Assurance Argument

Southern State Community College - OH

10/2/2015

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.)

Argument

1.A.1 Mission Statement Development Suited to the Nature and Culture of the Institution

The functional mission statements of community colleges in Ohio are generally consistent and easily identifiable across state supported institutions in Ohio. Southern State's commonly recited, guiding mission is to offer **accessible, affordable, and high quality education to people in southern Ohio**. Throughout the College's history, this mission statement has undergone minor variations, such as more descriptive text yet, the basic premise of the mission has remained unaltered. The core functions relative to this mission have remained intact for forty years and are consistent with Ohio's definition of state community colleges as defined in the Ohio Revised Code Section 3358. Among those functions include a commitment to transfer and technical programs, literacy and GED activities, community service activities, open admissions, workforce training, creating seamless pathways for transferring students, and exploring any and all cooperative and collaborative opportunities with public and private schools in the southern Ohio area. Although simplistically stated, the mission to provide accessible, affordable, and high quality education is robust and serves as a guide for all operations. This mission is widely communicated across the institution in both web and print form but more importantly, it is the guiding statement from which ideas are vetted, possibilities explored, and decisions are made. It is approved by the College's Board of Trustees during their annual review and approval of the Policy and Information Manual.

The mission statement is the foundation for the College's strategic visioning and goals setting exercises. Southern State's vision, to be **"Your First-Choice College,"** is realized through the consistent ability to deliver accessible, affordable, and high-quality education. The alignment of mission and planning is emphasized as part of every major future-oriented activity of the College. Considered the foundation of the College's strategic plan, the elements of the vision run parallel to accessibility, affordability, and high quality. Among these elements include the College's desire to

- Be Your Best Investment
- Realize Synergy Through Partnerships
- Be a Driving Force in Innovation and Technology

- Prioritize Student Success
- Be a Best Place to Work
- Be a Dynamic and Flexible Organization.

The vision casting process has taken on various iterations in the College's history but, the current model, which commenced in 2011, has proven to be the most adaptive and suitable to the College's needs. The current vision and its supporting goals are reflective of broad college and community engagement involving large, group-facilitated planning sessions not to mention many hours of group meetings aimed at articulating the vision and its elements with precision and clarity.

Annually, the vision is revisited to articulate supporting goals that ultimately drive individual performance evaluation and budget planning. The Board of Trustees hosts an annual retreat in which they verify that proposed strategic goals remain aligned with the overall mission, and they vote on those goals. The mission, vision, and goals are integrated into the College operations through mid-year and final personnel evaluations, monthly reports to the Board, and most significantly, the President's evaluation.

1.A.2 Programs, Support Services, and Enrollment Profile Consistent with Mission

The mission commits Southern State to providing accessible, affordable, and high quality education. Central to this is the effective delivery of industry relevant two-year technical programs,short-term certificate programs, as well as a core two year program building toward the foundation of baccalaureate education. Currently, Southern State offers 30 degree programs and seven certificate programs. Additionally, the College's transfer module courses are offered in compliance with Ohio's Articulation and Transfer Policy. Supporting workforce development, the College offers custom-designed programming to meet the needs of area employers as well as the needs of students pursuing short-term, non-credit training. The most relevant example of this programming includes the Truck Driving Academy. Founded in 2002, the Academy has trained over 4000 participants and prepared them for work in local, high-demand jobs.

The Southern State student body profile aligns well with its stated mission, particularly from the standpoint of accessibility and service to southern Ohio. Nearly 90% of Southern State's students originate from the five counties, Adams, Brown, Clinton, Fayette, and Highland that were a part of the original service charter. Only 10% come from outside the area and of those, many are in closely neighboring communities. Often geographically comparable in size to the states of Rhode Island and Delaware, the service region is vast yet sparsely populated. The College supports four campuses across the region. The nearest metropolitan centers are over an hour drive from the region's core and still 30-45 miles from the outermost areas of region. The absence of public transportation and limited college options place the four campuses locations as the most accessible higher education option in the region. This, coupled with a robust offering of online programming and courses offered at local high schools through College Credit Plus, is a testament to the College's commitment to accessibility in the region.

To more completely fulfill the accessibility aspect of the College's mission, the College recently relocated the existing South Campus in Brown County to Mount Orab for the purpose of better serving the broader Brown County region. Consequently, this relocation impacted the students originating from neighboring Adams County. This county, which often leads the state in high poverty, high unemployment, and low educational attainment rates, is the only county not currently served by a physical campus. For this reason, planning for an Adams County campus has been a focal point for

the past several years as demonstrated by inclusion in the College's annual strategic goals and has even resulted in placement of this campus as a top priority for capital funding. These transitions, have necessitated an extraordinary amount of planning and funding advocacy aimed at furthering the College's mission.

Southern State aims to be accessible by recognizing the unique needs of its constituents and designing programs and services to meet those needs. The roughly 185,000 person population across the five-county region is among the most under-served in all of Ohio and often leads the State in poverty, high unemployment and low educational attainment. These factors bring unquestionable relevance to the stated mission. Care is taken to align programs and services, particularly support services, with the complex needs of students. Aside from honoring an open admissions policy, the College actively leverages its capacity to support programs and services that may eventually serve as an entry point to higher education. For example, the College is among only several across Ohio with co-located Adult Basic Literacy and Education (ABLE) centers. Beyond sharing space, the College and the ABLE program work closely to create seamless pathways for students under-prepared for college. Another example of this commitment to accessibility is the College's alignment with the Fayette County Ohio Means Jobs entity. In this example the College leverages its facilities to provide space for employment services.

Academic and student support services reflect a keen sensitivity to the needs of students in the southern Ohio region. It is relevant to note that nearly 70% of Southern State's students are women, nearly 95% attend college using some form of financial aid, and over half of the student body is first-generation. These are factors that directly impact the type and level of support offered to our students. Through a reorganization in 2010, the College committed extensive resources to integrating tutoring, early warning systems, and advising under the same umbrella within a Student Success Center. This has been a key strategic move aimed at improving retention and completion among a student body that is at-risk, often on multiple factors. Through the customized completion plans introduced to new students, the College is well-positioned to offer a high-quality experience regardless of the student's challenges. Further, the adoption of a required College Success course for new students has provided a delivery platform that captures most of the concepts and research relevant to the work the College is doing to impact student success.

1.A.3 Planning and Budgeting Align with and Support the Mission

Southern State's commitment to affordability, another core component of the mission, is evidenced in the College's planning and budgeting priorities. It is the priority of the Board of Trustees and administration to actively manage tuition by being particularly critical of every proposed tuition fluctuation while maintaining emphasis on quality programming and services. A history of conservative approaches to tuition management has allowed Southern State to boast one of the lowest tuition rates in all of Ohio among the non-levy institutions.

Often challenged by the demands of sustaining four campus locations, the College effectively leverages resources and personnel to maintain affordability. Historically, the resource allocation reports suggest that Southern State operates in a fiscally competitive manner, showing no financial abnormalities as a result of these challenges. Further, the College actively supports the growth of student financial support by investing in Trustee Scholarships as well as its advocacy for the Southern State Foundation and the scholarships it supports.

Alignment of planning and budgeting priorities is also addressed in Criterion 5.C.1.

Sources

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- Business Office_Budgets_Resource Allocation FY2015
- Business Office_Tuition_FT Annual Tuition 1995-2015
- Business Office_Tuition_Tuition Comparison Chart
- Human Resources_Employee Performance Evaluation Form
- Human Resources_Policy and Information Manual
- Ohio Board of Regents_Ohio Transfer Articulation Policy
- Ohio Revised Code_Chapter 3358
- President_BoT_Minutes_January 2015
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- President_Evaluation_2014
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- President_Proposals_Adams County Capital Bill Project Proposal
- President_Strategic_Adams Co Economic Profile
- President_Strategic_Mission & Strategic Vision Web
- President_Strategic_Service Area Map
- President_Strategic_Strategic Plan Brochure 2014 2015
- President_Strategic_Strategic Plan Brochure 2015
- President_Strategic_Strategic Vision Process Summary
- President_Strategic_Vision Survey Responses
- Student Affairs_Financial Aid_SSCC Scholarships
- Student Affairs_Registrar_Student Body Profile 2008 to 2014
- Student Affairs_Student Success Center_Organization

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.

Argument

1.B.1 Mission Clearly Articulated in Public Documents

The mission statement, vision, values, are revisited annually as part of strategic planning exercises and communicated frequently through various communication channels, including print and web. Further, during the all-college convenings, the President uses at least a portion of his time to offer an update on the College's progress on overarching goals and, when appropriate, invite the college-community to explore potential goals for the future. During the College's Opening Week activities, a more focused workshop is sponsored to delve more deeply into evaluating the active strategic plan with the College's mission and vision. This affords the College community the opportunity to examine the extent to which its day-to-day activities align with the mission. Lastly, the monthly President's Report to the Board of Trustees includes a notation for items directly linked to the College's strategic plan and ultimately its mission.

1.B.2. / 1.B.3 Mission and Vision are Current and Explain Emphasis on Aspects of the Mission Including Scope and Intended Constituents

The College's strategic vision represents a unifying guide toward fulfilling the college's mission and living its values. Collaboratively, a vision to be "Your First-Choice College," is grounded in the mission to offer affordable, accessible, and high-quality education to the southern Ohio community has been cast. To do this, the College has committed to:

- Being Your **Best Investment** — Whether it's through students investment of tuition dollars, donors' contributions toward scholarships or philanthropist's long-term investment in the Foundation, Southern State wants to be a "best investment" institution. This involves demonstrating good stewardship and sound financial policies and practices in all that we do. It is not enough to accept tuition, grant monies, foundation investments, subsidy and the like without a genuine commitment and earnest effort to use those resources to serve the greater good.

- Creating **Synergy Through Partnerships and Collaboration** — As a college with a broad mission and operating in a unique geographic area, Southern State is well positioned to be a synergistic force. We seek to model agility and foresight in responsiveness to new opportunities while, at times, taking the lead in forming alliances that advance our mission and contribute to

the vitality of our region. Further, we aim to contribute our talent, resources, and energies toward being a good partner in all endeavors and promoting a collaborative spirit wherever we are represented.

- Being a **Driving Force in Innovation and Technology** — Innovation stretches beyond creativity or simply introducing something new; technology is often the catalyst in being truly innovative. Southern State desires to lead practices, processes, and systems that are transformative, integrative, and accelerate the pace of new ideas, new programs and new ways of doing things that will move us toward the vision. We seek to be technology pioneers yet selectively invest resources in the tools and systems that have the capacity to make the most meaningful impact for our students, our college, and our community.

- Advancing **Student Success** — Accessibility is the hallmark of our mission yet it is not enough to simply get students in the door—the president wants to shake their hands at the commencement ceremony. To achieve our vision, the college must demonstrate a service mentality across the campus and strive to anticipate the diverse needs represented by every student population. A holistic approach to retention that recognizes and addresses complex challenges can be a major catalyst in positioning students to fulfill their aspirations including certificate and degree attainment.

- Being the **Best Place to Work** — Doing work that makes a difference in people's lives contributes to a meaningful work experience. Higher education changes lives and introduces prospects for positive futures. Being a part of such a compelling purpose can be motivating and exciting. Southern State, while not blind to common workplace issues, strives to be the best place for you to share your talents.

- Being a **Dynamic and Flexible Organization** — These times require active, lively, energetic, pliable and resilient behavior. Although easy to demonstrate these attributes at the individual level, Southern State seeks to model these attributes across the organization. Whether it's responsiveness to academic program needs, partnering capacity with other organizations, re-engineering for student success or general quality enhancement efforts, Southern State seeks to be dynamic and flexible. We want to be on the cutting edge of designing and implementing strategies, processes and systems that improve quality, lead to better student outcomes, position us an indispensable partner and generally propel us toward our vision. This required agility is the motivator behind the annual goal setting.

The mission, strategic vision, and strategic goals remain current on the College's website. Further, the vision and goals are integrated throughout the institution by the means by which they are embedded in the Employee Professional Development and Strategic Involvement process, or more commonly referred to as the Performance Evaluation. Annually, all full-time staff are measured on their ability to meet core competencies such as results orientation, teamwork, customer service, problem solving, continuous learning, and organizational commitment, as well as to their achievement toward specific goals directly tied to the College's strategic vision. This structure allows for everyone, at all levels of the organization, to engage in the broader directions of the College.

Sources

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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.

Argument

1.C.1. Institution Addresses its Role in a Multicultural Society

The College serves a relatively homogenous region of southern Ohio. The total minority population among the communities served by Southern State is between 2%-5% and the student body profile is consistent with the surrounding area. Given this, the College is deliberate in exposing the students and the community to culturally diverse programming and recognizes that it must be consistently purposeful in this area. This has been accomplished largely through employment recruiting practices, cultural event programming, and experience-based learning strategies designed for diversity objectives which support the College's core learning outcome of preparing students to interact in a diverse environment.

The report offered to Southern State following the 2006 Higher Learning Commission reaffirmation visit stated, "If a more diverse college personnel is desired, it will be incumbent on SSCC to continue to cast a larger net in search of new personnel." Response to this suggestion has has included in the re-organization of the College's Human Resource function which had largely been a shared administrative responsibility to that point. In 2008 a full-time, qualified human resource director was hired and charged with building a comprehensive department inclusive of employee recruiting. Postings are now streamlined and available online. Further, advertisements for open positions are strategically placed in select outlets with worldwide reach. Additionally, employment policies are revisited frequently and updated to reflect contemporary practice in an increasingly diverse society.

Invited guest lectures, presentations, and performances are another resource for promoting diversity. The College is fortunate to have an auditorium venue that comfortably hosts over 400 guests and a multi-purpose center which seats over 2000. In these venues the College has hosted a variety of cultural events aimed at broadening the minds of students and community members alike. For example, as part of Black History Awareness Month, the College co-sponsored The Hillsboro Story, which aptly portrays the civil rights drama as it played out in the local community in the mid 1950s. Annually, the College celebrates Women's History by hosting a special program inclusive of elements such as women's suffrage or gender in the workplace. These are just a few of the many special presentations that are hosted by the institution. Annually, it is not uncommon for the fine art department to host a minimum of three major theatrical performances, a series of musical programs, and a host of special guest appearances aimed at promoting diverse thinking through student and community engagement activities. Further, faculty invite special guests to the classroom to enrich student's experience with diversity. Among those recently has been an Affrilachian poet, Frank X Walker, and a Guggenheim Fellow and winner of the Grand Prix de Litterature Policiere, Donald Ray Pollock. In fall 2015 and spring 2016, the College is partnering with a community theatre and Arts Midwest to connect our students and friends of the College to world cultures through week-long residencies with global performers. Performing in October is Turkish vocalist, Aysenur Kolivar.

Experience-based learning opportunities are also being more commonly explored as a means of promoting diversity. A unique collaboration among fine arts, humanities, and English faculty led to the first travel-abroad opportunity that the College has hosted in many years. While participation was sparse in this inaugural year, the London trip spurred momentum. A trip to Germany is scheduled for spring 2016.

1.C.2. Processes and Activities Reflect Attention to Human Diversity Within the Mission and for the Constituency Served

It is important to acknowledge that three of the five counties within the Southern State service region have been designated as Appalachian. As such, the institution's processes and activities reflect a deep appreciation for the cultural distinction of this population. For example, the College partners with community artisans to host Traditional Skills Workshops during the summer. This workshop series is aimed at introducing people to traditional Appalachian arts and culture while also providing a training ground to keep the Appalachian artisan skills and cultural heritage alive and well for future generations. Additionally, the College also fosters cultural pride by volunteering expertise from the College to be featured speakers in community events. For example, in collaboration with the local Chambers of Commerce and relevant special events they coordinate, the College has hosted a speaker presenting findings related to the influence of Appalachian Culture on women's identity. The College has also hosted public service events, such as mapping community assets among socioeconomically disadvantaged populations in the Appalachian region.

Other relevant cultural training opportunities are directed internally to foster a supportive environment for student learning and achievement. Through the Carl D. Perkins Grant program, the College has hosted a variety of speakers aimed at encouraging student persistence through challenges affiliated with cultural heritage (Pharm D), and abuse (My Orange Dufflebag).

Despite the institutional commitment to supporting and advancing diversity, the extent of racial or cultural diversity among our students, faculty, and staff remains limited. Although the 2008-2014 Student Body Profile reveals a minor uptick in minority students, this appears to be an anomaly yet, reflective of the service area's general population. Regardless, Southern State remains committed to recruiting and retaining domestic minority students, faculty, and staff. This will largely be accomplished through continued nationwide personnel recruiting practices as well as expanded student recruiting into neighboring communities with more diverse populations. Additionally, the College is eager to explore its role in Ohio's most recent global initiative aimed at increasing the share of international college students in Ohio from 4.1% to 6% to expand global capacity. The Global Reach to Engage Academic Talent Initiative hopes to expand Ohio's international visibility in higher education, and leverage economic and workforce development potential.

Finally, the institution is keenly aware of varying degrees of student preparedness upon entering college, particularly learning and physical challenges that will directly impact their academic life. As such, a full-time Disabilities Coordinator provides educational support to students facing such challenges. During the 2013-14 academic year, the office assisted 91 students and during 2014-2015, 76 students were served.

Sources

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- Advancement_Programs_Women In History Promotion 2008
- President_Global Reach Initiative
- Student Affairs_Music_Webpage
- Student Affairs_Registrar_Student Body Profile 2008 to 2014
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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.

Argument

1.D.1 / 1.D.2 Understanding of Educational Role and Public Obligation and Prioritizing Educational Responsibilities

Beyond the geographical relevance of the College's name (Southern, denoting the "southern part of Ohio) the other dominant component of the College's identity is the word, "community." Obligation to Southern State's public stakeholders permeates the institution in word and deed. A central element of the College's strategic plan is to be dynamic and flexible and create synergy through partnerships and collaboration and this is most notably demonstrated through the College's open facility practices, community centered events, and the broad engagement of Southern State students and personnel within community-oriented groups and organizations.

In section 5.6 of the Southern State Policy and Information Manual, the policy begins with a statement supporting the educational mission of the College. "The purpose is to promote the free exchange of ideas and the safe and efficient operation of the College." Further, it addresses the direct and indirect support for teaching and service. As such, it is common practice for the College to be extremely accommodating for community guests while also balancing this hospitality with a clear sense of priority for educational purpose and this is evidenced in a broad look back of the weekly facility usage reports. Generally speaking, the College is often a hub of activity on any given day. In addition to course meetings among Southern State students, the College is often a host to partner institutions offering advanced education courses. Examples include weekend classes through Lindsey Wilson College, Ohio Christian University, Franklin University, and Miami University.

Space that is not being used for academic purposes during specific time frames often becomes the meeting space for local Chambers of Commerce, Community Leadership groups, local Rotarians, and the like. Further, due to the broad accessibility of the College's Campuses within their respective communities, the campus is also a common site for major events such as the Highland County Ag Expo, the Ohio National Guard's Health Fair, job fairs sponsored by the local OhioMeansJobs groups, local education conferences, art shows, and other specialty training. More often than not, the guests that visit the institution's campuses for events unrelated to the College, often become target audiences for the academic or training purposes of the College.

In addition to being a community friendly venue for guests whose purposes are mutually beneficial to the College, the institution is also deliberate about inviting potential students to campus through direct and indirect recruiting activities. "Free and Open to the Public" is a standard of the majority of events

and activities hosted on the College's campuses. For example, admission to all Southern State Patriot athletic competitions is free for all guests. Further, many of the fine arts performances and special guest presentation are often free to the public. More directly, the College hosts quarterly "Connect to College" days which serve as general visitation opportunities for students and their families.

1.D.3. Engagement with External Constituencies

Further embracing the public obligation, staff and faculty members of the institution are actively engaged within their respective communities through board appointments, civic service, and volunteerism. Perhaps most obviously, this commitment to the public good is evidenced in the monthly President's Report to the Board of Trustees where the President's "activities and involvement" are listed. During any given month, this list is long and diverse and demonstrates a genuine regard for the institution's role as a community partner. Similar engagement practices are expected by members of the President's Council as well as campus directors and often accepted willingly by faculty and staff at every level of the institution. While too lengthy to include a comprehensive list, the College is well-represented across diverse organizations throughout the service region and beyond. Among those include manufacturing councils, Chambers of Commerce, Workforce Boards, Rotary Clubs, Leadership Academies, and a host of civic boards.

In addition, students also play an active role in community engagement. Service credit initiatives further extend the reach of the College and actively engage the community. For example, to raise money for a sponsored scholarship, the Student Government Association arranges for an annual fundraiser in which they invite businesses to participate in a discount card project. This project not only benefits current and future students, it also reinforces the strong partnership shared between the College and its business partners. Other student groups such as the Medical Assisting Student Organization organize an annual "Pink Tea" in honor of cancer awareness. Still others, such as the Agriculture program, host an annual Thanksgiving Feast using food that they have grown and raised in the academic setting. These and a variety of other endeavors reflect a deep understanding of the role within the institution's respective communities as well as an appreciation for the institution's educational responsibilities.

Sources

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- Student Affairs_SGA_Discount Card Scholarship Announcement
- Student Affairs_Student Success Center_Connect to College Days Webpage

1.S - Criterion 1 - Summary

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

Summary

A clearly defined mission and vision are the drivers of Southern State's operations and the foundation from which goals are cast and subsequent accomplishments are realized—it defines our identity. Iterations of planning styles have resulted in generally favorable outcomes throughout the College's history yet, it is reasonable to suggest that the current model is working extremely well for Southern State as individual engagement is visible across the institution. The College is able to point to a variety of large-scale improvements, successful student outcomes, a stable and consistent work environment, and a highly regarded state and local reputation as evidence that the mission and vision are clear, well-supported, and the guide for all advancement.

Since its inception, the College has been about serving the southern Ohio Community; not only for producing more educated individuals but, for the sake of growing an educated citizenry and all of its associated outcomes such as stronger family ties, higher moral values, peace of mind, and a strong economy. The consistent reliance on a clear mission and related functions has enabled Southern State to connect people to these outcomes and build public good along the way. The vision has served as a unifying guide for all endeavors, big and small. However, this should not imply that Southern State is resting on its laurels—in fact, the College recognizes there is vastly more to do. Most notably, the College is actively contemplating the following:

- Through conservative oversight and effective planning the college has fared well in global economic instability, uncertain state support, and shifting enrollment trends however, funding necessary to support continued advancements is a rapidly escalating concern. While the pursuit of alternative funding sources will be guided by the existing mission and vision, stakeholder expectations will undoubtedly shift and operations will have to evolve accordingly.

- Globalization will continue to set the pace of operations. To be competitive, "faster," "smarter," and "better" have become the non-negotiable elements of sustainability. Implications for offering accessible, affordable, and high quality education, Southern State's mission, are challenging. As Southern State recognizes itself in a global marketplace, mission integrity must be closely monitored.

- Operating in communities that are relatively ethnically and culturally homogenous tests the College's aptitude for instilling in students the skills, knowledge, and desire to interact in a diverse environment. It is clear that the College has to be deliberate in advancing this core outcome and this is an area for continued, meaningful growth. Further, continued strategic employment recruiting is essential to sustaining and promoting diversity across the institution.

Sources

- President_Strategic_Mission & Strategic Vision Web

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.

Argument

As demonstrated in numerous organizational documents and exemplified in practice across the institution, the College operates with integrity. The institution has adopted fair and ethical policies and processes that govern its board, administration, faculty, and staff. Frequently using best practices of relevant organizations, the majority of these policies and processes are documented in policy manuals central to the operation of the institution. Available in print and accessible via the web, these standard policies include the Board of Trustees Policy Manual, the Policy and Information Manual, and the Catalog.

Integrity in Financial, Academic, Personnel, and Auxiliary Functions

Financial

The primary responsibility of the Board is that of fiduciary oversight and ensuring integrity in financial matters. As outlined in Board duties, they are charged with establishing the tuition and fees schedule as well as reviewing and acting on all financial matters, including the annual budget, capital expenditures for facilities, and expenditure items requiring competitive bidding. The Board appoints a Finance Committee which facilitates broader discussion on these issues and makes informed recommendations to the full Board. The Board reviews each month's financial reports including the college's general fund, auxiliary funds, and others. These are published on the web and distributed to the College community through email.

The Business Office, under the leadership of the Vice President for Business and Finance, supports consistent and transparent processes and operations guided by generally accepted accounting principles. The financial functions and practices of the College are subjected to a yearly audit conducted by the Auditor of the State of Ohio. The Auditor of the State of Ohio contracts with an Independent Public Accounting firm that audits the College. The audits are conducted in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America and the standards applicable to financial audits contained in *Government Auditing Standards*, issued by the Comptroller General of the United States. The audit includes examining evidence supporting accounting principles used by management as well as evaluating overall financial statement presentation. The Board of Trustees Audit Committee members participate in a pre- and post-audit meeting. For the last ten years the College has had clean reports and there have been no unqualified opinions (2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013). Audits are published on the Auditor of State website and the local media is notified when the audits are made public.

The Financial Aid Office protects the continued eligibility of the institution, present and future students, and gains recognition for fiduciary accuracy and student service from various outside evaluating agencies. Compliance with Federal regulations is given the highest priority to preserve the integrity of all Financial Aid Programs. Supporting this are established policies including, Student Rights and Responsibilities, the Return of Title IV Funds Policy, and the Title IV Loan Code of Conduct. Timely notification, credit, and reporting of financial aid administration are a continuing goal. The department routinely has successful audits from all outside agencies and remains compliant with all funding programs.

Further, The Ohio Auditor of State's office maintains a system for the reporting of fraud, including misuse of public money by an official or office. The system allows all Ohio citizens, including public employees, the opportunity to make anonymous complaints. Those procedures are clearly outlined in the widely accessible, Policy and Information Manual, section 3.14.

Academic

As discussed in component 2.C.4, the Curriculum Committee, a subcommittee of the Faculty Senate oversee issues of academic integrity, including instructional consistency, course content, coordination, and disclosure of information relating to course design and instructional materials. This committee is one of the most functional and effective components of instructional overview at the College; it oversees all curricular functions. The Committee meets monthly throughout the academic year and oversees the adoption of College syllabi, instructional resources, distance technology, adoption of textbooks, philosophy of pedagogy, and student services relating to academic instruction.

Additionally, Program Review and assessment practices also serve to uphold the integrity of the institution. With well-established processes and guidelines, these measures influence the academic offerings upon which Southern State stakes its claim to quality.

Other polices such as the Student Code of Conduct, Academic Honesty, Computer Use Policy, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), Student Appeals, Sexual Harassment, and the Transfer of Credit Policies all serve to uphold the integrity of the institution.

Personnel

All College personnel are subject to the general policies and procedures that apply to employee conduct and behavior that are set forth in the College's Policy and Information Manual. The requirement to comply with the policies, procedures, and standards found in the manual is a condition of employment.

Additionally, the College also relies on the Collective Bargaining Agreement with the Southern State Education Association (SSEA) as a means of promoting the delivery of high quality education, free of interruption and interference. This is a mutual covenant executed in good faith.

Lastly, the Board of Trustees is obligated to the policy and practices set forth in the Board of Trustee Policy Manual. This is a comprehensive source for policy and practice expected of those in the highest leadership role.

Auxiliary

In financial reporting only, the College uses "auxiliary" designation for the Patri-Tots Early Learning Center and the Workforce and Community Services Division, which includes the Truck Driving

Academy. In all other capacities, these areas operate under the same policies, procedures, and practices as all other personnel.

Policies and Processes for Fair and Ethical Behavior

Governing Board

As determined by the Ohio Revised Code, Chapter 3354 and 3358, the College's Board of Trustees has final responsibility for the governance and operation of the institution. The Board By-Laws, included in the Board Trustee Policy Manual, clearly articulate the responsibilities and processes of the Board. This manual, in its entirety, is reviewed and updated annually. All newly appointed board members attend an orientation session in which these are thoroughly reviewed.

The policy resolutions adopted by the Board of Trustees, include those relating to ethics. The Southern State Community College Board of Trustees Ethics Policy is to carry out its mission, in accordance with the strictest ethical guidelines and to ensure that members and employees conduct themselves in a manner that fosters public confidence in the integrity of the Southern State Community College Board of Trustees, its processes, and its accomplishments. The General Standards of Ethical Conduct, requires that the institution's Board of Trustees members and employees must at all times, abide by protections to the public embodied in Ohio's ethics laws and as interpreted by the Ohio Ethics Commission and Ohio courts. The College provides Board members with a copy of these laws and requires a signed acknowledgement of receipt. Further, members are obligated to participate annually in ethics training provided by the Ohio Attorney General and also submit financial disclosure forms. Members and employees must conduct themselves in a manner that avoids favoritism, bias, and the appearance of impropriety. The Board of Trustees follows the American Association of Community College Trustees Standards of Good Practices and are members in "Good Standing."

In addition to policy related to ethics, the Board of Trustees also speaks extensively to openness and transparency for the benefit of a better informed citizenry. The Public Records Policy strictly adheres to the State's Public Records Act and the collective group of laws, commonly referred to as the "Sunshine Laws," which support open records and open meetings. In accordance with this theme of transparency, the Board follows proper meeting notification guidelines and publishes meeting reports online for public access.

Administration/Staff

Similar to the policy manual guiding the College's Board of Trustees, the Policy and Information Manual, contains general policies and procedures that apply to the conduct and behavior as members of the College community. It contains information regarding the governance, services, functions, employees, students, and facilities of Southern State Community College. Updates and changes to the Manual are annually reviewed and approved by the Board of Trustees and are disseminated to all employees, and acknowledgement of receipt is monitored annually by inclusion of the Manual in the College's employee training platform. The Manual can be accessed at all times on the College's website. Additionally, the information is contained in the orientation materials of all newly hired employees.

Contained within the Policy and Information Manual are several policies that reinforce the institution's commitment to integrity and the aim toward fulfilling the highest ethical standards.

Including: Conflicts of Interests, Employee Code of Conduct, Reporting and Addressing Concerns of Misconduct, and FERPA.

Southern State Community College is committed to providing equal opportunity and an educational and work environment free from discrimination on the basis of sex, race, color, religion, national origin, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, pregnancy, military status, and/or veteran status. The College adheres to all applicable state and federal equal opportunity statutes and regulations and is dedicated to ensuring access and equal opportunity in its educational programs, related activities, and employment. Further, the College has established measures in place to address claims of illegal discrimination. Title IX Coordinators and/or the Department of Human Resources have visibly posted contact information in the Catalog (pages 37-38) that is also available on the College's website.These coordinators participate in annual training coordinated by the Ohio Attorney General.

To ensure that all constituents of our college community are treated with respect, dignity, and integrity, the College has adopted the following in the Policy and Information Manual's statement asserting respect for human diversity:

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.

The College community seeks to learn from one another, foster a sense of shared experience, and commit to making the College the intellectual home for all. To sustain this, College policies and procedures aimed at protecting individual rights must be upheld. Any actions disregarding these policies and procedures, particularly those resulting in discrimination, harassment, or bigoted acts, will be challenged swiftly and collectively. Considered an integral part of the institution's focus, goals, and mission, there is an expectation among all who work, study, and teach at Southern State Community College that they are committed to the principles of mutual respect and positive engagement.

In part, this commitment is further substantiated by the significant investment made to human resources. In 2008, the College hired its first-time, full-time Director of Human Resources to lead at the Cabinet level. The introduction of this role has undeniably advanced Southern State's efforts toward fairness and transparency in its employee practices. In addition to creating and reviewing key policies, this department serves as a resource and counsel from recruiting, through the hiring process, on-boarding, sustained employment, and when necessary, discipline including and up to termination. For example, a substantial investment in an online application portal allows for pre-screening of applicants to ensure applicant qualifications are appropriately aligned with stated job specifications. Further, the process is expanded to include a background check as a condition of employment. Lastly, the process culminates with the human resources department offering universal orientation related to benefits, policies and procedures.

Southern State Community College provides ongoing staff and faculty development via workshops, webinars, and personalized learning opportunities. Utilizing an on-line training tool the College has delivered Sexual Harassment, Diversity, and Discrimination in the Workplace modules to employees.

Furthermore the system allows the College to create customized training opportunities for employees such as FERPA, the College's Policy and Information Manual, and maintenance requisition. Professional growth is a key component of the performance evaluation and professional development system that is utilized for staff and administration positions. Generous budgets have been established for investments in personnel growth including tuition reimbursement, which adequately reflect the institution's commitment to integrity in all endeavors.

Regarding employee practices, the College has adopted several practices across the institution which embrace fairness and transparency. For example, the College and its faculty Association both commit to negotiating in goodwill as required by the Ohio Revised Code, Section 4117.01 (G). Another example is the collaborative nature of the insurance committee and its broad representation to act on behalf of all employees. Structurally, the President hosts All College Meetings in which he uses that platform to share information, report on strategic goals, and generally engage with the college community. Additionally, the President and the Vice President of Academics has a standing invitation to attend the monthly Faculty Senate meetings where they are open to a Q/A session.

Faculty

Individual employee contracts are issued to faculty on an annual basis. The contract is conditional upon compliance with all College rules and regulations set forth in the Policy and Information Manual and the Southern State Education Association Collective Bargaining Agreement.

Sources

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- Advancement_Communications_Website_Policies & Procedures
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- Business Office_Audits_Financial Audit Report 2007
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- President_BoT_General Standards of Ethical Conduct
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- President_BoT_Policy Manual
- President_BoT_Policy on Meetings
- President_BoT_Public Records Policy
- SSEA_Collective Bargaining Agreement 2013-2016
- SSEA_Collective Bargaining Agreement Appendix B - Contract
- Student Affairs_Admissions_Transfer
- Student Affairs_Campus Safety Webpage
- Student Affairs_FERPA
- Student Affairs_Financial Aid_OBR Audit Letter
- Student Affairs_Financial Aid_Return of Title IV Funds Policy
- Student Affairs_Financial Aid_Student Rights & Responsibilities
- Student Affairs_Financial Aid_Title IV Loan Code of Conduct
- Student Affairs_Statement of Sexual Harrassment Catalog p. 37-38
- Student Affairs_Student Appeal Process
- Student Affairs_Student Code of Conduct

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.

Argument

The integrity of Southern State's communication strategies is grounded in a firm belief that honesty, accuracy, clarity, and transparency are essential to any message. Across the institution there are sound processes in place for continuous improvement in communication. Internal and external messaging is shaped with a mindfulness toward the College's mission and accuracy. Measures of quality assurance rest heavily on interdepartmental communications and, depending on the project, a series of reviews and verification. The College uses a broad range of tools to present the institution including, publications, web, and social media.

Continuous Improvement Toward Clarity and Accuracy

One example of the College's high regard for accuracy, quality, and transparency is the Institutional Collaboration Committee which formed in 2012. The result of several departmental representatives voicing concerns about possible gaps in information sharing, this committee has evolved into one of the most effective means of verifying interdepartmental information, particularly between the academic and student service divisions of the College. Absent of any higher order or edict to establish a committee or task force, this group formed by the motivation of a shared desire to improve accuracy and efficiency in communications. Co-chairs include senior level administrators, the Vice President of Academics and the Vice President of Student Affairs, joined by representatives from their departments as well as representation from the Communication's Office. Other guests, including faculty, students, and staff are called upon occasionally to contribute. Meeting minutes are recorded and shared among the college community.

Similarly, an expanded version of the Collaboration Committee, "Student First," meets monthly to review systems and processes impacting students. Like the Institutional Collaboration Committee, this group also aims to identify unintended challenges and gaps and propose resolutions that make a student's experience more pleasurable and convenient. Representatives contributing to Student First include stakeholders from financial aid, records, business office, and information systems. Student First meeting minutes are maintained and available for review.

Communicating with Integrity

Guided by personal professional ethics and excellence in communications, the College's Communications team members are active with the National Council for Marketing and Public Relations (NCMPR) and adheres to the Code of Ethics set forth by this organization. This department is responsible for the College's most critical publications as well as its web presence. The systems established to ensure integrity involve a series of checks and cross-checks are highly organized and include generous review time. For example, the College Catalog, the primary document to communicate student and academic policies, degree requirements, and course descriptions, undergoes an extensive and inclusive annual review process that involves several rounds of review from various constituents among all departments as well as final review from senior level leaders. Meticulous care is taken to make the updating process convenient and widely accessible among all contributors and

that the final product is reflective of highest level approvals.

Like the catalog, the College's website is a vital component of the College's communication strategy. As the primary public medium for internal and external audiences, the web function is coordinated by a webmaster reporting to the Vice President of Institutional Advancement. Since the College's first, homegrown website in 1998, the site has gone through three major redesigns. With each iteration, refining content quality, information accessibility, functionality, and user convenience have been the guiding elements of each redesign. Site maintenance, including information updates, is informed by committee minutes, Board minutes, and departmental communications from across the College. The web is an integral part of the overall communication strategy and is often leveraged in print publications and reports to fully and accurately represent Southern State. The College relies on Google Analytics to implement data-informed updates as it relates to navigation and accessibility of information for the end-user.

The College's social media presence is also leveraged as a key communication strategy. Under the direction of the Public Relations Director, the College maintains and active presence on Facebook and Twitter and is building a presence on LinkedIn. In addition to marketing the College, this has proven an excellent tool for postings related to emergency events, weather-related closings, and event announcements. Select individuals have posting permissions and are relied upon to monitor both sites and ensure timely and accurate responses to questions or concerns posed on the sites.

In addition to the catalog and website, students and prospective students are also provided guidance through the Student Handbook, the bi-annual Registration Guide, and the new student's Individual Plan for Academic Completion. The Student Handbook is modeled after the catalog and includes clear guidance on academic and disciplinary policies that concern their rights and responsibilities as Southern State students. Although printed copies of the handbook have been discontinued, the handbook is available for print from the College's website. The Registration Guide, a printed guide for students and prospective students, is updated bi-annually to assist students through the registration process. It includes information related to tuition, financial aid, important dates, refund policies, payment information, faculty contacts, program locations, student success resources, and a host of other services offered by Southern State. Like all publications, this material is reviewed through multiple lenses and offered to the President's Council for final review.

As Southern State continues to grow in complexity and the need for indexing, searching, and retrieval mechanisms increases, it would behoove the College to consider exploration of a content management platform. It is expected that such a tool would be helpful in strengthening existing protocol used to verify information accuracy and would expedite the availability of this information to all constituents.

Marketing and Promoting Transparently

Any marketing material created to promote Southern State is done so in a highly collaborative manner with interdepartmental input. The central aim of all marketing information is consistent with the mission to offer affordable, accessible, and high quality education. Further, the inspiration guiding all creative work is one of invitation, connectedness, and quality outcomes grounded in a high regard for ethics, institutional policies, and state and federal laws pertaining to the practice of public information. To deliver in this manner, the Communications Department is well versed in ensuring accuracy, transparency, and truth in all endeavors.

The high stakes nature of accuracy and transparency in academic promotion demands a highly collaborative vetting process among members from across the institution. As such, the promotion of the College's academic programs consumes significant attention and time and is often a continuous

improvement endeavor. Information related to academics is most often vetted by the faculty or department coordinator directly involved as well as the senior leaders in both Academics and Advancement. A relevant example of this is the re-engineering of the program brochures. Aiming always to improve the relevancy and accuracy of printed material, the College decided to discontinue the program outlines in brochure form and migrate to a more comprehensive programmatic viewbook that includes clearer pathways, as well as employment information, alumni experiences, and faculty contact information. And, rather than risking circulation of program outlines that could easily be outdated the moment they are printed, the College is leveraging the web to disseminate up-to-date programmatic information. By implementing a QR code, users are able to view and print program outlines at their leisure and are taken to the web where information is expected to be most current. While the program viewbook is a significant improvement in terms of marketing the academic programs, web accuracy becomes even more critical, further elevating the importance of a structural content management platform.

Equally important in terms of accuracy and transparency, the promotion and dissemination of information relating to tuition and fees (catalog/web) including the net price calculator, transfer(catalog/web), institutional data, and institutional and program accreditation (catalog/web) is managed through various cross-departmental checks and verifications. Where relevant, tuition and fee information is a component of many of Southern State's marketing materials. Additionally, the College maintains a summarized site for consumer information. This includes a host of important links to information about the College, services, access, safety, accountability, and more. *Note: It was brought to the College's attention prior to the submission of the Assurance Argument that some institutional accreditation citations included old language referring to the North Central Association. The College has updated made appropriate updates to the web and electronic resources and noted the change for future cycles of various print publications.*

Southern State has leveraged its size and personnel to firmly argue the case for accuracy and transparency in information dissemination and marketing. And, while this has worked well in the first forty years of operation, the College also recognizes that technology, particularly in the form of content management systems across social media and the web, pose a tremendous asset to a college that is growing and becoming more administratively and structurally dispersed across a larger area. More formality and systematic reliance is warranted and will be a priority in the immediate future.

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- Student Affairs_Admissions_Transfer Admission Catalog
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- Student Affairs_Student Handbook 2014-2015
- Student Affairs_Student Success Center_IPAC Binder Contents
- Student Affairs_Tuition_Tuition & Fees Catalog
- Student Affairs_Tuition_Tuition & Fees Web

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.

Argument

Southern State Community College is a state-assisted community college serving southern Ohio. Power and duties of the Board of Trustees derive from Chapter 3358.08 of the Ohio Revised Code. From this the Southern State Board of Trustees is empowered to make decisions that are in the best interest of the institution and charged with assuring the College's integrity. These responsibilities and associated procedures are fully defined and articulated in the Southern State Community College Board of Trustee Policy Manual.

2.C.1.Deliberations Reflect Institutional Preservation and Enhancement

The Southern State Board of Trustees generally meets on the second Wednesday of the month and schedules other meetings as necessary. The Board By-Laws indicates, unless otherwise specified, there shall be at least six regular annual meetings of the Board. In addition to the public notice that is disseminated to the surrounding community, a draft agenda is circulated internally among the College community. The meeting agenda is shaped by the President and the Chairman of the Board. The agenda is also informed, in part, through input from the President's executive leadership team. In accordance to the Board's policy on meetings, copies of the agenda are delivered to each board member five days in advance of the meeting. The agenda items are issues and items that reflect guiding principles that honor the representative role that each Trustee has to the community he/she serves, and these items convey a commitment to the mission strategic vision of the institution. A sampling of Board minutesreflects a commitment to institutional preservation and enhancement.

2.C.2. Board Deliberations Reflect Consideration for Internal and External Constituencies

A vital and consistent component of every Board agenda is the President's Report. This report includes the monthly activities and significant events, issues, and opportunities from the President's perspective as well as contributions from respective areas of the College. During the meeting, the Board consistently entertains any contribution that the President would like to make in addition to the written report. The Board's policy on meetings defines, among other things, the rules of order and

public participation. Anyone wishing to address the Board during a public meeting must request permission from the chair or the secretary of the Board at least one week prior to a Board meeting. In addition to the public posting of Board Meeting minutes on the College's website, the President also follows-up with the internal community a brief, yet informative email recap of the Board's activity and meeting detail.

2.C.3. Board Independence from Undue Influence

As described in Core Component 2.A. the Southern State Board of Trustees has implemented formal policies and practices to preserve its independence from undue influence of donors, elected officials, ownership interests, and other external parties. The Board of Trustees Policy Manual outlines that each Member of the Board shall have a duty to reveal to the Board any interest, whether economic or otherwise, that he has in a matter that comes before the Board. Members who have such an interest shall not participate in discussions concerning the matter and shall recuse themselves from any action concerning the matter. Members who have such an interest shall not be counted for purposes of determining a quorum.

The policy resolutions adopted by the Board of Trustees, include those relating to ethics. The Southern State Community College Board of Trustees Ethics policy is to carry out its mission, in accordance with the strictest ethical guidelines and to ensure that members and employees conduct themselves in a manner that fosters public confidence in the integrity of the Southern State Community College Board of Trustees, its processes, and its accomplishments. The General Standards of Ethical Conduct requires that the institution's Board of Trustees members and employees must at all times, abide by protections to the public embodied in Ohio's ethics laws and as interpreted by the Ohio Ethics Commission and Ohio courts. The College provides Board members with a copy of these laws and requires a signed acknowledgement of receipt. Members and employees must conduct themselves in a manner that avoids favoritism, bias, and the appearance of impropriety. The Board of Trustees follow the American Association of Community College Trustees, Standards of Good Practices and are members in Good Standing.

2.C.4. Delegation of Day-to-Day Administration

Day-to-day management of the institution is delegated to the administration and academic matters are entrusted to the faculty. The Policy Manual clearly assigns the President with the responsibility and authority to provide professional leadership and administrative direction for the various operations and personnel groups that make up the College. The President is responsible for making personnel decisions including hiring and firing and setting the compensation for College personnel.

The Faculty Senate serves as the faculty representative body and governing assembly for matters related to the College's academic programming, curriculum, educational guidelines, academic policies and regulations, and overall student success. The Faculty Senate also makes recommendation so the College administration regarding and related to academic matters and represents the general welfare of the faculty.

In similar context, the Southern State Education Association (SSEA), in Article 15.03 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement, directs that the College shall establish committees on curriculum, the College calendar, academic policies and procedures, academic assessment, and employee

development, and may, from time to time, establish faculty and administrator search committees and other committees. Employees are offered the opportunity to be members of such committees, and employees are expected to participate in and devote reasonable time and effort to committee work, as required by Article VII, Section 7.053 of the SSEA Collective Bargaining Agreement. Such committees make recommendations to the College concerning matters considered. The College is expected to receive and consider any such recommendations.

Sources

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- President_BoT_Policy Manual
- President_BoT_Policy on Meetings
- President_BoT_Pres Report_August 2015
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- SSEA_Collective Bargaining Agreement Article 15.03
- SSEA_Collective Bargaining Agreement Article 7.053

2.D - Core Component 2.D

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

Argument

Southern State Community College is a community dedicated to intellectual engagement. Campuses consist of students, faculty, and staff from a variety of backgrounds and cultures. In the course of working, studying, and teaching, each community member brings 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. Intellectual and social development and daily educational interactions, whether co-curricular or classroom related, are greatly enriched by acceptance of one another as members of the community.

Through valuing individual diversity and the diversity of others, the College community seeks to foster a sense of shared experience and commit to making Southern State intellectually inviting for all. The Policy and Information Manual formally acknowledges this position in its Statement Asserting Respect for Human Diversity. Further, within the College's core learning outcomes, a similar commitment is reflected in the College's expectation of students. In demonstrating the ability to interact in diverse environments, there exists the expectation that students can generally demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between individuals and of ethical values and use that in decision making.

Functionally, freedom of expression is expressed in the form of support for diverse programming. For example, theatrical performances in the Edward K. Daniels auditorium are often reflective of the College's value for social advancement. The rotation schedule, according to the theatre faculty, includes "crowd pleasers" and scripts that are risky in terms of broad social acceptance and will make the audience "think." Similarly, Southern State supports art exhibitions, guest speakers, and musical performances and generally opens such venues up free of charge to students and community guests.

The College's Academic Freedom policy is designed to safeguard freedom of rights and ensure that knowledge is discovered, acquired, and applied responsibly. The policy clearly states an expectation that administrators will promote academic freedom while also ensuring that members of the academic community fulfill their responsibilities as educators. Academic freedom and responsibility are inseparable and are shared by all members of the academic community. This is evidenced by meeting responsibilities, preparing for and meeting obligations, conferring with student advisees, evaluating fairly, reporting student achievement, and participating in the planning for events or activities that contribute to student growth and development.

Institutionally, the College recognizes the constitutional guarantees of the right of free speech and peaceful assembly. The facility use policy clearly states that the purpose of the policy is to promote the free exchange of ideas and the safe and efficient operation of the College. The College also recognizes the principle of academic freedom which permits freedom of inquiry and discussion and the right to make constructive criticism. The College is equally cognizant of the necessity of maintaining justice, law and order on the campuses of the College and preventing the disruption of the

educational functions of the College. As such, the College's position has been formalized through the Policy and Information Manual's section 5.14 | Maintenance of Law and Order.

Students also contribute in this regard. Central to the mission of Southern State is a commitment to education that promotes academic excellence, personal and professional growth, free and unbiased thought and expression, tolerance, a strong sense of social responsibility, civility, and a lasting, life-long appreciation of learning. Students are the lifeblood of such a community and hold rights of participation in the academic community. Consequently, they are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that supports the academic atmosphere of the College, that respects the rights of other students and employees of the College, and that follows the policies and procedures of the College as outlined in the college catalog. The Student Code of Conduct explicitly states the expected behavior of all Southern State students. Enforcement of this code rests with the Vice President of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management as does the disciplinary appeal procedure.

The pursuit of truth in teaching and learning is further supported structurally within the organization through a generous tuition reimbursement program, investment in robust scholarly resources, committed funding for professional development, monitoring of student learning, curriculum review, and program review.

Sources

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- Human Resources_Tuition Reimbursement Program
- Student Affairs_Student Code of Conduct

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.

Argument

Southern State is committed to providing educational opportunities that promote academic, professional, and personal growth for faculty, staff, and students. To these ends, all members of the College are expected to uphold the highest academic and ethical standards. Policies and procedures relevant to responsible acquisition, discovery, and application of knowledge are firmly established and enforced. Further, the College actively invests in resources aimed at supporting services that promote academic integrity.

2.E.1. Oversight and Support to Ensure Integrity of Research and Scholarly Practice

As a community college, emphasis on teaching and learning often trumps research driven agendas among faculty. However, this is not to suggest that research and scholarly practice are absent within the institution but rather that comprehensive services for such practice are often borrowed from partner colleges as necessary. Such activity is coordinated in conjunction with the Vice President of Academic Affairs, a position that, by nature, requires working knowledge of acceptable research practice. Depending on the depth of the research, a determination is made by the Vice President of Academic Affairs as to whether the project warrants review by an Institutional Review Board. In such instances, agreements with partner institutions are called upon to ensure that such research is conducted responsibly and with integrity. Shawnee State University is among several institutions in close proximity and is the recognized resource for such services.

2.E.2. Student Guidance in the Ethical Use of Information

Among the core learning outcomes expected of all Southern State students is the the expectation that they have the ability to access and manage reliable information effectively and responsibly. In addition to demonstrate a basic working knowledge of computers and the ability to use the internet and libraries to conduct research, they are also expected to be familiar with databases relevant to their academic majors. This is embedded in the curriculum and delivered through College Success (PSYC 1108) and English Composition II (ENGL 1102). Additionally, several technical programs have also indicated that they include relevant assignments and they use specific courses to report on this outcome.

Library leadership and staff take an active role in educating and supporting students in their informational literacy journey. It is quite common for library personnel to visit classrooms upon invitation to offer students an overview of research techniques. Additionally, Library staff have created and continue to create user-friendly resource guides that conveniently summarizes topical books, online resources, and databases, it offers tips on evaluating resources, and guides students

through relevant citation processes. These guides are created upon request of faculty or based on student demand. A comprehensive research guide is available to students online which supports scholarly practice.

Within the Student Success Center, tutoring is an integral part of student support and guidance. The Center is committed to providing free, quality tutoring assistance and resources necessary to ensure the academic success of all students by offering one-on-one mentoring, drop-in labs and online services on all campuses. Assistance in all aspects of a student's academic experience, including research, is available.

2.E.3. Policies on Academic Honesty and Integrity

For students, academic honesty and integrity are introduced at the point of orientation and repeated numerous times thereafter on course syllabi. The College's Statement of Academic Honesty and subsequent sections related to plagiarism and academic misconduct clearly articulate related definitions, actions that constitute misconduct, and sanctions for stated misconduct and are included in the College catalog and website.

Southern State's expectations for core learning include the responsible use of knowledge. To provide direction for students, faculty, and staff, the College publishes a policy for use of computer resources. The general statement of responsible computer usage states that the Southern State computing resources are intended for college-related purposes, and specifies the direct and indirect support of instruction for faculty, administrative functions, and the free exchange of ideas among the College community and between the College and external communities. The policy states that the rights of academic freedom and freedom of expression apply to the use of our computing resources, including responsibilities and limitations associated with those rights and their legal and ethical behavior. The policy applies to all users of the College's computing resources, whether affiliated with the College or not and to all uses of the College's computing resources, whether on campus or at an external location.

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- Academic Affairs_Library_Research Guide
- Academic Affairs_Library_Resource Guides List
- Academic Affairs_Statement of Academic Honesty
- Academic Affairs_Syllabi_ENGL 1102 English Comp II
- Academic Affairs_Syllabi_PSYC 1108 College Success
- Student Affairs_Student Success Center_Organization

2.S - Criterion 2 - Summary

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

Summary

Integrity is the pillar upon which all else rests; without integrity there is no value. The evidence presented in Criterion 2 affirms Southern State's commitment to ethical and responsible behavior and operations across the institution. Policies and procedures reflect these values and, in areas where formal policies don't exist, practice favors operational and behavioral integrity.

Among financial, academic, personnel, and auxiliary functions, the College adheres to fair and ethical policies and processes that direct operations. Widely cited throughout the Criterion, the Policy and Information Manual and the Board of Trustee Policy Manual, largely guide protocol and clearly define what is acceptable. Evidence of the College's reliance on standards and benchmarks among externally recognized and reputable entities further demonstrates this commitment to operating with integrity in all endeavors.

The sound policies and practices established by the College's highest level of authority, the Board of Trustees, provide a solid foundation upon which all other practice flows. Their deliberations reflect a spirit of institutional advancement and genuine concern for the constituencies served by the College. Day-to-day administration is delegated appropriately and faculty are rightly charged with leading academic matters. Together, these groups coordinate, execute, and lead in a manner that supports student success and naturally promotes institutional advancement. Such leadership and operational integrity lends itself to public self-presentation that is bold, assured and transparent.

Recognizing its role in a larger society as an institution of higher learning, the College strives to maintain an environment dedicated to intellectual engagement. Academic freedom is as much about responsibility as it is freedom and the College supports responsible acquisition, discovery, and application of knowledge by its faculty, students, and staff. This is evidenced by the priority placed on these concepts within the College's Core Learning Outcomes as well as the depth and punitive consequences defined in the College's Statement of Academic Honesty.

In the spirit of advancement and continuous improvement, the College recognizes that there are always open opportunities. Among the policies, processes, and practices that speak to integrity, the College acknowledges that the effectively managing the volume of information is among the most significant challenges. As the institution matures, the complexity of operations increases. This heightens the need for indexing, searching, and retrieval mechanisms, which support information accuracy and accessibility. This is particularly relevant for the maintenance of the College's most critical publications and the web.

Sources

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- Human Resources_Policy and Information Manual
- President_BoT_Policy Manual

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).

Argument

3.A.1. Course/Program Current and Appropriate Performance Requirements

Assuring quality, relevancy, and currency of programs and courses is an ongoing process at Southern State. All degree programs receive regular feedback through both formal and informal advisory groups. Several programs have and follow third party accreditation standards unique to their professions, while others follow profession specific standards. A complete listing of programs holding third party accreditation can be found in the 2015-2016 College Catalog (pg. 6). Prior to the bi-annual publication of the catalog, each department reviews courses for currency and accuracy. Any curriculum changes which have been completed in the subsequent years are updated in the published catalog; however, the web content is updated on a continual basis to ensure the most accurate information is available. Additionally, a program review process is utilized to determine current program status and to document suggested changes or needs, and to recommend changes to ensure programs are current and relevant to the region.

Southern State employs measures to assure the curriculum is at an appropriate college level. One example is the program advisory committees. These committees consist of professionals in the respective field providing input on program needs, design, and direction. Additionally, several programs have third party accreditation or professional standards which are incorporated into the curriculum. Another measure of student performance at the appropriate level are the student passage rates on third party, nationally normed tests. Lastly, the program review process is conducted at a minimum of every three years on all programs to ensure continued relevancy and currency.

Southern State adheres to the Ohio Department of Higher Education Ohio Transfer Module (OTM) and Transfer Assurance Guides (TAG), which are statewide policies allowing for the guaranteed transfer of over 100 courses to other public institutions. OTM and TAG courses are vetted by statewide faculty panels to ensure course outcomes are consistent and that the rigor of the course is adequate for the number of credit hours assigned. All public institutions in Ohio abide by the state mandated definition of a credit hour as outlined in the Program Approval Manual. Additionally,

Southern State has multiple programmatic articulation and transfer agreements with both public and private institutions throughout the state and across the country. These agreements are updated on a continual basis. Since the College transitioned to semesters in 2012, these agreements continue to be under review.

3.A.2. Differentiation of Student Learning Goals

Southern State offers undergraduate education at the Associate Degree level. The College awards Associate of Applied Science, Associate of Applied Business, Associate of Arts, Associate of Science, Associate of Technical Studies, and Certificates. The requirements to complete each degree and certificate are outlined in the 2015-2016 catalog and on the web (Academic Affairs_Programs_Associate Degree Programs Web; Academic Affairs_Programs_Certificate Programs Web). The specific completion requirements for each program are outlined on the individual program pages within the catalog and on the College's website. Students are informed of the requirements of the respective degrees, specifically the general description of the program and the required credit hours needed to earn the degree or certificate. Learning goals for programs are part of the assessment process and are incorporated into program assessment plans. Additionally, each syllabus contains the specific student learning outcomes. The following syllabi show examples of the student learning outcomes for specific courses (Academic Affairs_Syllabi_BADM 2251 Business Law I;Academic Affairs_Syllabi_ENGL 1102 English Comp II).

3.A.3. Consistency in Learning Across Delivery Modes

Southern State utilizes a standard course syllabus template to assure consistency in stating course objectives, methodology, evaluation, sample course outline, and communication of course and college information. Each program and department utilizes this template to develop individual course syllabi. All full-time and adjunct faculty are provided electronic access to course syllabi documents and are provided hard copies of their course if needed.

Sample Syllabus from general education

Sample Syllabus from technical program

Online and additional location courses and instructors must meet the same requirements as face to face courses as outlined in the individual course syllabi. Additionally, the College offers hybrid and technology supplemented courses. Regardless of delivery method, there are inherent challenges in the creation and delivery of the respective curriculum. To address some of these challenges, the College provides the following resources and guidance:

Common Template for Online and Hybrid courses- A common template for online and hybrid courses was agreed upon in the collective bargaining agreement. The template serves as a common starting page for faculty and students. Within this template faculty may alter the availability of tools needed for their particular course. The common template allows students to have a familiar environment regardless of the online or hybrid course they may be attempting.

Online learning and online success workshops- The College provides information to students about the rigor of online learning, the technology requirements, and a quiz to determine their readiness for online courses. Additionally, the College offers online success workshops to provide students with an opportunity to utilize the Blackboard LMS and view the common template so students are more familiar and confident with their ability to successfully complete an online course.

Online Instructor Requirements- To address issues of completion in online courses, faculty members have the ability to provide additional information about their course through a webpage. Students wishing to take an online course may access information about the course on this page prior to registration. The goal is to help students understand what they will need before they attempt an online course.

Faculty Responsibilities for Online and Hybrid courses- Governance of faculty responsibilities for online and hybrid courses is outlined in the faculty contract in Article 7.15-7.22. Included in this section is how courses will be developed, how faculty will be compensated, how the College will support faculty, what software and hardware may be used, and how faculty will communicate with students.

Dual credit courses offered through College Credit Plus must adhere to state law and corresponding rules as developed by the Ohio Department of Higher Education.

Sources

- Academic Affairs_Assessment_Assessment Plan Respiratory
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- Academic Affairs_Committees_Advisory Committee_Folder Contents
- Academic Affairs_Nursing_PN NCLEX Pass Rate
- Academic Affairs_Online_About Online Learning
- Academic Affairs_Online_Online Instructor Requirements
- Academic Affairs_Program Review_2014-2016 Review Cycle
- Academic Affairs_Programs_Associate Degree Programs Web
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- Ohio Board of Regents_Academic Program Review Guidelines (page number 53)
- Ohio Revised Code_3333-1-65.1 to 3333-1-65.10
- SSEA_Collective Bargaining Agreement Article 7.164
- SSEA_Collective Bargaining Agreement Articles 7.15-7.22

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.

Argument

3.B.1. General Education Programming Appropriate to Mission, Education Offerings and Institution Level

Southern State's general education program centers on core learning outcomes designed to provide both personal and professional awareness and success. Since both technical and transfer liberal arts degrees are offered, the general education requirements for each program differ.

The Associate of Arts and the Associate of Science provide two years of formal education which are designed to be the base from which students may pursue a baccalaureate program. A requirement of each degree is the completion of the Transfer Module in accordance with the Ohio Department of Higher Education. The Transfer Module consists of a specific subset or the entire set of a college or university's general education requirements in English composition, mathematics, humanities, fine arts, social science, behavioral science, physical science, natural science, and interdisciplinary course work. To complete either the Associate of Science or Associate of Arts, students must have completed 36 semester credit hours in the Transfer Module, in addition to a minimum of an additional 24 hours at the 1100 level or higher.

Associate degrees in technical programs (Applied Business, Applied Science, and Technical Studies) are required by the Ohio Department of Higher Education to have a minimum of 30 general education or applied general education hours, which are courses deemed necessary for a foundation in the profession. Within these 30 hours, 15 hours must be non-technical as prescribed the Ohio Department of Higher Education. Additionally, the Ohio Department of Higher Education requires the following: 3 hours of English, 3 hours of mathematics, and at least six semester hours from two of the following three categories, arts and humanities, social and behavioral sciences, and natural science.

3.B.2. General Education Learning Outcome Framework

As part of Southern State's last Higher Learning Commission reaccreditation visit, the College was challenged to develop, share, and assess the core learning outcomes for all students. Following this visit, the College worked to revise and update a set of core learning outcomes. The core outcomes update was completed in 2010. The core learning outcomes of communicating clearly, solving problems, thinking critically, interacting in diverse environments, and using information effectively are taught and applied in varying degrees throughout the general education courses and are also reinforced across the technical programs. Additionally, the state of Ohio through the Ohio Department of Higher Education has established a set of courses through the Ohio Transfer Module, which are foundational for general education for all undergraduate degrees.

The core learning outcomes are assessed within multiple programs and disciplines . Each outcome is assessed using different evaluation tools based on the assessment plan of the discipline assigned the core learning outcome. In addition to the discipline(s) assigned the outcome, other disciplines and programs have identified core learning outcomes in their assessment plans as well. The assessment plans outline the outcomes, the course(s) used to assess the outcomes, the assessment tool, the evaluation method, the criteria, and the timeline for the assessment. Once the assessments are complete, a report is developed and provided to faculty for review. In addition to this direct assessment, the College utilizes the graduate survey to assess the core learning outcomes. All graduates receive the survey and are asked to rank their experience in various categories related to the five core areas. As an example, 97% (somewhat and very much) of students responded that college courses helped with understanding of ethical issues and decision making. Additionally, 90% (somewhat and very much) responded their ability to utilize computer software was increased as a result of college work.

3.B.3. Collecting, Analyzing, and Communicating Information, Mastering Inquiry, Adaptability Skills Embedded Across Programs

Beyond the inclusion of the Colleges core learning outcomes across the programs, Southern State Community College has many programs and departments in which students routinely engage in collecting, analyzing, and communication information, mastering inquiry, and adapting to changing environments. In the sciences students engage in numerous activities involving collecting, analyzing and communicating information, particularly in lab based courses. However, the sciences are not the only area for collecting, analyzing, and communicating information or mastering modes of inquiry or creative work. Other programs include activities within the curriculum which provide for these opportunities. Another example of this would be the use of human patient simulators in the health science programs. Students have the ability to work with these high and medium fidelity mannequins while practicing work skills and reviewing, analyzing, reporting and determining appropriate courses of action for the patient.

To assist students in the development of skills for changing environments the College has taken a multifaceted approach. Over the last three years, the College has been awarded a series of grants to improve and increase student participation in internships and co-ops. The Ohio Means Internships and Co-ops (OMIC) grants allow businesses to hire students and have half of the students' salary covered by the grant. Through this program students have the opportunity to gain valuable work experience while still in college, and better prepare themselves for employment upon graduation. In fact, students who participate in the program are very likely to be hired by the employer where they completed the internship or co-op. Additionally, the employers benefit from this program, as they have the opportunity to evaluate potential employees over an extended period of time with minimal fiscal investment. Likewise the College derives benefit from the partnerships with the employers through feedback on curriculum changes, student outcomes, and greater business engagement.

A second avenue the College is pursuing to develop skills for a changing environment is to infuse programs with professionalism skills. This change to programs is a direct result of feedback from Advisory Board members and from regional employers. To address this issue the computer science department is piloting a Professionalism course, which focuses on the skills and attributes regional employers desire while providing students with an advantage in the job market. In addition to this course, the College through the OMIC grant, will be visiting colleagues in Georgia to study the Work Ethics program embedded in the technical college system. The Work Ethics program consists of ten areas of emphasis (appearance, attendance, attitude, character, communication, cooperation, organizational skills, productivity, respect, and teamwork) which are vital for successful employment. The goal is to incorporate the Work Ethics curriculum throughout Southern State's technical curriculum.

Lastly, as many jobs are moving towards specialized credentials, Southern State has started offering specialized certificates in many areas. Examples of these certifications include Microsoft Office certification in the Office Information Technology program or CompTia A+ in the Computer Science program. Other programs are in the process of determining how best to meet the growing demand of short-term, specialized certifications.

3.B.4. Recognition of Human and Cultural Diversity

Southern State is committed to diversity as previously outlined in Criterion 1.C.
The College's Statement Asserting Respect for Human Diversity states "Through valuing our own diversity and the diversity of others, we seek to learn from one another, foster a sense of shared experience, and commit to making the College the intellectual home for us all." Southern State recognizes that "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."

Southern State supports diversity in many ways. Some examples would be the opportunity for international travel, participation in Perkins speaker series, and others outlined below.

Adult Opportunity Center

The Adult Opportunity Center (AOC) provides Adult Basic and Literacy Education (ABLE) classes on each campus and several off-campus locations. The program is offered free to any individual who is at least 16 years of age. Other services provided by the AOC include, adult literacy; college refresher/readiness courses; GED preparation; nursing program preparation; reading, writing, and math improvement; and workforce education. According to Census data, the service area for the College is below the state average (82% vs. 89%) for individuals over age 25 with a high school diploma or equivalent. Therefore, without access to such support and developmental services many individuals would never have the opportunity to move forward educationally.

Carl Perkins

Through Carl D. Perkins Grant the College has brought in various speakers to address human and cultural issues. Among the topics presented are the following: .

- Gary Bracken who authored the *Orange Duffle Bag* spoke about his non-traditional upbringing, and overcoming physical, emotional and spiritual abuse, and overcoming obstacles to achieve personal and academic success.
- Dr. John Roush and Dr. Shane Shope conducted an exercise for faculty and staff on asset

mapping,

- Dr. Ryan McCall, Vice President of Southern State Community College, talked to faculty, staff and students about his personal upbringing and how being a first-generation student had changed his family tree.
- The College also sponsored a speaker who addressed generational poverty based on the work conducted by Ruby Payne.

World Religion and Cultures:

To expand students' understanding of other religions the World Philosophy instructor invited a local imam to present on "Understanding Islam". The presentation was open to the student body and staff. Due to the interest, the instructor looked to arrange for a local rabbi to share Jewish cultural ideologies with the Spring philosophy class. Additionally, another instructor invited a practicing Buddhist to explain foundational beliefs and daily practices.

Steve Free, a member of the Scioto Shawnee tribe and a recording artist, presented a free concert for SSCC and general public. The audience was treated to various native American songs and educated on the significance of their lyrics and musical styles to the Shawnee.

The College, on the Mt. Orab campus, hosted a Mende (Sierra Leone) Tribal Masks Exhibit. The Mende tribe women (the Sande Society) use the bundu mask, a black helmet style, to instruct young girls in the different roles of the adult tribe. As part of their initiation, the young women learn of the magic and power, or *hale*, that reside in each mask. The mask exhibit showcased five bundu masks.

Disability Services

Southern State is committed to assuring equal treatment for persons with disabilities. The College recognizes the diversity of our students with disabilities and ensures that they are treated equally and with respect in terms of both opportunity and participation. Southern State takes pride in a diverse student population. The disability services' mission is to encourage self-advocacy and development of independent skills by disabled students. Additionally, all course syllabi are required to have a disability services statement and contact information for the Disability Services office.

Courses and Programs

Additionally, Southern State offers HSSR 1140 Racial and Cultural Diversity in the Helping Professions as part of the Human and Social Services program and SOCI 1107 Introduction to Diversity, which can be utilized to satisfy the Ohio Transfer Module and the general education distribution requirements for the Associate of Arts and Associate of Science degrees. Additionally, the College offers SOCI1121 Cultural Geography which surveys the history of culture and ethnicity throughout the world

3.B.5. Contributions to Scholarship, Creative Work, and Discovery Appropriate to Programs and Mission

As a teaching institution, Southern State faculty are not required to participate in research, but there are some instances where faculty are involved in these endeavors. Dr. Donald Storer, for example, collaborates with various archeologists from around the country including University of South Florida, Mt. Vernon (George Washington's home), and Montpelier (James Madison's home) to assist in soil analysis for historical interpretation and renovation purposes. Dr. Storer obtains soil samples from the partners and has students in his chemistry classes assist with analyzing and preparing reports

back to the archeologists. Additionally, students who have participated in this work have been provided with the opportunity to present their findings at national scientific meetings around the country.

Another example of contribution to creative work would be the Southern State Theatre. The Theatre, under the direction of Associate Faculty member Rainee Angles, has three productions per year involving students, staff, faculty, and community members. The Theatre has performed various plays and musicals over the last ten years including, Fiddler on the Roof, The Laramie Project, The Complete Works of William Shakespeare, Abridged, Our Town, and Almost Maine among others.

Assistant Professor Jeffrey Wallace leads the annual Writing Competition. Students may submit original works of poetry and fiction. Student works are judged by faculty members and monetary awards are provided for winners in each category.

Sources

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- Academic Affairs_Student Project_CHEM Project Example
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- Student Affairs_Disability Services Webpage
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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.

Argument

3.C.1. Faculty Resources Sufficient for Quality Academic Delivery, Oversight, and Assessment

Southern State employs adequate numbers of both full-time faculty and adjunct faculty. The student to faculty ratio is 18:1 based on the IPEDS Fall 2014-15. This low ratio provides opportunities for faculty to develop relationships with their students. Faculty are required to follow certain expectations as outlined in the collective bargaining agreement (Article 7.0-7.08 and 7.11-7.13; Article 9) and in the Policy Information Manual. These expectations outline faculty responsibilities for teaching, evaluation and professional development, involvement in their academic programs, and involvement in the College and community. Adjunct faculty may refer to the Adjunct faculty handbook to understand what is expected of them and how to conduct their courses.

Faculty have oversight for the curriculum of their respective programs, and changes to the curriculum are sent through the Curriculum Committee for approval. Faculty also serve on other committees, such as Program Review Committee and Adjunct Faculty Committee as part of this curriculum oversight process.

The Curriculum Committee is charged with maintaining and monitoring Southern State's curriculum for credit classes and programs. The Program Review Committee monitors programs and disciplines and evaluates the effectiveness of programs based on factors such as enrollment and student success. The Adjunct Faculty Committee provides a venue for adjuncts, full-time faculty, and administrators to support adjunct faculty and enhance their preparedness and classroom management skills.

Expectations for students are determined and expressed in various manners. Course syllabi (Academic Affairs_Syllabi_ENGL 1101 English Comp I; Academic Affairs_Syllabi_ENGL 1102 English Comp II; Academic Affairs_Syllabi_MATH 1117 Elementary Algebra) articulate instructor expectations for a course. Rubrics are another way Southern State communicates expectations to

students.

An ongoing assessment process is in place which includes the utilization of a SharePoint site where all assessment plans, timelines, and reports are stored and easily accessible. Faculty assessment workshops (Fall 2015) (Update 2006)are held to provide faculty time to focus on their assessment plans and reports. These workshops are coordinated by the Assessment Coordinator, a faculty member provided with a supplemental contract. The College recognizes the need to provide for more transparency in the assessment process. To ensure greater transparency of assessment the College will be reestablishing the assessment website that was created following the previous Higher Learning Commission (HLC) visit. It will be open to the public and will contain the assessment plans, outcomes, and interventions for both programs and the core competencies. The website was taken down due to multiple transition points at the college, including transition from quarters to semesters and reduction of program credit hours to below 65, both mandated by the Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE), and a complete redesign of the College's website. The updated website will be made available to the public by June 1, 2016.

3.C.2. Faculty Credentialing Across the Institution

Southern State follows the established guidelines of the HLC and the ODHE for faculty credentials. General education courses require a master's degree, or at least a master's degree and 18 coherent graduate hours in the discipline. In some instances the College utilizes the tested experience criteria to qualify faculty to teach general education courses. Those faculty teaching in developmental courses may have only a bachelor's degree as these courses are not college level. Some departments have created a rubric for determining the requirements, above those of HLC and ODHE, to teach within the discipline (math department rubric).

In the technical programs faculty typically hold a bachelor's degree. In certain programs there are no corresponding bachelor degrees in the field therefore, certifications or tested/work experience is acceptable (HVAC, Medical Assisting). Even in these instances, faculty are encouraged to earn a bachelor's degree.

The Vice President of Academic Affairs, Dean of Instructional Operations, Dean of Technical Studies, Dean of Core Studies, division coordinators, and program directors are responsible for validating the credentials of faculty. All faculty, both full-time and part-time, including those who teach in the College Credit Plus have the required credentials, or in rare cases they are granted a tested experience exception.

3.C.3. Policy and Procedures for Faculty Evaluation

Full-time faculty members undergo annual evaluations with their division dean. Review of previous year performance, goals, and objectives along with future expectations are discussed throughout the year. The faculty evaluation process is outlined in the collective bargaining agreement in Article IX. A newly developed student evaluation of full-time faculty will be utilized in Fall of 2015. The goal is to have this evaluation tool online and thereby provide opportunities for faculty to utilize the results for both formative and summative purposes.

Adjunct faculty evaluations by the students are conducted during the 14th week of each semester. After they are tallied by support staff, they are reviewed by the deans and a copy sent to the faculty member. This is one method used to determine professional development or other supportive needs. Additionally, state law now requires all adjunct faculty teaching in the College Credit Plus program are subject to a classroom observation to ensure college material, format, and rigor are being utilized.

3.C.4. Established Processes and Resources to Ensure Instructional Relevancy and for Faculty Professional Development

Faculty are provided a budget to attend conferences and seminars for the purpose of professional development and making presentations at professional conferences. Tuition reimbursement is provided for further education to encourage lifelong learning. Faculty are also encouraged to obtain professional memberships in their field of expertise as well as any other support needed to stay in tune with current trends. Library resources are also easily accessible, including access to electronic professional journals in all relevant fields to ensure latest trends are available. Additionally, the library conducts a workshop during opening week to provide faculty with updates on available new resources.

Three times per year, the Adjunct Faculty Committee hosts an Adjunct Faculty Orientation & Development event in an effort to orient new adjunct and full-time faculty as well as provide professional development opportunities. Faculty Division Coordinators, seasoned adjunct faculty, and administrators present workshops covering areas such as policy/procedural changes, new technological advancements, and relevant instructional topics. In an effort to keep them informed, all adjuncts are required to attend at least one event per year.

3.C.5. Instructor Accessibility for Student Inquiry

Southern State faculty are committed to provide a learner-focused experience to students. As such, they avail themselves to assist students as needed. Regular faculty office hours are posted at the beginning of the term on each campus. Instructors are also accessible to students prior to or immediately following class, via email, and phone. Per the collective bargaining agreement faculty are to provide sufficient office hours to meet with students, and for online courses there is a defined timeframe to ensure timely faculty response to student inquiries or concerns, via phone, email, or communication tools within the learning management software.

3.C.6. Support Staff Appropriately Qualified, Trained, and Supported in Professional Development

Every position at Southern State has a job description (administrative sample)on file in the human resources office. Each job description states the duties, responsibilities, and qualifications for the position. Qualifications and duties vary depending on department and individual position. All staff positions are posted on the employment page on the Southern State website and applications must be completed online. Screening of the application occurs to ensure that only qualified applicants are interviewed. A hiring committee reviews qualified candidates, conducts interviews, and makes a selection for hiring suggestion.

Both faculty and staff have opportunities for professional development. Attendance at conferences and professional meetings is encouraged for professional development. Employees must complete the professional meeting request form and receive approval to attend a meeting. Additionally, the Southern State Professional Development and Strategic Involvement Process provides an annual performance evaluation to both enhance the employee's development and contribute toward the College's annual strategic goals.

Tuition waiver for all employees is available within certain requirements listed in the Policy and Information Manual.

Each fiscal year the College budgets $25,000 for staff and $60,000 for faculty tuition reimbursement

for classes taken at regionally accredited institutions related to improving their job-related skills. The reimbursement must be approved in advance and each employee is limited to $5,000 of tuition reimbursement per year. Application of the tuition reimbursement is on the College website.

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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.

Argument

3.D.1. Student Support Services Suited to the Needs of Students

In an effort to improve the overall retention, graduation, and transfer rates at Southern State, the institution has implemented student support practices designed to improve student retention and degree completion. To streamline student services and focus on retention and completion initiatives, student support services were reorganized in 2013. The new Student Success Center encompasses four departments including Tutoring, Retention, Advising, and Career and Counseling Services. The main goal of the Center is to track students from the start of their academic career to the finish. Support services provided by this Center seek to address the needs of the general student population, particularly those who are academically under-prepared students, adult learners, and first generation college students.

Tutoring

Structure and ITTPC Certification

In September 2010, the Tutoring Center was restructured to better serve the academic needs of those students seeking additional help. As part of this restructuring, two full-time administrative positions and two part-time associate tutor positions were added, as well as a Mentor Tutor. These additions provide better monitoring of services and improve inter-campus communications. The Tutoring website includes online forms and a Tutor Directory of all lab schedules and tutors available for one-on-one sessions.

Established development practices guide the department in delivering quality services to students, particularly students with disabilities and nontraditional learners. The College Reading and Learning Association recently certified the Center for Levels I, II, and III by the International Tutor Training Program Certification (ITTPC). All tutors must complete level I training to tutor. Upon completion of each level of training, tutors receive certificates for Level I Certified Tutor, Level II Advance Tutor and Level III, Master Tutor.

In 2014, the part–time positions were replaced by one full-time Mentor Tutor responsible for scheduling and training tutors according to ITTPC certification requirements.

Tutoring Services

The Southern State Tutoring Center is committed to providing free, quality tutoring assistance and resources necessary to ensure the academic success of all students. The Tutoring Center offers one-on-one mentoring, open labs, and e-tutoring/online services at all campuses. Web tutorials, exploration of online tutoring platforms, and tutor training workshops and orientations are ongoing projects.

The Tutoring Center sponsors various workshops, which are routinely assessed. Among the workshops include:

- pre-term workshops for *Computer Fundamentals* (Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint)
- *Online Success* (Blackboard 9)
- *Southern State Web Tutorials* to ensure that students are logged into student portals and know how to utilize them.
- *ACCUPLACER* Test Prep for students desiring to refresh their skill prior to placement in math or English courses.

Retention

Coaches, IPAC, and Completion Plans

AmeriCorps Coaches provide in-depth, hands-on guidance and assistance to first-time community college students who require remediation, need assistance in locating and utilizing resources on and off campus, or need help in maintaining academic progress.

Coaches are embedded in the College Success class to distribute the Individual Plan for Academic Completion, a supplemental text created by the Student Success Center Staff to be used as an advising tool and a tool for the coaches to guide students one-on-one with:

o   the selection of career and majors,

o   the identification of risk factors and campus resources to address those risks,

o   discussion points for transfer and financial aid,

o   study skills assistance, and

o   the creation of academic completion plans

Coaches are able to reach out to all full-time, first-year students who are strongly encouraged to take College Success. Students in the College Success course are required to create an individual academic completion plan and meet with the coaches as stipulated in the syllabus.

Monitoring Progress/Intervention

The Early Warning System is a collaborative effort with faculty and staff to identify students throughout the term who have academic or attendance issues and other risk factors, to notify students of academic issues, and to provide options. To ensure that all faculty and staff have a user-friendly

system, the institution has placed the Early Alert form on the Jenzabar portal. Student Success staff provide training and a navigational tool to all employees to ensure that they can access the Early Alert form. Training also includes information on the use of Early Alerts.

Midterm letters are sent to all students earning a D or F in any course and to those who faculty choose to report as "concerning" midterm. The letter, generated by the Student Success Center, identifies the courses and grades submitted by the instructors and offers actions that students should take to improve performance. Contact information for advising is provided.

Advising

The Advising Office provides comprehensive services for students, with the goal of ensuring students have a clear path for their academic and career goals. Some of the services provided include:

- Creation and Maintenance of advising worksheets (Examples: DARS; Student Affairs_Student Success Center_Advising_DAR Human Social Services; Student Affairs_Student Success Center_Advising_DAR Electromechanical Engineering)
- Creation of Academic Probation Plans - Student Success Workshop
- Communication with and monitoring of students on academic warning
- Training in administration of Holland Self-Directed Test
- Use of Intrusive / Proactive advising model

Support from Career & Counseling Services

The Career and Counseling Services department coordinates career and employment services for Southern State students. Students and alumni are provided assistance in clarifying career goals, exploring educational options and acquiring job skills. The career coordinator also assists employers with various objectives, including recruitment.

 Research has proven that the sooner students identify their career and major goals the more likely they are to complete a degree. The College provides students several opportunities to help in career and major selection. One-on-one career counseling services are offered. A number of career assessments are available to help students identify the their career path. All academic advisors and coaches are trained in the administration of the Holland Self-Directed Search test in an effort to reach out to more first-year students and or those students considering a change of major. Career and Major exploration topics are also covered in the College Success class, which is strongly suggested for all first year, full time students.

Career and Counseling services website and Advisor Training Manual

Career services offers assistance and resources in job search skills and job recruitment via one-on-one appointments, workshops, and partnerships with the *Ohio Means Jobs* state employment offices located on or near Southern State campuses and with employers. Job fair information and a job board posting are maintained and updated online.

In addition to career counseling, the College provides one-on-one personal counseling services to students and family members without cost. The counselor serves at all four campus locations. The staff in the Career and Counseling Services continually pursue and maintain professional development, training, and certifications.

3.D.2. Learning Support, Preparatory Instruction, and Processes for Diverse Learner Needs

An area the College recognizes opportunity for continued development, learner support has been identified as a component of the Quality Initiative. Beginning fall 2013 all new college students were strongly encouraged to enroll in a first-year-experience course, College Success. Coverage of Microsoft Office programs, library resources, and work with AmeriCorps coaches to complete an Individual Academic Completion Plan (IPAC) are elements of this course, which are integrated into the syllabus. AmeriCorps coaches have been embedded in many of these first year experience courses to work with the students on career and major decisions, goal setting, identifying barriers to success, study skills, time management, and development of an IPAC.

All new college students take the ACCUPLACER® placement assessment to determine placement in math and English courses, unless they have the requisite ACT scores. The Math & English Placement Guidelines indicate which math and English courses a student begins taking. These guidelines are based on the ACCUPLACER® scores, ACT math and English scores, SAT English scores and high school math course grades. The required scores for remediation free placement have been established statewide by the Ohio Department of Higher Education. While colleges are allowed to decrease the established score, they are not permitted to increase the state established score.

In an effort to help students improve their placement scores, the College offers refresher courses (Success Workshops). These courses are designed to provide students with a brush-up on topics in math and English and to provide greater clarity to how the placement tests are structured. While participation in these courses has been extremely limited at this time, they have yielded very good results with over 70% of students increasing their placement in math and over 80% increasing their placement in English.

Southern State's Adult Opportunity Center (AOC) offers college and college-bound students needing additional assistance in English or math college readiness classes. These classes meet twice a week semester long and are free to those attending. Students may take these classes prior to college enrollment or as they are taking college classes. Students may not be enrolled in a college class of the same subject at the same time.

Southern State operates two testing centers, one on the Central Campus in Hillsboro and one at the College's North Campus in Wilmington. The testing centers serve both for academic placement testing for incoming students and industry certification testing for Southern State students and community/business members. A full listing of testing available can be found on the Testing Center webpage . Additionally, the College offers placement testing in area high schools for those students choosing to participate in the College Credit Plus program.

3.D.3. Academic Advising Suited to Programs and Student Needs

Advising is delivered via the Advising Center under the umbrella of the Student Success Center. In addition to helping the students register for classes relevant to each program, the advisors use an intrusive advising model to help students identify programs suited to their career goals, address academic concerns and other barriers to success, interpret placement scores, refer students to appropriate campus resources, and connect them to faculty advisors assigned to the respective technical program. Based on campus preference, each student is provided with information for his/her advisor upon enrollment to the College. Additionally, within the College Credit Plus regulations, the College is required to provide an advising session for all students participating in the program prior to the no fault drop date.

Extensive work has been completed to provide advising worksheets (Engineering sample) that provide accurate, up-to-date information and talking points for each program to help students chart a

course to completion. Students who wish to pursue a technical program are directed to a faculty member in the respective program to further advise the student.

Eligible students receive accommodations and academic support services. The Disability Coordinator works closely with the student to develop a collaborative individualized plan of accommodations. Faculty, staff, and the Disability Coordinator arrange exam accommodations, assistive technology, alternative media, sign language interpreting/transcribing services, note-taking, and tutoring. Students are encouraged to meet with the Disability Coordinator for general academic coaching, such as test taking skills, and self-advocacy building. In addition, the College provides students the opportunity to meet with a counselor for any mental health issues or problems related to their academics, as well as general career guidance.

3.D.4. Infrastructure and Resources Necessary to Support Effective Teaching and Learning

Technological Infrastructure

The Information Technology (IT) Department maintains the infrastructure of network technology on all four campuses and collaborates with multiple other departments to provide technical support. The IT department also maintains a help desk available 8am – 5pm Monday through Friday to all students, staff, and faculty. The help desk assists with resetting passwords on college accounts, opening tickets for existing IT problems, and answering general computer or technical-related questions.

The technology committee previously met on a monthly basis to discuss any upcoming technological changes for Southern State. With the hiring of an Executive Director of Information Technology, the composition and charge of this committee is currently being reviewed.

Support for training in computer software and operating systems comes through the IT Department, the Library, and a Distance Education Coordinator. All students, faculty and staff are provided with email accounts and other software as needed, based on position. Additionally, each year the Vice President of Academic Affairs provides a list of approved technology, which is supported by the College.

Scientific Laboratories

Biology and Chemistry labs are provided at each of the four Southern State campuses. Each of the labs is well-equipped and the respective departments are provided a rolling lab budget annually to purchase both consumable goods and new equipment as needed. When the need arises for equipment beyond the lab funds available the Dean of Core Studies and the Vice President of Academic Affairs work to provide additional funds in attempt to purchase the needed equipment. The Southern State Foundation and various other grants have also supported the purchase and outfitting of labs with needed equipment and supplies.

The College also operates a greenhouse for the agricultural science program. The greenhouse was renovated in the last five years and incorporates some of the latest technology available. The greenhouse serves as both a learning lab and a resource for students in the agriculture program to grow plants to sell for fundraising purposes throughout the year.

The nursing program has a Human Patient Simulator (HPS) lab available providing a hands-on approach to student learning. The HPS lab is also utilized by the Respiratory Care and Medical Assisting programs. Additionally, the Respiratory Care and Medical Assisting programs have program specific labs to provide hands on learning environments.

The engineering program, which includes the Computer Aided Design (CAD), electrical/electronics, Heating Ventallation and Air Conditioning (HVAC), electromechanical, and aviation maintenance majors, also has labs at the locations classes are held. An example of the equipment in these labs include the CAD program which houses a computer lab and multiple 3D printers. The aviation maintenance program is offered through a partnership with a local career technical center, and students have access to fixed wing and rotary wing aircraft, reciprocating and jet engines, landing gear systems, and other aviation related components.

Library

The Library operates a full service facility at each campus location and supports robust services via the web. Library hours vary among campuses, but on average each is open 56 hours each week to accommodate student need.

The Library provides a variety of print (books and periodicals), audiovisual, and electronic materials. Electronic materials include e-books, streaming videos, and academic databases. The Library provides access to materials through the College's Library catalog Online Public Access Catalog (OPASS), Ohio Library and Information Network (OhioLINK) consortium catalog, and InterLibrary Loan (ILL) services through Online Computer Library Center (OCLC).

The Library collection is continuously developed and revised to support the College curriculum. This collection is also supported through OhioLINK, which is a consortium of 120 college and university libraries in Ohio and the State Library of Ohio. Through OhioLINK, students at Southern State have access to resources and materials across 120 libraries. The OhioLINK consortium provides access to 130 electronic databases available on campus or through remote authentication to students, faculty, and staff. OCLC's ILL services provide resources from around the world.

The Library's special collections include the Appalachian collection at the Brown County campus and the Clinton County collection at North Campus. Central campus houses materials of the collection of the Southern Ohio Genealogical Society.

The Library provides one-on-one assistance to students, faculty, and staff with research and information seeking. Instructors may also request library instruction for their courses. Each library instruction session is tailored for the research and information needs of the students for the class or assignment, as well as general research and library information. Additionally, the Library provides resource information guides for students whether connected to an individual course, subject, or resource

The Library at Fayette Campus is the location of OhioMEANSJobs Fayette County center. OhioMEANSJobs provides assistance in resume writing, job search, and job placement services for the citizens of Fayette County and support for recruitment for local employers. OhioMEANSJobs Fayette County is a part of Fayette County Job and Family Services and the Office of Workforce Development of Ohio. These services are offered on campus through a contractual arrangement between the College and the County.

Clinical Practicum Sites

Programs that include a clinical practicum site as part of their curriculum work with community practicum sites that meet the learning and experience needs of the students. These programs have clinical sites not only in the College's five county service area, but throughout southwestern Ohio. Each clinical site has a signed Memorandum of Understanding outlining the relationship with the

College and expectations by all parties participating in the clinical education component. These agreements are reviewed, adjusted, and renewed on a rolling basis. Each program director reviews the clinical agreements prior to submitting to the Vice President of Academic Affairs for approval. Additionally, agreements are submitted to the Attorney General for the State of Ohio for approval if there are changes requested by the clinical affiliate.

Internships

Many programs provide opportunity for an internship in their curriculum. These internships provide students hands-on experience in a real world environment. Some of the internships are funded with the Ohio Means Internships & Co-ops grant through the Ohio Department of Higher education. This grant provides matching funds for businesses that were willing to take on an intern at their location. Many students who have had success in internships have secured employment at the internship site.

Edward K. Daniels Auditorium

Southern State offers three annual theatrical productions through the Fine Arts department, in addition to offering instrumental and vocal performances by combined college and community members. Most of these productions are hosted in the College's Edward K. Daniels Auditorium located on the Central Campus in Hillsboro. The auditorium has recently undergone renovation, including new seating, sound system, and lighting. The auditorium is also the location for many theatre and music classes, as well as program graduation commencement ceremonies, and All-college meetings.

3.D.5 Student Guidance in the Effective Use of Research and Information Resources

As part of the core learning outcomes all students are expected gain an awareness of utilizing, documenting, and presenting information effectively. This goal is accomplished in many programs and disciplines, as well as specific courses such as the College Success course, which includes library resources and the basics of research, library resources, and information literacy. Southern State also offers English Composition I (ENGL 1101) and English Composition II (ENGL 1102), which address effective research methods and evaluation of information sources through research assignments.

The courses and programs requiring research and information services are effectively supported by the Southern State Library. The Library provides classroom and online information literacy and research instruction in accordance to the Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL) Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education. The library also provides students with targeted online guides for various classes and subjects to better guide them to the information resources they need.

The mission of the Southern State Library is to provide comprehensive and quality resources and services in support of the research, teaching, and learning needs of the College's students, faculty, and staff, as well as the community of Southern Ohio.

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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.

Argument

3.E.1. Co-curricular Programming Suited to Mission and Contribute to Student's Educational Experience

Southern State actively supports co-curricular programs by providing services and events that facilitate the development and implementation of various cultural, educational and social activities and programs to enhance student life. These events enhance the interaction and support from the administration, faculty, staff, alumni, and the community.

The College recognizes the opportunities a Study Abroad program can bring for exposing students to cultural and global perspectives. The College launched its first endeavor in May 2014, with a small group of 12 adventurous travelers. The nine day trip focused on a Theatre and Literature theme, staged with a backdrop of England's London, Oxford, Stratford and Bath. Two faculty members with disciplines in theatre and literature, prepped the travelers in advance for the theatre productions seen and the literary places visited. EF College Study Tours coordinated the logistics and provided professional tour guides to enhance the field experience. Of the twelve travelers, seven had not been out of the country before this trip and 4 had not been out of the state.

The invaluable experience of study abroad continues biannually. The next trip, scheduled for May 2016, is planned for Germany and Switzerland. Academic topics included in this venture are economics, history, music and literature. The College's Foundation is working with potential donors to designate scholarships for travel abroad opportunities.

Several technical programs have associated student groups. As an example, the Respiratory Care Club participates in fund raising activities each year to provide for respiratory care students' expenses not covered by grants, scholarships or other forms of financial aid, and to establish, fund and award a respiratory care scholarship. Additionally, through collegiate athletics, community band and community choir, the College provides access to sporting and cultural events not available otherwise to the area.

3.E.2. The Institution Demonstrates Stated Claims

Southern State's mission is to provide accessible, affordable, high quality education to the service region. To this end the College has opened four campuses in the five county service area with a desire to open a fifth campus, which would provide a full campus for each county. In addition to the campuses, the College has multiple additional locations both within and outside of the service region to provide accessible education to individuals throughout southwestern and south central Ohio.

The College has one of the lowest tuition rates for any non-levy community college in the state of Ohio. The Board of Trustees has been a constant advocate for keeping tuition as low as possible to ensure all students have the ability to afford a college education.

Quality educational programs are maintained by employing highly qualified faculty and by working with employers to make adjustments to curriculum as needed. An example of this quality would be the number 1 ranking of our Practical Nursing program on the licensure exam, and having a top 10 in the state NCLEX passing rate for the Associate Degree of Nursing. Another example is the growing number of internships and co-ops the College is developing with regional businesses. The list of employers includes R+L Carriers, GE aviation, AMES, Candle-Lite and many area banks and school districts.

Southern State staff also serve on a variety of boards within the service area and across Ohio. Because each campus services different counties in the service region, the respective campus administration become involved in local organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce, Workforce Investment Boards, P-20 councils, and other organizations. Additionally, the President has been the chair of the Ohio Association of Community College President's group and served on the capital financing committee appointed by the governor. The Vice President of Academic Affairs has served on multiple statewide committees including the Funding Consultation and the Articulation and Transfer Oversight Board.

Lastly, the College, in collaboration with the Highland County Chamber of Commerce, leads "Grow Highland County." This program is designed to develop the economy through assistance to entrepreneurs. The College has recently entertained requests to assist nearby counties in similar economic development efforts.

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- President_BoT_Pres Report_June 2015
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3.S - Criterion 3 - Summary

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

Summary

Southern State provides associate of arts and science degrees, associates of applied science, business, and technical studies, and related certificates. The degree programs are reviewed on a regular basis through a program review process to ensure relevancy, quality, and student outcomes. As part of statewide transfer guarantees many courses in both the general and technical programs have been vetted at the state level guaranteeing transfer of credit to other state institutions. This transferability provides evidence the courses and programs require levels of performance by students appropriate to the degree or certificate awarded, and that the learning goals are articulated and appropriate for the associate degree level. Additionally, several programs have third party accreditation and are in good standing with their respective accreditors.

The College strives to ensure program quality and learning goals are consistent across all modes of delivery and locations through the use of common syllabi containing stated learning outcomes for each course, and through assessment across all delivery methods. However, based on research, the College is aware of the disparity online courses have when compared to face to face course success rates. To remedy this the College has recently implemented a common template for all online courses, and will be hiring a full-time educational technology specialist to assist faculty with online courses. Additionally, with the new College Credit Plus program the College will be focusing on the quality of instruction in the high school based courses through classroom visits, training for adjunct faculty, and advising sessions with students.

The College has established core learning outcomes designed to provide both personal and professional awareness and success. The core learning outcomes in conjunction with the approved transfer module and technical program requirements engage students in a variety of opportunities to collect, analyze, communicate information, and develop skills adaptable to a changing environment. Additionally, through both coursework and special events the College strives to provide students with a greater understanding of the human cultural diversity, both within their own community and around the world. However, the College recognizes this is an area for improvement and will need to make this a priority in future strategic planning.

Southern State has qualified faculty and staff to provide effective, high-quality programs and student services. The College employees qualified instructors, who are reviewed by the Vice President, Deans, and Division Coordinators, in all modes of delivery. All faculty follow the collective bargaining agreement in regards to evaluation, accessibility, and professional development.

The College provides students with necessary support services and preparatory instruction in various ways including advising, computer skills workshops, online preparation, and placement test refresher courses. Additionally, all college students, staff, and faculty have computer access, with available help desk support. The College also has necessary classroom space for laboratory science, performance arts, libraries, and clinical practice sites to fulfill its mission.

Sources

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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).

Argument

4.A.1. Maintains a Practice of Regular Program Reviews

Southern State has two processes, Program Review and Core Review, designed to assure the quality of its educational programs. Program Review evaluates degree and certificate granting programs while Core Review evaluates individual departments and the courses within them.

Program Review

All degree and certificate granting programs undergo a formal program review every three years. Exceptions include programs under "warning status" based on the program review evaluation form. These programs which, need improvement, are reviewed on a two-year cycle. Programs that reflect multiple challenges meeting set standards are reviewed annually. Standards are based on established evaluation criteria including those prescribed by specialized accrediting bodies. These criteria include but are not limited to:

- Mission, Goals, and Demand
- Curriculum
- Student Enrollment, Persistence, Achievement, and Satisfaction
- Learning
- Resources and Services
- Financial Resources

The Program Review Committee consists of the Vice President of Academic Affairs (VPAA), deans, division coordinators, and faculty members. As part of the review process, the committee also regularly reviews graduate surveys , analyzes the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CSSE), reviews transfer agreements with four year institutions, evaluates faculty credentials, and assures that each program has the necessary physical and learning resources (class and office space, furnishings, technology, and equipment). The process often includes departmental meetings with advisory committees that consist of business leaders and employers from the College's five county service area to determine the program needs of the communities that Southern State serves.

Core Review

Core Review is subset of Program Review, during which all departments, including those that are not part of a specific degree or certificate granting program (e.g., Philosophy, English, and History), are evaluated. During Core Review, a dean, division coordinator, and full-time faculty members from each discipline meet to evaluate that discipline's courses and performance. Methods and resources are assessed to assure they meet standards, and student work is evaluated. Departmental findings are then shared with the committee and used to create action plans to improve the quality of the College's core curriculum. In the event there is no full-time faculty for a discipline, a dean and division coordinator conduct a Core Review with input from part-time faculty.

Recent Findings and Actions

As a result of the most recent Program Review, Southern State has launched both an Engineering Aviation Maintenance program and a Heating Ventilation and Air Condition (HVAC) program to meet business and industry needs in the region. The College elected to spend $30,000 from capital funding to renovate the greenhouse for the Agriculture Department as a result of Program Review findings. Another example includes the College's plan to introduce a "fast-track" delivery format for the College's Business Administration Management program. This is scheduled to launch in fall 2016 and is a direct result of feedback learned through the review process. While the two examples cited suggest positive outcomes, there are occasionally more complex outcomes. For example, review of the Food Science Program indicated serious lack of enrollment and decreased industry demand, which resulted in the program being discontinued.

During the most recent Core Review, Speech and Theater classes were restructured to better fit the Ohio Transfer Module (OTM) and Transfer Assurance Guide (TAG). Core Review also serves as an opportunity for individual departments to assess and improve courses, teaching techniques, texts, and assignments. One example of this is the English department's recent decision to create two levels of developmental English to better serve students who enter college with below average reading and writing skills.

Southern State's Quality Initiative was largely influenced by suggestions from Program and Core Review, especially in regard to making student success courses recommended for all first-time students and recommending every student have a degree plan.

In an effort to collect more relevant data and create more effective action plans, the College has purchased Qualtrics, a comprehensive survey tool, to deliver and analyze graduate surveys and individual course evaluations. The College is also offering a 50% refund of student graduation fees for completion of the new graduate survey. The early response rate has been 40%. Improved response rates on these more detailed surveys should assist the College its ongoing Program and Core Review efforts.

4.A.2. Policies Guiding Transcripted Credit, Prior Learning, and Experiential Learning

Experiential Learning Guidelines

Southern State's Prior Learning Assessment program provides an opportunity for students to gain college credit for prior experience, training, or public involvement. Students who qualify may earn up to one academic year of credit (30 credit hours) through the program. With the approval of the VPAA, these credits may be used in qualifying for an associate degree.

To participate in the program students must:

- Be enrolled and have already completed at least six semester credit hours at Southern State
- Be able to provide documented evidence that they have a minimum of five years of experience, training, or public involvement directly related to the course or courses they wish to substitute
- Complete the required minimum of 20 hours of classroom instruction to earn a degree from Southern State
- Write a letter to the VPAA stating their desire to participate, the reasons why they qualify, and the courses they wish to receive credit.

The VPAA evaluates each application, but acceptance does not guarantee awarding of credit. Students accepted into the program will be required to provide thorough documentation of all learning experiences, and that documentation must be reviewed and approved by faculty.

Prior Learning Guidelines

Southern State Follows American Council on Education Guidelines for accepting credit based on:

- Training provided by the U.S. Armed Services
- Training provided by business and professional organizations
- Performance on a DANTES Standardized Subject test

Southern State follows the College Board and Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE) guidelines and recommendation when accepting credit for:

- Advanced Placements classes (AP classes)
- College Level Examination Programs (CLEP)

ODHE is currently working on both statewide transfer guarantees for military credit and for a statewide policy on acceptance of CLEP. As these policies are adopted the College will adhere to recommendations outlined in each.

Southern State also awards credit for Advanced Standing High School courses and Technical Preparatory courses, but only when a formal articulation agreement has been approved by the Curriculum Committee and VPAA.

With the permission of a division coordinator and authorization of a dean, faculty may also administer proficiency tests.

To improve capacity and consistency when reviewing Prior Learning, the College recently sent several faculty through a Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) training. The goal is to have a faculty member on each campus who will be certified as a CAEL Certified Assessor. To date the College has one faculty who has completed this process and has been certified with others who have completed the Faculty Assessor Proficiency Exam.

4.A.3. Policies to Assure Quality in Accepted Transfer Credit

The College has strict policies designed to assure the quality of the credits it accepts in transfer from other institutions of higher learning. Transfer credit is evaluated in the following manner. Students previously attending an accredited institution recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation may be allowed to transfer courses as follows:

- Course taken prior to Fall 2005 with a grade of "C-" or above
- Courses taken after Fall 2005 with a grade of "D" of above

A student wishing to transfer from another accredited college or university must be in good standing from the last college of attendance. To recognize fully a completed Associate of Arts (A.A.) or Associate of Science (A.S.) degree, students who have earned such a degree from an Ohio public college with an overall GPA of 2.0 or better, will receive transfer credit for all college level courses which they have passed. Students requesting transfer credit must have an official transcript from each of the previous colleges attended sent to the Office of Admission.

The college also follows guidelines set forth by the Ohio Department of Higher Education in the Transfer Assurance Guide, Career Technical Assurance Guides, and the Ohio Transfer Module.

4.A.4. Maintenance and Authority over Prerequisite Courses, Rigor, Expectations of Student Learning, and Faculty Qualifications Across the Institution and Assures Equivalency in Dual Credit Programming

Course Prerequisites

Prerequisites are determined by department and program, and the Curriculum Committee must approve of all course prerequisites. As part of the College's large-scale conversion to a new Student Information System, Jenzabar, the College was particularly attentive to the system's capacity to support advising. The advising module included in the new system allows staff and advisors to closely monitor prerequisite requirements and student's completion of those courses. Additionally, the Student Success Center provides program completion guides for all advised students outlining the desired degree program and the courses required to complete the program

Rigor of Courses and Expectations for Student Learning

Curriculum Committee has established standards regarding the rigor or courses, learning objectives, and learning outcomes. As noted in the Curriculum Committee Manual, prospective courses must meet specific criteria and be approved by their department before presentation to the Curriculum Committee. Course proposals brought before committee must include an action sheet and a sample syllabus. The syllabus must include learning objectives, learning outcomes, adopted texts, course

methodology, a week-by-week course outline, grading scale, and explanation of evaluation methods, as well as course specific management guidelines and college-wide policies such as FERPA and resources such as Disability Services.

Southern State offers developmental, 1000 and 2000 level courses. Developmental courses allow students to prepare for credit-bearing courses. Entry level classes (1000 level courses) that are credit-bearing and can be used toward a certificate, degree, or transfer. Upper level courses (2000 level courses) require students demonstrate independent learning skills and mastery of course specific methodologies.

The Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE) implements a statewide policy which facilitates seamless transfer among students enrolled in Ohio's college's and universities. This policy is referred to as the Ohio Transfer Module (OTM) allows schools to create a subset of courses to meet general education requirements in English composition, mathematics, humanities, fine arts, social science, behavioral science, physical science, natural science, and interdisciplinary work. The OTM, along with the Career Technical Assurance Guides (CTAG) and Transfer Assurance Guidelines (TAG) allow students to easily transfer credits to other state institutions. OTM and TAG apply to courses in 38 different degree paths. Whenever a Southern State course is eligible, it is submitted for OTM approval. When courses are rejected, they are revised and resubmitted until they meet the approval of the ODHE. Since ODHE has a Program Approval Manual, which defines a credit hour for all state institutions, all college courses which are developed, whether they are OTM or TAG approved, meet the credit hour guideline to ensure transferability.

Access to Learning Resources

Southern State has four campuses in four counties in southern Ohio, as well as approved additional locations at career and technical centers, and business training centers. Each campus has its own staff, including a campus dean, library manager, administrative assistants, IT support, and advisors. All four campuses have libraries, computer labs, science labs, tutoring centers, and advising areas. The Dean of Instructional Operations oversees the libraries, and the College employs a Tutoring Coordinator through the Student Success Center. The Executive Director of Information Technology oversees the computer labs, as well as all of the college's networks and software, and the System Administrator in charge of Blackboard and online course software. The Dean of Core Studies is in charge of all science labs. The Vice President of Business and Finance coordinates all purchasing and facility improvements and renovations.

With the exception of science labs, all Southern State students have access to all learning resources. Science labs can only be accessed by students when they are enrolled in a course that requires the use of a laboratory.

In regard to electronic resources, all Southern State students have email, access to subscription based journals and other electronic resources, the ability to contact faculty and staff through instant messaging, and a direct line to the help desk for technical issues. All students also have access to Blackboard.

The Dean of Core Studies, Dean of Instructional Operations, Dean of Technical Studies, Coordinator of Academic Partnerships, and VPAA oversee academic instruction and programming as well as resource allocation at off-site locations.

Faculty Qualifications and Dual Credit Programs

The VPAA, along with Deans and Division Coordinators, review all faculty credentials, including but not limited to, all College Credit Plus (CCP) courses, and Southern State abides by ODHE guidelines in regard to necessary credentials.

All off-campus CCP courses require use of SSCC syllabi and approved text, and all adjunct faculty go through training at least once per year. This training is a state mandated requirement of all CCP courses and helps assure these programs are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement. Deans, division coordinators, and faculty conduct regular site-visits to all off-campus programs as mandated by state law. These conditions are articulated in written agreements between SSCC and its educational partners, and those agreements are approved by the curriculum committee.

4.A.5. Specialized Accreditation Appropriate to Educational Purposes

Southern State has several programs that are accredited by specialized agencies:

Nursing

The Associate Degree Nursing Program is accredited by the National League of Nursing Accrediting Commission, [3343 Peachtree Road NE, Suite 850, Atlanta, Georgia 30326] and has approval by the Ohio Board of Nursing [State Office Tower, 77 South High Street, 17th Floor, Columbus, Ohio 43266-0316, (614) 466-3947].

Medical Assisting

The Medical Assisting Technology program is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of the Allied Health Education Program [35 East Wacker Drive, Suite 1970, Chicago, Illinois, 60601- 2208, (312) 553-9355].

Practical Nursing

The Practical Nursing program has the full approval of the Ohio Board of Nursing [State Office Tower, 77 South High Street, 17th Floor, Columbus, Ohio 43266-0316, (614) 466-3947].

Respiratory Care

The Respiratory Care program holds an accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation for Respiratory Care [1248 Harwood Road, Bedford, Texas 76021-4244].

While only the aforementioned programs require specialized accreditation, Southern State makes efforts to assure all programs prepare students for success. For example, Southern State's Chemical Dependency Counseling Program meets the educational requirements for certification as a Social Work Assistant through the State of Ohio Counselor, Social Worker, and Marriage and Family Therapist Board. Likewise, the courses within that program address the necessary competencies identified by the Ohio Chemical Dependency Professionals Board. Other programs that offer students training to meet set standards include Real Estate, Cyber Security, and Aviation Maintenance.

4.A.6. Evaluation of Graduate Success and Employment or Continuing Education Preparation

Southern State utilizes exit surveys and external sources to evaluate the success of its graduates.

Graduate Surveys

Current students take the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CSSE) survey, every other year to help the College determine the quality of instruction and learning resources, as well as to assure that students have access to faculty and learning resources. Individual degree granting programs are also responsible for monitoring the success of their graduates and reporting on them during Program Review.

Southern State also issues graduate surveys and offers graduates the return of half of their graduation fees in exchange for completing the survey. Thus far, the College has had a 40% return rate for these surveys, and the results are mixed. According to the survey, 88% of responding students have taken more than 12 hours per term (indicating full-time); however, the numbers collected during registration do not bear this out, so there is some work to be done to increase the number of part-time students responding to the survey in this regard. Nearly half of responding students (47%) complete their degree in two years, which is above the national average. At the same time, 23% of the students who do not complete their degrees in two years site changing their major as a reason for the delay. In response to this data, Southern State now provides students with degree pathways through student services to help students stay on track. The College is creating "meta-majors," which are common courses within a degree program. This will allow students to take a series of courses common to all of the majors within a degree area before they declare a specific major and allow them to switch majors while losing fewer credits and time towards completion.

It's also notable that ODHE has adopted a new funding model contingent on student completion and success. As part of this new model, the ODHE will furnish Southern State with National Student Clearinghouse data moving forward, particularly for out of state and private institution transfer students. This will allow the College to set benchmarks for future goals of student completion and success.

Outside Sources

Program Advisory Boards meet annually and as necessitated by faculty leadership. The Board consists of the VPAA, Deans, faculty, local business partners, and representatives from four-year institutions. The Board's goals are to assess industry needs, provide program feedback, increase employment rates, and create pathways to advanced degree programs for Southern State students. These relationships have helped the College create internship and co-op programs, as well as transfer and articulation agreements.

Southern State also utilizes special programs such as AmeriCorps to assist with peer advising, tutoring, and mentoring.

Sources

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- Academic Affairs_Prior Learning Assessment_Form
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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.

Argument

4.B.1 / 4.B.2. Goals, Processes, and Claims Related to Student Learning Outcomes for Curricular and Co-Curricular Programming

Constructed largely through the framework created in response to the Higher Learning Commission's feedback following the 2006 visit, Southern State has largely implemented the plans and structures initiated during that review period and used those successes as a foundation for continued quality assessment. Southern State has articulated intended outcomes for student learning on three levels: course, discipline, and program, and the College assesses student learning on all three levels using multiple measurements. The College also sets goals for its co-curricular programs, assesses them, and makes changes based on the findings.

Individual Course Goals and Assessment

Individual course objectives are determined by faculty and staff in each division, approved by Curriculum Committee, and stated in course syllabi. Course-level outcomes are also articulated in the College's annual Academic Catalog.

For Assessment purposes, the College is divided into programs and disciplines. Programs result in students earning a degree, licensure, or certificate. Disciplines consist of core courses, such as English and math, which may be required of multiple programs.

A brief snapshot of where Southern State has been and currently is in regard to assessment shows 43 of the 47 (91%) programs and disciplines with a complete assessment plan and timeline. The remaining four have a working assessment plan and timeline, but it is in need of minor revisions. It also shows an increase of assessment reports being submitted beginning academic year 2010-2011 through 2014-2015. Detailed information on the assessment plans, timelines, and reports is included as additional evidence in Criterion 4.B.3.

Courses designed for specific programs are assessed by their respective divisions (during the annual assessment process) and by the Program Review Committee (during Program Review, which occurs triennially). The same structure is followed for assessment of core courses. The review of individual disciplines and programs are staggered to give the committee time to fully assess each.

During the 2011-2012 academic year the Assessment Committee used an evaluation process to review all program and discipline assessment plans and timelines. Based on these evaluations, revisions were made to assessment plans. In following years, additional revisions to assessment plans were made.

At the start of the 2012-2013 Academic Year, 31 of 48 programs and disciplines had completed assessment plans and timelines, a 65% completion rate For the 2013-2014 Academic Year 31 of 48 programs and disciplines had completed assessment plans and timelines, an 83% completion rate. Of these, two were being revised, three programs were new, and three were not completed. These eight programs have now completed their assessment plans and timelines. As of Fall 2015 (academic year 2014-2015) 43 of 47 programs (91%) have working assessment plans and timelines. The remaining four programs have plans and timelines, but are in need of refining.

The College's assessment process requires the involvement of full-time faculty and adjunct faculty. Each program and discipline develops and evaluates its success using the assessment plan rubric. The results of Southern State's assessment practices, as well as an explanation of actions taken to improve student learning based on those results, are noted in Criterion 4.B.3.

Curricular Program and Discipline Goals and Assessment

Southern State's programs are designed by faculty members and staff in each division, and programs are designed with input from the Advisory Board and the administration. All Southern State programs are approved by Curriculum Committee, and the goals and requirements of programs are listed in the Academic Catalog.

The College's Program Review and Core Review processes use individualized rubrics like the Math and Nursing examples. The rubrics address a variety of criteria, including faculty credentials, student pass rates, employer surveys, retention, advisory board opinion, and labor statistics.

Southern State's Program Review Committee consists of the Vice President of Academic Affairs, deans, division coordinators, and select faculty members. This committee conducts not only program review, but also core review (Disciplines that offer core curriculum for degree and transfer paths go through core review. Programs that enable a student to earn a degree, licensure, or certificate go through Program Review).

All of the college's programs and disciplines are reviewed triennially, unless a program has issues, as determined by the scoring sheet based on the program review rubric. It is possible that reviews may be required more frequently. Once a program or discipline is reviewed, it is placed in one of three categories:

1) Continuous- performing at or above acceptable levels with no or few recommendations;

2) Warning-performing at acceptable levels in most criteria and below acceptable on only a few criteria with multiple recommendations for improvement;

3) Probation- performing below acceptable levels in numerous areas with corresponding recommendations for improvement.

Southern State's Office Information Technology (OFIT) Program is one example of program in good standing, and it falls into the "continuous" category. During the most recent OFIT Program Review, (2012) data collection and surveys found that the program's pass rates were above the national average and that 80% of employers surveyed were satisfied with graduates' skills and abilities. While

there is room for improvement, the program is considered satisfactory. The Nursing program is another example of a program in good standing and in the "continuous" category based on the most recent program review

Southern State's Agriculture (AGRI) Program is an example of a program that required biennial instead of triennial review. Following its review, it was placed in "warning." The Agriculture Department, based on its program review, needed updated physical resources. Funds were allotted to improve and acquire resources, however the program needed more frequent review to assure its success. The Agriculture Program is now off the biennial review, and plans are in place to move the program to the North campus to provide better space and educational opportunities.

More detailed results of SSCC's Program and Core Review, as well as an explanation of actions taken to improve student learning based on those results, are noted in Criterion 4.B.3.

Co-Curricular Program Goals and Assessment

Southern State's Co-Curricular programs also set goals, assess themselves, and make changes to improve student learning based on their findings.

The library regularly asks students, faculty, and staff to complete surveys regarding its programs, resources, or the overall effectiveness. Once results are tallied, changes are implemented based on the findings. Most recently, all SSCC libraries have changed their hours, increased access to basic office supplies, improved the library's online presence and functionality, and acquired new materials for reserve and for general collections at the request of faculty and staff.

After a period without an advisor or student members, Phi Theta Kappa was restored in 2012. Faculty members encouraged students with qualifying grade point averages to join and to apply for scholarships. In 2013, four Southern State students were invited to the Ohio Statehouse to attend a statewide luncheon for the All-Ohio Academic Team. In 2014, that number increased to seven. Phi Theta Kappa members now travel to regional conferences on a regular basis and they actively recruit for new members.

The Southern State Theatre uses its mission and sets goals as the basis for its quality improvement efforts. Following each production the Theatre Director and associates complete a self-evaluation. This has led to a number of improvements in the last few years. Most recently, during the 2014-15 academic year, the theatre moved auditions for spring performances up. They now occur prior to the winter break instead of after. This allows the participants more time to memorize lines, design sets, and perfect other necessary aspects of the performance. As the theatre is part of the larger community, it's also notable that the theatre has begun using social media for promotion and feedback, as well as selling tickets online. Demand for live theatre has increased in our service area, allowing the theatre to raise ticket prices to defray the cost of production.

Student Government Association is another co-curricular group that utilized ongoing assessment activities to improve outcomes. For example, in April of 2011 a "healthy" vending machine was installed at Central Campus in the lounge as a result of student input. This input also resulted in suggestion boxes being installed at all the campus libraries. This group routinely uses surveys to gather feedback. In 2012 this student association addressed Ohio's movement toward a smoke-free campus. As a result, administration and the Board of Trustees were well informed when tit came time to consider policy adjustments. In another example, priority registrations and computer lab availability were addressed, each resulting in improvements to the educational environment.

4.B.3. Using Assessment Information to Improve Student Learning

Southern State uses the data it gathers through assessment, Program Review, and Core Review to improve student learning.

Assessment of Student Learning

Over the past five academic years, the number of disciplines and programs submitting an assessment report has risen from 16 of 48 (33%) in 2010-2011, to 39 of 47 (83%) in 2014-2015. One component of the assessment report asks if the disciplines or programs used the results of their assessment efforts to make interventions to improve student learning. The number of programs and disciplines making changes based on assessment has increased steadily each year, from six in 2010-2011 to 28 in 2014-1015. For the remaining assessment reports where a change was not made, the reports indicated the results met the desired threshold of success for the student learning outcome.

Program and Core Learning Review

In addition to annual assessment of student learning, every program and discipline goes through a triennial review. These reviews enable the College to enact positive changes on multiple levels. College-wide initiatives can be instituted and assessed during these review processes. Likewise, changes that are specific to individual programs and disciplines can be instituted and assessed. Recent College-wide initiatives include, but are not limited to:

- Verifying the credentials of adjunct faculty and training adjunct and College Credit Plus instructors who deliver SSCC curriculum at off-campus locations.
- Instituting an early warning system and assuring that faculty use this system.
- Promoting graduate surveys to the student body to improve assessment and action planning.

Recent program and discipline specific initiatives include, but are not limited to:

- The Chemistry department has incentivized campus visits for local high schools by offering free field trips that allow high school students to see college-level lab experiments.
- The Health and Physical Education department has added online courses.
- The Business Department has made Interpersonal Communications (COMM 1110) a requirement.
- The philosophy department intends to move courses online to meet student demand.
- The history department is planning to add new courses at the 1000 and 2000 level.
- The English department has restructured its developmental courses and the way it uses Accuplacer to better assess and place incoming students.

This is just a small sampling of changes brought about Program and Core Review. The following are detailed findings and actions plans for a sampling of programs. (Nursing; Office Information Technology Medical Assisting)

4.B.4. Assessment of Student Learning Methodologies and Processes Reflect Good Practice and Participation Among Faculty and Other Instructional Staff

Assessment requires the participation of full-time faculty in each discipline and program. To more fully engage faculty in this process the College participated in the Higher Learning Commission's Assessment Workshop in the summer of 2011. The team consisted of Deans, Division Coordinators,

and the Faculty Lead in Assessment. The purpose of attending the workshop was to provide greater support and increase the knowledge base for assessment across the College.

Southern State is also working to increase adjunct faculty participation in the assessment process. During the 2010-2011 academic year, none of the Southern State's programs or disciplines indicated they had involved adjuncts in their assessment efforts. By the 2014-2015 academic year, 18 of 47 programs (38%) indicated adjunct participation.

In further efforts to increase adjunct participation, the Faculty Lead for assessment has presented at the adjunct faculty training and development workshops, held three times a year. The goal of the adjunct faculty presentations is to help adjuncts understand the importance of their participation in the assessment process.

In addition, the Faculty Lead for assessment has developed an Adjunct/Full-time faculty workshop where full-time and adjunct faculty in a particular program articulate strategies for adjunct engagement. This three hour workshop is designed for programs and disciplines ready to bring adjunct faculty into their assessment efforts. This workshop not only updates adjunct faculty on the College's assessment efforts, but also has a hands-on component that facilitates actionable ideas for assessment of student learning.

As a result of receiving approval for online delivery of programs, Southern State is also working to improve its assessment of online and hybrid courses. While the type of delivery for courses assessed at Southern State include face to face, online, hybrid, independent study, and practicums, the number of programs assessing a student learning outcome in an online or hybrid course has increased from 0 of 48 programs in 20110-2011 to 12 of 47 programs in 2014-2015.

While Southern State works to improve adjunct participation and better assess online courses, the College believes that its processes and methodologies do represent best practices. With the majority of full-time faculty participating, and significantly increased adjunct participation, the College is able to accurately assess student learning, and programs and disciplines do not hesitate to intervene and make changes to improve student learning, as evidenced in the previous section. It is also notable that all full-time faculty are evaluated by a dean or the Vice President of Academic Affairs on an annual basis.

Southern State's annual assessment process enables programs and disciplines to self-assess and create action plan every year. Concurrently, the Program Review process provides a second level of assessment, which includes broader representation such as deans and division coordinators using different methodologies.

Sources

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- Student Affairs_Student Success Center_Early Alert Guide
- Student Affairs_Theatre_Mission and Goals
- Student Affairs_Theatre_Vendini Survey

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.)

Argument

4.C.1. Defined Goals for Student Retention, Persistence, and Completion are Ambitious, Attainable and Appropriate to its Mission, Student Populations, and Educational Offerings

Utilizing IPEDS data the College's year-to-year retention rate has been above 45% in the last five years and was 51% for the 2013 full-time cohort. For part-time students the retention rate has been above 31% and was 34% for the 2013 cohort. Using IPEDS data Southern State has averaged, over the last four years, a completion rate (combined graduation and transfer rates) of 48%. The 2014 IPEDS Digest suggests Southern State is trending well-above average for graduation rates.

Based on these results the College has set goals through the Open Pathway Quality Initiative (QI) and through the required Ohio College Completion Plan for retention, persistence, and completion. Through the QI Southern State has a stated goal of increasing retention, graduation, and transfer each by 10%. This ambitious yet, attainable goal would place the College competitively against the highest performing institutions. Within the Ohio Completion Plan are goals designed to support the stated QI goals. These include increasing the number of students completing developmental English and math within the first three semesters by 10%, reducing the number of hours students need to complete programs by five hours, improving the warning and intervention system for students, and increasing the awareness and utilization of the Prior Learning Assessment Program.

Southern State was nominated for the Aspen Prize in the 2014-2015 round of nominees. The College is proud of this fact, and being nominated demonstrates the effort the College places in providing an environment for students to progress and graduate or transfer depending on their ultimate goal. With the goal of increasing the retention, graduation, and transfer rates by 10% Southern State has set an ambitious and attainable goal, which would keep the College well above the national average in these categories.

4.C.2. / 4.C.4 Processes and Methodologies for Collection and Analysis of Information on Student Retention, Persistence, and Completion Reflect Good Practice

Southern State tracks retention, persistence, and graduation rates using IPEDS methodology of tracking entering cohorts of full-time, first-time degree-seeking students. However, since there is a large number of students who are part-time, the College also uses IPEDS to track these students. Since the fall of 2014 the College has been implementing dashboard software to provide greater access to student enrollment data. The dashboard data was introduced to the College by the President during an all-college meeting. Once the dashboard is more fully developed and the reliability and validity of the data are confirmed, this data will be available to the entire College community during the 2016-2017 academic year.

In addition to the IPEDS data, the College has been part of a statewide initiative to review completion and retention rates in an effort to reduce the number of credit hours in each program. Through this initiative the College utilized additional data to determine such things as our retention rates, theoretical graduation rates, and number of students being lost due to extra-hours in programs. Lastly, in the absence of an institutional research office, a team from the College participated in a grant project through the Ohio Association of Community Colleges to create a data team to review data, primarily dealing with gateway courses. Through the grant the College was provided technical expertise when analyzing outcome data from the gateway courses. An outcome of the data team review was a change in the timing for early warning notices. Faculty now provide early warning notices in week five of the term as compared to week eight, thereby allowing more time for intervention to occur and have an impact on student success.

Through the College's program review process data on student completion of courses and graduation rates are analyzed. Additionally, the College utilizes a graduate survey to gather information concerning student perceptions of programs, knowledge gained, strength of core learning outcomes, employment status, and time to completion. To increase the response rate of the graduate survey the College refunds half the graduation fee to students once they complete the survey. The Ohio Department of Higher Education has purchased access to the National Student Clearinghouse as part of the new performance based funding model. Through the Clearinghouse, Southern State will be able to better track student transfers to out of state and private institutions, which the College was unable to do in the past. These data will provide an opportunity for the College to create better transfer articulations with four year institutions most attended by graduates and transfers. Additionally, by design the performance based funding model for Ohio public institutions increases the efforts made to review student outcome data, as we are provided with data annually on our course completion, credit hours achieved, developmental completion, graduation, certificate obtainment, and transfer. These data can be compared to peer institutions to allow the College to determine areas of success and areas where improvement is needed.

4.C.3. Use of Information on Student Retention, Persistence, and Completion is Used For Quality Improvement

Through the data collection efforts addressed in 4.C.2 and in conjunction with other established review mechanisms, quality improvement measures are frequently implemented. An example of significant changes includes the complete renovation of the College's greenhouse to better serve the Agriculture program. This improvement was determined as a need during the program review process. Another example of a large scale change would be the addition of a faculty position in the Criminal Justice program and the purchase of a new cruiser for the program. Based on industry feedback garnered through the College's internship and co-op partners, the College anticipates significant capital improvements in the Engineering labs as well as the Bio-Technology lab. Other large changes include stopping programs based on enrollment or accreditation issues. The College discontinued offering courses in the Food Science program due to low enrollment. The Emergency

Medical Technician Program had low enrollments and ongoing accreditation concerns so the College determined it should be discontinued.

Through the assessment process, many programs implement smaller program changes. An example would be the Computer Science faculty reviewing their curriculum and removing one of the majors and utilizing the meta-major concept to create a more student-friendly course and program layout (computer science program layout before and after). Through the meta-major layout, students lose less time when changing majors within the program by aligning courses common to all programs in the same terms.

In an effort to improve the overall retention, graduation, and transfer rates at Southern State Community College, the institution has sought out relevant student support practices. To streamline student services and focus on retention and completion initiatives, student support services were reorganized in 2013. The new Student Success Center encompasses four departments - Tutoring, Retention, Advising, and Career and Counseling services. The main goal of the Center is to track students from the start of their academic career to the finish. Support services provided by this Center seek to address the needs of our general student population and particularly those who are academically under-prepared, adult learners, and first generation college students.

When reviewing student retention and completion data (IPEDS reports), the College chose to implement changes to advising as part of the student support practices. All new students are to meet with an advisor upon completion of the placement assessment. At that time, students are registered for their respective math and English courses, as well as other courses in their major. Students who are new to college are also encouraged to take the College Success course where they are provided with a program completion plan outlining their respective program and course sequencing to ensure timely program completion. Students who are in technical programs are provided with a faculty contact within the program so the faculty may advise them as they progress towards completion.

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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.

Summary

Southern State ensures quality educational programs, learning environments, and support services through assessment and evaluation of student learning. The College maintains a regular program review process, where all programs are reviewed every three years. Additionally, the College has developed internal policies and follows statewide policies in regards to transfer credit, prior learning assessment, and experiential learning. Southern State faculty have oversight of the curriculum including prerequisites, rigor, expectations, and assessment. The College reviews all faculty credentials, regardless of modality or location, utilizing both Higher Learning Commission and Ohio Department of Higher Education criteria, to ensure they are properly credentialed.

The assessment and evaluation of programs and graduates is important to the College. The assessment process provides opportunities for faculty to evaluate learning outcomes and to adjust teaching methods and curriculum, when necessary, to ensure students are receiving a quality education. However, assessment in the classroom is not the only method the College utilizes. The College surveys graduates each year to ascertain their post graduation success. Information gained from these surveys are utilized as part of the overall program review and assessment process. Additionally, the College utilizes input from local employers through the Advisory Group to assess the curriculum and make necessary changes to ensure students are leaving the College employment ready. One example of the change in curriculum is the development of the Professionalism course in Computer Science, based on Advisory Board feedback.

Through the Quality Initiative and the Ohio College Completion proposals the College has defined retention, persistence, graduation rates which are ambitious, yet attainable. The College utilizes multiple avenues of data collection on these areas. However, the College also recognizes that the analysis of these data needs to be improved to allow for better decision making towards improved student success. The College is in the early stages of utilizing a dashboard system and has set aside funds to hire an institutional research position. Both of these will provide greater access to valid and reliable data, allowing for increased data driven decision making.

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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.

Argument

Southern State Community College is committed to maintaining and strengthening its educational programs through intentional and strategic use of institutional resources. This effort is reflected in the entire resource allocation process. Southern State maintains adequate human, physical, and technological resources to ensure quality education programs and has well developed processes in place for budgeting and monitoring expenses.

5.A.1. Infrastructure to Support Operations Across the Institution

Southern State Community College maintains four campus locations, offers online programming, and delivers credit and non-credit training at off-site locations, high schools, and career centers across the southern Ohio region. The variety of delivery methods and locations demands a sophisticated infrastructure and clear organizational structure capable of supporting consistent, accessible, and quality programming regardless of the medium or location.

Financial Resources
Given that approximately 70% of the College's operating budget is related to costs associated with personnel, the senior administration and Board of Trustees take a very conservative approach to managing and overseeing the most critical budget factors. As the overall economy and employment pictures have improved and enrollment has declined, the College's strategic response has been to right-size staff utilizing attrition while maintaining service and operational quality. In addition, the recent conversion to a semester calendar has provided a more accurate budgetary scenario earlier in the academic year. This has enabled the College to move quickly, reduce expenditures where possible, utilize cost savings of reduced adjunct instruction and faculty overload pay, and implement the

strategic filling of positions. Since 2011, enrollment has declined 38%. Commensurate adjustments to staffing levels have taken place through attrition and retirement incentives as opposed to lay-offs and formally declared reductions in force. Moody's reaffirmation of its A3 rating in early 2015 is compelling evidence of the College's anticipation and corrective response to fluctuation while noting the pressure to increase revenue.

Human Resources
The College's organizational structure mirrors its mission. Each area is provided support services necessary to meet its goals regardless of the educational delivery mode or location. Southern State Community College employees 54 full-time faculty, 103 part-time instructors and 166 part-time non-teaching staff and 88 full-time staff members. Included among the full-time teaching staff are a librarian and counselor. The 2014 IPEDS report fully describes the personnel distribution.

Among the non-teaching staff, job descriptions are established and revised on a periodic basis. Within each description, the appropriate qualifications are clearly outlined. Each position is point-factored for placement on the salary schedule. Just as in academics, transcripts and hiring documentation are maintained to demonstrate required credentials and/or qualifications. In fact, the online employment application portal aides in this quality measure by doing the initial qualification screening. Annual performance evaluations among full-time staff are conducted for quality maintenance, personal improvement and institutional progress toward strategic goals. Adjunct instructors, tutors, child care personnel, and part-time instructors of the Truck Driving Academy have alternative models for evaluation.

Facilities
Southern State operates four campuses throughout a geographic service region in southern Ohio that is comparable in size to the states of Rhode Island and Delaware. The facilities represent approximately 250,000 square feet of usable space sufficient for the College to deliver quality programming. Additionally, credit and non-credit courses are also delivered at off-site locations including area high schools and career centers as well as online. The College is approved for the Additional Location Notification System as prescribed by the Higher Learning Commission.

The physical campuses are managed by a maintenance superintendent and relevant personnel under the direction of the Vice President of Business and Finance. Contracted and certified maintenance agreements are in place for heating, air, and ventilation systems as well as custodial services. In addition to the State Share of Instruction (SSI), Southern State receives biennial capital support for renovations and special projects. This funding assists in fulfilling necessary maintenance and upgrades to plant operations.

In late 2011, as part of a strategic goal during that year, the College underwent a comprehensive facility assessment and utilization study under the direction of a professional engineering and design firm, KZF Design. Results of this assessment were used to determine adequacy and projected life expectancy of existing structures and facilities. In addition, the space utilization component of the study analyzed current facilities for adequacy and capacity to support academic, faculty, and administration needs. From this comprehensive study, the College has been able to move forward several significant master-planning types of initiatives, including the construction of a replacement campus in Brown County. This document, still highly relevant to decision making and strategic planning related to facilities, has made a significant contribution to the core maintenance planning activities underway and projected into the foreseeable future.

In addition to the plant-related improvements made as a result of the 2011 study, the College also

articulated a strategic goal related to space utilization. Considered a key aspect of facility management, the effective use of space is equally important to the physical status of the space. Ad Astra, a space utilization software program was purchased in 2014 and is scheduled for full implementation in Fall 2015. This advanced analytics system allows the College to improve space utilization, reduce scheduling conflicts, optimize space resources, and inform future scheduling for course offerings.

Technology

The technology budget is supported by both the general fund and by a technology fee assessed to students. Through this budget, the College is able to prioritize needs consistent with strategic aims. The College maintains a rolling five year replacement schedule for major technology items. Among the most significant IT initiatives implemented in the College's history was the implementation of a new, long overdue administrative computing software, JEX. The conversion was an intense, year-long process, which encouraged and provided the opportunity for quality improvement in data retrieval, collection, storage, and analytics. This strategic investment totaled over $1M. Among accomplishments of similar scope but less costly, the College also cast the goal of upgrading the wireless network across the four-campus structure. The aim, to support all users on campus simultaneously, required a monumental investment of human and financial resources. Like the administrative computing upgrade, this improvement was another strategic bold step toward being a leader in technology and innovation.

Prior to fall 2015, Southern State's technology infrastructure was divided between administrative functions and academic functions. The administrative academic component function consisted of the student information system and the business functions. This included the upkeep and functionality of the College's administrative student information system, Jenzabar. The College's network, help desk, web portal, learning management system, and general computer support were managed by the academic function. The two functions had complex reporting structures and overlapping responsibilities. Driven by the strategic element to be a driving force in technology and innovation, the existing technology structure was revamped effective fall of 2015 to unite complementary systems and services. The information technology function and the [Executive Director of Information Technology](#) position has been elevated to a cabinet level position for greater continuity within the department and clearer strategic alignment.The academic information technology function provides a wide array of duties and functions, including help desk, learning management system hosting and support, computer and network support, web portal, database security, budget development, and technology replacement timelines.

5.A.2. Resource Allocation Process

Historically, [functional budget reports](#) suggest that approximately 70-72% of the College's budget is directed to meet personnel costs. And, these costs are relatively predictable with a collective bargaining agreement spanning three years, with similar benefits extended to other employees. With the roughly 28-30% of discretionary resources, the annual operating budget is developed incrementally for core operations and strategically for new initiatives and increased focus for existing programs. [Resource allocation comparison](#) illustrates Southern State's commitment to academic instruction and support as well as student service support. While academics will always remain the College's core purpose, it is juxtaposed with the College's strategic priorities. Instruction and Academic Support budgets represents 62% of the College's operating budget.

5.A.3. Realistic Goals Given Organization, Resources, and Opportunities

Southern State is well-positioned to deliver on its mission to offer accessible, affordable, and high

quality education and to reach its vision to be "Your First-Choice College." The strategic goals, which emerge annually from these guiding sources, are relevant and reflect a commitment to the College's continued advancement. The organizational structure of the institution supports quality and resources are appropriately allocated to accomplish stated goals (as addressed in Criterion 5.C.). Evidence of this is speckled throughout the Assurance Argument and is best summarized in the Presidential Evaluation narrative (2013, 2014), which suggests a commanding handle on institutional goals.

5.A.4. Staff Qualifications and Training

All personnel, part-time and full-time, are required to participate in essential training such as sexual harassment, safety and security/hazardous chemicals, as well as an annual review of updates to the Policy and Information Manual. Additionally, as relevant and necessary, custom training, such as software application, safety, supervision and leadership, and customer service, among others, is offered throughout the year. Most recently, in support of the College's strategic goal to be more deliberate in creating and maintaining an inviting college environment, a specialized service training, inspired by the Disney Institute, was delivered to nearly 100 select personnel. All training is streamlined and monitored by the Human Resources department and is delivered by an industry recognized academic learning management solution.

Among teaching personnel, the Collective Bargaining Agreement between the Southern State Education Association (SSEA) and the College drives the credentialing and evaluation of this employment group. According to section 7.06 of the SSEA/SSCC Agreement, faculty will meet the criteria specified by the Higher Learning Commission and/or Ohio's Department of Higher Education, whichever is more stringent. These standards, fully described in Appendix F of the Agreement, are updated as necessary on the institution's website.

Like non-teaching staff, the faculty also have a well-constructed evaluation mechanism which serves to validate effective teaching, professional development, and service while also promoting continuous improvement in these areas. The faculty evaluation process is clearly defined in section 9.06 of the SSEA/SSCC Agreement.

5.A.5 Process for Budgeting and Monitoring Expense

The budget development process reflects thoughtful consideration for anticipated revenue and expenses. A process led by the Vice President of Business and Finance, in consultation with the President and senior adminstrators, budget planning is a transparent and participative process that involves campus constituents and reflects the interplay of assessment, evaluation, and planning along with calculations of salary and benefit costs related to current and requested bargaining unit and non-bargaining unit employees. The budget process flows as follows:

Stage 1 | Budget Preparation

- Historical data, revenue, and enrollment projections are reviewed and summarized by the Vice President of Business and Finance for the development of a comprehensive, projected base budget.

- Projected budgets are prepared for senior level administration for review and vetting among their respective constituency. Consideration of the strategic plan and operational needs are addressed at this point among the President's Council

- Senior administrators distribute departmental budgets to Deans and Directors. Staff, faculty, and

Division Coordinators review budget proposals and make suggestions/requests, and return to Deans and Directors.

- Vice Presidents review and prioritize requested adjustments for alignment with the College's mission and strategic priorities.

Stage 2 | Approval of the Proposed Budget

- The base budget is presented to the Board of Trustees Finance Committee

- At the recommendation of the Finance Committee, the budget is proposed for consideration among the Board of Trustees.

Stage 3 | Budget Monitoring

- Through President's Council, the College's senior leaders are routinely updated on budget management and developments

- The Vice President of Business and Finance provides a monthly budget report to the Board of Trustees

The annual budget is approved by the President and Board of Trustees. Real-time access to budgets is made possible through an online requisition system. Area responsibilities reside at the vice president and director levels, with down line reporting and access determined as they direct.

The Vice President of Business and Finance provides a monthly financial report to the President and the Board of Trustees. These reports are also provided to all faculty and staff in an email recap from the President after each board meeting. This transparency ensures that everyone is aware of the resources being used to support the College's educational purposes. Faculty and staff have opportunities to ask questions about financial resources at monthly Faculty Senate meetings and quarterly All-College meetings.

There is an independent audit of the College's financial records annually in accordance with OMB Circular A-133 at the direction of the Auditor of the State of Ohio. Financial Statements are prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles and as prescribed by the *Governmental Accounting Standards Board*. Financial accounting records are maintained in a manner using an economic resource measurement focus and accrual basis of accounting. Under the accrual basis, revenues are recognized when earned, and expenses are recorded when obligations have been incurred. Grants and similar items are recognized as revenue as soon as eligibility requirements imposed by providers have been met. The College maintains its records in accordance with the policies and retention guidelines established by the Inter-University Council of Ohio. Additionally, the Board of Trustees appoints an audit committee to work closely with the auditors and report to the Board of Trustees. The annual audit is posted on the Auditor of State's website and released to the press.

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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.

Argument

Southern State strives to create a culture of shared governance and an environment that is reflective of the organization's value for stakeholder involvement. Organizational structure, policy, and operating practice promote informed decision making throughout all sectors of the College. Southern State is deliberate in providing opportunities for internal and external constituents to influence strategic visioning, program quality, relevancy, and development, policy formulation, and generally shaping the future of the institution. This is only possible through the active and informed involvement of knowledgeable Trustees, administrators, faculty, staff, and students.

5.B.1. Governing Board Knowledge and Oversight

As described more fully in Core Component 2.C, the Southern State Board of Trustees consists of nine (9) members appointed by the Governor of Ohio. Duties and powers of this board derive from Chapter 3358 of the Ohio Revised Code. Formal duties and expectations are defined by the State of Ohio and conveyed in the Board of Trustee Policy Manual. Policies regarding meetings, particularly the construction of the agenda, serve to guide Trustees in meeting their legal and fiduciary responsibilities. During each meeting, the Board entertains a comprehensive Monitoring Report that includes a President's Report and a Treasurer's Report. Together, these reports inform the Board of Trustees regarding high-level, internal and external developments relative to College operations as well as informing the Board about the financial health of the College. Additionally, the Board reviews and approves the Policy and Information Manual on an annual basis. As necessary, the Board contemplates any adjustments to policies impacting students, finances, or academics.

On the ground level, the College administration has established protocol that serve to inform Trustees and build upon existing knowledge of the institution. For example, new board member orientation programs aim to welcome new members and provide a comprehensive overview of responsibilities. Senior level administrators are included in such orientations to offer insights into the operations and priorities of the College. The Board also hosts an annual retreat aimed at solidifying strategic goals for the institution. During such retreats, senior administrators are invited to share departmental updates, which further enhance knowledge and builds rapport among one another. Routinely, senior level staff, faculty, and other guests as needed make presentations to the Board of Trustees both by request of the Board and the College as a method to keep the Board informed on important matters.

5.B.2. Engaging Internal Constituents in Governance

The college has developed an organizational structure which provides for clear lines of reporting and authority and for direct communication between individual divisions and between them. While this structure provides for clear lines of authority, the college also routinely establishes cross divisional committees and teams which can be both permanent and transient depending on need. A list of the recognized college committees and teams is described on the College's web page. An example of a transient team would the Semester Conversion Task Force formed in 2010 to lead the college through the semester conversion process or the technology group which reviewed administrative computing options for the College. Another example is the Institutional Collaboration as referenced in other areas of the assurance argument. This particular committee is comprised of interdepartmental representation and their emphasis is communication and process improvement across all sectors of the College.

At the beginning of each fall semester all faculty and staff participate in information and training activities aimed at informing personnel and building engagement. Frequently referred to as "Opening Week" or "Welcome Week" this is a designated and required function for all personnel. During this time faculty departments have an opportunity to meet and discuss curriculum matters, participate in the annual Assessment workshop, take advantage of specialized training, and generally hear college-wide updates. Throughout each semester, college-wide meetings, referred to as "All College Meetings," which convene three times annually, to continue the communication loop. Such meetings are often the platform to keep the college community abreast of accreditation processes including the Quality Initiative and migration to Open Pathways, inform stakeholders on progress toward strategic goals, and offer open communication regarding significant College issues and projects.

In addition to encouraging active participation in Opening Week and All College meetings, adjunct faculty are specifically targeted for continued engagement. Recognizing that meeting participation can be challenging for part-time faculty often employed elsewhere, specialized orientation and development workshops are coordinated three times a year on a Saturday. Mandatory participation is required at least once a year. During these workshops adjunct instructors are oriented to the College and provided opportunities for training in the use of administrative and learning management systems, security, classroom management, library resources, and a host of other topics.

Additionally, the President holds an annual strategic visioning exercise where internal and external constituents are able to help develop the goals for the upcoming year based on the strategic vision of the College. The President also provides monthly board meeting updates to the College community via email for those who are unable to attend the meeting.

Faculty participation in governance is formally outlined in the collective bargaining agreement Section 15.03, between the Southern State Educational Association (SSEA) and the College. Within this agreement faculty committees, participation in hiring committees, and other representation is outlined. In addition to the formal arrangements within the agreement, the Board recognizes the faculty have governance in curriculum issues and the College administration seeks faculty involvement in the insurance committee. Division Coordinators are part of the Vice President's council which is a recommendation making body for proposing new programs and program location. Additionally, the President and the Vice President of Academic Affairs attend the monthly Faculty Senate meetings to present information about college, state, or national initiatives, to answer questions, and to obtain suggestions for improvement in operation of the College.

Similar to engagement among board members, faculty, and staff, Southern State deeply values student involvement. Formal and informal mechanisms are in place to encourage involvement among

students. The most widely recognized formal mechanism includes student groups and organizations. With clear procedures for establishing a new club or organization, students are invited to expand their involvement as they wish. Existing, recognized, and sponsored groups include Medical Assisting Student Association, Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society, Respiratory Care Student Association, Student Nurses Association, Student Government Association (SGA), and Student Philosophy Association. While group strength and organization is dependent upon the engagement of transient students, the majority of the recognized groups are able to maintain their integrity due to the College's active support of the group's sponsors. For example, the SGA, is particularly active and has remained so by filling executive leadership positions and appointing campus ambassadors. The Association has established a variety of promotional and fundraising endeavors that speak to the broader student population and has done so with fervor. Most recently, the Association established a discount card initiative with proceeds directed to support an SGA scholarship through the College's Foundation.

Informally, the College actively seeks student involvement in the development of policies and procedures that impact students. It is not uncommon for the administration to seek input from SGA members on issues ranging from marketing ideas to becoming a smoke-free campus. This input is solicited through deliberate conversation, surveys, and open invitations to the Board of Trustee meetings. More recently, the College has used social media to communicate with students.

5.B.3. Involvement in Setting Academic Requirements, Policy, and Processes

Similar to the engagement practices addressed in 5.B.2., stakeholders are involved in setting academic requirements and policy. The Institutional Collaboration Committee is among the most formalized means of suggesting changes and includes interdepartmental representation. Other means of communication include the use of the Vice President's Council, Curriculum Committee, and Program Review. Additionally, students are able to use their respective student organizations to facilitate change. Active groups include the Student Government Association, Student Nurses Association, the Respiratory Care Student Group, and the Medical Assisting Student Organization.

Sources

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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.

Argument

Planning is an integral aspect of ensuring that Southern State is properly aligning resources to achieve the mission. Planning processes across the institution are inclusive and generally well-informed by internal and external constituents. Using assessment data, stakeholder surveys, and structured feedback mechanisms, the College uses its planning practices to inform budgeting and resource allocation.

5.C.1. Resources Allocated in Alignment with Mission and Priorities

Discussed in Component 5.A, resource allocation illustrates a commitment to academic instruction and support as well as student services support. At a global level, this aligns with the College's mission of delivering accessible, affordable, and high quality education. Priorities are determined by the strategic plan, which is updated annually. Investments in time, personnel, and financial resources are aligned to meet those goals. Examples of this alignment include large-scale projects such as the implementation of a new and improved student information system, Jenzabar EX (JEX). This implementation stemmed from the 2011 strategic bold step to establish a continuous assessment system for student success. In other example, the College committed the time and personnel to the pursuit of external funding for an Adams County Campus, which has resulted in $1.25M capital funding appropriation dedicated to this project. There are numerous examples of alignment between the College's resources and its stated mission and priorities. These are evidenced in the annual evaluation report (Examples: 2013, 2014) that the College president submits to the Board of Trustees Chairperson and Vice Chairperson.

5.C.2. Linking Assessment, Evaluation, Planning, and Budgeting

Discussed more fully in Criterion 5.A.5, budget planning is a transparent and participative process that involves campus constituents and reflects the interplay of assessment, evaluation, and planning. Through program review and assessment processes, academic equipment and space needs are identified and expected to be communicated in Stage 2 of the budgetary process.

Faculty involvement in these processes ensures that the appropriate resources are determined. As with most institutions of higher education, prioritizing the needs is imperative as there are more needs

than funds available annually. An example of equipment and space needs addressed through this process is the renovation of the College greenhouse. The greenhouse was several years old and need of repair, updated control systems, new plumbing, and new plant tables. Based on this information, funds were allocated to completely remodel and update the greenhouse. Another example of the process would be the hiring of a faculty member in the Criminal Justice program. Based on the program review process it was identified there was a need to hire a full-time faculty member for this program. Upon hiring of the full-time faculty member the credit hours taken in this program doubled in two years.

5.C.3. Planning Reflective of Internal and External Constituents

Discussed in Core Component 1.A, the mission statement is the foundation for the College's strategic visioning and goal setting exercises. Dating back to 2010, Southern State has relied upon a large-scale, facilitated visualization approach to the strategic planning process. This strategic planning process includes engagement among faculty, staff, students, and select external constituencies. This college-wide planning process was implemented shortly after the inauguration of the College's 5th president, Dr. Kevin Boys, and builds upon earlier planning strategies including the "Looking in to Reach Out Plan |2007-2010. The elements of the vision reflect a solid understanding of Southern State's capacity today while also stretching boundaries for future advancement. The goals derived from the strategic vision are revisited annually with goals being adjusted and the overarching vision and vision elements remaining in-tact (See Strategic Plan Goals for 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015). This annual vetting process ranges from the use of clicker technology during all-college meetings to structured surveys to specific planning exercises during Opening Week activities.

5.C.4. Planning on the Basis of a Sound Understanding of Capacity

Southern State's overall financial planning is reflective of both historical and contemporary data that is carefully scrutinized to ensure a consistent and healthy resource base. Dependent largely upon only two sources of revenue, statue subsidy and tuition, the College is particularly attentive to fluctuations in these areas and plans accordingly (auxiliary enterprises including a Child Care operations and workforce development provide limited additional funding). The general fund balance history illustrates the comprehensive history of fund balances and the relative percentage of expenditures.

The portion of the general fund resources represented by state funding has yet to return to its pre-FY 2000 levels of 50%, but has increased from a low of 38% in FY 2004, to 48% in FY 2015. During that period, state funding simply could not keep up with enrollment growth. The post-recession recovery's negative impact on enrollment has disproportionately impacted student fee revenue. This, coupled with greater stability in state funding and a shrinking of total revenue, resulted in state support increasing as a percentage of total revenue. Clearly it would have been preferable to realize an increase in the percentage of the College's budget represented by state funding while total revenue had at least been stable as opposed to declining. Decreasing enrollment trends over the last three to four fiscal years has undoubtedly presented challenges; however, the College has maintained a relatively stable financial base as summarized in the annual financial report. Further, conservative management resulting in minimal tuition increases has largely protected student affordability and leveling enrollment trends. In FY 2015 annual tuition for a full-time student is $4,232, which places the College in the lower quartile among Ohio's non-levy supported schools. Tuition increases over the past ten years have averaged 3.1%, and in the last two years less than 2.5%.

From FY06 to FY15 tuition revenue has fluctuated greatly primarily due to a large enrollment increase during the recession followed by a subsequent significant decrease to pre-recession levels, while constrained by state imposed tuition caps. During the time of enrollment growth (FY 2009 &

FY 2010), the college grew its reserves which helped to mitigate the impact of three consecutive years of double digit enrollment decline. During this period the college also took a strategic approach to filling vacancies, negotiating rates and plan design with healthcare providers, and providing limited growth in line item budgets. Additionally, the college completed a conversion from quarters to semesters in fall of 2012 which resulted in a fiscal year encompassing two summer terms. This strategic and conservative approach has allowed the college to avoid major reductions in academic and student services.

Funding trends are closely monitored related to factors such as service area demographics, student profiles, new applications, and student financial aid reports. Further, progress toward Ohio's newly implemented performance based funding model is beginning to play an increasingly important role in the budget planning. Early history using the new model suggests that Southern State's share of state subsidy is relatively stable.

5.C.5. Planning Practices Anticipate Emerging Factors Related to Technology, Demographic Shifts, and Globalization

The Southern State Strategic Plan is the driver for all subsequent planning and is informed by data. In the absence of a full-time institutional researcher, the College has cleverly leveraged research consultancy to achieve desired outcomes. For example, in 2011-2012, Southern State contracted the services of Hanover Research to assist in formulating research projects aimed at related strategic goals. Among the studies completed were the following:

- Southern Ohio Environmental Scan and Market Analysis (A survey to provide the College comprehensive and up-to-date demographic information related to the communities and region served by Southern State.)

- Closing the Gender Gap (A study designed to explore the uneven distribution between men and women students attending Southern State.)

- Academic Programs Offered by Institutional Competitors Local to Current and Potential Campus Sites. (A report designed to inform the College of potential program delivery diversification.)

- Best Practices in Non-Faculty Performance Based Pay for Small Public Colleges (A best-practice analysis for the purpose of informing the development of a new employee performance evaluation program.)

- Early College Program Best Practices (An analysis of early college and dual enrollment programs nationwide.)

- Branding Perception Survey Development and Implementation (A brand perception research study aimed at informing the College's rebranding project.)

- EDA Grant Awards Evaluation (A best-practice study designed to provide Southern State an outline of successful applications for Economic Development Administration (EDA) grants by Community Colleges nationwide.)

- Best Practices in ABLE-College Data Sharing (An overview of promising practices in Adult Basic Literacy and Education /College partnerships.)

The studies and analysis conducted on behalf of Southern State have been instrumental in making data informed decisions. For example, the Branding Perception Survey and the open-ended responses

played a critical role in the direction of the College's comprehensive rebranding campaign. The 714 responses from internal and external stakeholders proved invaluable in developing the brand promise and helping shape the marketing strategy. In yet another example, the Academic Programs Study informed the development of new program selection (HVAC and Cyber-Security) for the College's unveiling of a new campus facility in Mt. Orab, Ohio. In addition, as part of the contract with Hanover Research, college personnel also had unlimited access to a robust library of other research projects conducted on behalf of other organizations. This library of resources indirectly informed other large-scale projects within the College such as the development of a comprehensive evaluation system and the evaluation of budgeting processes.

Other relevant and far-reaching planning efforts demonstrate the College's astute awareness of opportunities among an ever-changing global landscape. For example, the 2011 Comprehensive Facility Assessment and Utilization Study, as referenced in Core Component 5.A, revealed facility deficiencies that significantly altered the trajectory for accessibility in the southern portion of the College's service area. The College used the study to re-position its physical presence to an area that represents far greater potential for enrollment growth.

Emerging factors such as technology and globalization will continue to require a keen sensibility toward reviewing and processing current research and industry projections. Continued reliance on state and national reporting mechanisms and benchmark reports such as IPEDS and the National Clearinghouse will continue to enhance Southern State's planning abilities. Historically, the College's strategic planning exercises have done well to acknowledge emerging factors as well as external pressures. For example, the College's investment in technology infrastructure and its stated goal to increase on-line enrollment recognize the potential for continued growth in these areas. In another example, the College invested considerable resources into the development of a food science program however, the demand did not materialize as projected by industry and the College had to discontinue the program. A final example is the the relocation of a campus from a remote part of the service area to a more highly traveled corridor that gave consideration to adult commuters and their accessibility to higher education. Additionally, partnerships with other institutions allow the College to leverage those partnerships to expand its reach and offer programs otherwise not possible or accessible. An example of which would be the aviation program partnership with a local career center.

Looking forward, Southern State acknowledges that, despite best-efforts to ground decision making and planning in data, the need for dedicated services for institutional research has reached its peak. After exploring some cost sharing scenarios, the College is actively leveraging current retirements and resignations to realign money to hire a full-time institutional research professional. Aiming to onboard a seasoned professional during the 2015-2016 academic year, the College recently posted a position advertisement for an institutional research position. In addition, through a realignment of auxiliary services, the College strategically re-purposed an existing position to offer more support to data coordination. Leveraging the individual's knowledge of the College's data information system, this person's new duties are better aligned to support the College's desire to have more accessible, reliable data for decision making and reporting purposes. With the addition of a senior level institutional researcher and the realignment of existing resources to data coordination, the College will be effectively better positioned to anticipate and plan for the future, particularly as it relates to demographic shifts and fluctuations in factors impacting enrollment, revenue, and subsidy. Further, this will accelerate progress on a variety of strategic initiatives including accessibility and quality initiatives.

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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.

Argument

Evaluation and assessment of the elements associated with Southern State's vision to be "Your First-Choice College" provide the framework for continuous improvement and the measurement of institutional effectiveness. The processes are incorporated at the institutional, programmatic, and individual level and are monitored through performance evaluation of faculty and staff and systematic reporting.

5.D.1. Evidence of Performance in Operations

Measurement of institutional effectiveness is holistically organized to provide actionable feedback around the College's strategic priorities emerging from Southern State's vision to "Be Your First-Choice College by:

- being a **best investment**
- **creating synergy through partnerships**
- being a **driving force in innovation and technology**
- ensuring **student success**
- being a **best place to work**
- operating **dynamically and flexibly**

Evidence is documented on a monthly basis through contributions to the President's report to the Board of Trustees in the form of strategic alignment designation. At the individual level, progress toward performance goals is systematically monitored through required mid-year and end-of year evaluations. Further, the President designates time during All College meetings to update the college community on progress toward the stated goals. In areas where no evidence of performance or improvement exists, the College tries to understand what barriers, structural or procedural, contributed to the lack of success. In some circumstances, those goals are reintroduced. For example, the strategic goal related to an Adams County location aimed at improving accessibility to students in the southern part of the region has been introduced and reintroduced in various iterations for four consecutive years. While at first glance one may assume that the College has failed in reaching its goal, the reality is that extenuating circumstances have changed the timetable for its accomplishment.

In addition to leveraging the strategic priorities as a means of evaluating performance and setting improvement targets, the College also leverages the State's higher education funding formula. Using a multi-component approach consisting of (1) a course completion (or completed FTE) component, (2) a success points component, and (3) a degree/certificate completion component, this structure inherently facilitates the monitoring of institutional effectiveness. The Success Points, for example, are aimed at allocating funding associated with student success in credit accumulation and

developmental course completion and are intended to measure the significant steps that students take toward higher education achievement.

Having experimented with various iterations of systemic performance improvement over the past forty years, the College's experience with the 2006 Higher Learning Commission's (HLC) reaffirmation visit bolstered Southern State's ability to make significant gains in this area. Experience with developing a progress report relative to assessment and then being challenged to submit a subsequent monitoring report, conditioned the College, beyond assessment, for shaping a culture of continuous learning and improvement across the institution. In many respects, this process sharpened the institution's approach to advanced-level quality improvement. Consequently, while it will always be a work in progress, the College shows promise as a maturing model for institutional effectiveness and recognizes that evidence must substantiate all claims. In fact, even the transition to the HLC Open Pathway has further enlightened our efforts toward improvement and effectiveness. The mere structure of the assurance argument reinforces performance improvement and, in drafting the argument, all involved have a new appreciation for substantiating claims.

Perhaps the most relevant example of performance improvement and learning from experience has been the recent (Summer 2015) submission of the Quality Improvement Initiative as required by the HLC Open Pathway. Southern State identified a four-pronged approach to student success including mandatory orientation, refresher courses for students with developmental needs, required enrollment pathways, and plans for academic completion. While the outcomes, particularly as they related to anything "mandatory" or "required," suggested there is room for improvement, there were notable successes in the use of refresher courses and in the implementation of the academic completion plans. Above all, the process of establishing the goal, measuring success toward the goal, and finally analyzing the results and identifying opportunities for improvement and/or expansion has been informative for future sustainability of the pre- and post- entry student success strategies.

At the micro-level, the College relies extensively on the feedback of its constituents. Graduate surveys, advisory council feedback, formalized student engagement surveys such as the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), informal surveys, and cross-departmental committees help the College recognize ways in which it can improve operations, increase efficiency, and generally improve effectiveness. Through these mechanisms the College has implemented various improvements such as bookstore practices, tutoring support, and various timeline restructuring. The College is committed to obtaining this feedback and even invests in it where necessary. For example, the College increased the graduate survey response rate by over 40% by reimbursing students half of their graduation fee for a returned survey.

5.D.2. Learning from Experience

Perhaps the greatest opportunity for continued growth and advancement toward a shared vision is continued maturation of data-informed decision making. While the absence of a highly qualified institutional researcher has posed limitations, the College has been deliberate in leveraging existing resources to fill this gap. Most recently, the College partnered with the Ohio Association of Community Colleges to participate in a grant program aimed at assisting smaller institutions with data compilation and analysis. Southern State opted to take a closer look at gatekeeper courses and online delivery to glean insights into student success. The findings of this analysis resulted in a new focus for the assessment of online instruction as well as recommendations to hire an instructional technology specialist to support quality instruction in online delivery. Further, the data also revealed that the timing of the Academic Early Warning System needed re-tuning.

Despite the assertion that there are firmly rooted quality improvement processes in place, the College

also recognizes that for continued, meaningful improvements, the expertise of an institutional research professional is warranted. Although the College has effectively leveraged research resources over the years, such as consulting contracts, special internal projects, and the like, the time has come for investment in a more permanent solution. The College has constructed a job description for a full-time institutional research position. Ideally, the role would be implemented in the foreseeable future however, this is heavily contingent on enrollment and budget implications.

Priority projects aimed at improving institutional effectiveness have been defined and will be accelerated by the addition of an institutional research professional. Among these projects include:

- Development of a database for employers for the Ohio Means Internships and Co-Op grant
- Retention and persistence tracking related to developmental courses, non-returning students, and students with 60 or more credit hours but no degree.
- Recruiting and application pipeline reports aimed at improving access.

In addition to these initial projects, the overall intent of the position is to assist the College in developing systemic data tracking mechanisms and analysis necessary to continue maturing into a model institution for evidence-based decision making and quality improvement.

Finally, the president has recently been appointed to the Voluntary Framework of Accountability Oversight Board by the American Association of Community Colleges. Southern State's participation in this program will provide another data-rich feel for continued improvement, especially as it relates to student success and transparency for stakeholders.

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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.

Summary

The ability to deliver accessible, affordable, and high quality instruction is predicated on Southern State's stewardship of its resources coupled with policies, processes, and structures aimed at supporting the College's mission and visionary aspirations. The College has constructed a strategic framework that is responsive to existing needs and adaptive to challenges and opportunities of the future. The elements of the vision to be "Your First-Choice College" and the goals which support this, are realistic and attainable as evidenced in the College's broad repertoire of accomplishments and sound financial position.

Among the most critical of functions, the processes and structures used for budgeting and monitoring expenses are solid. Leveraging the experience and foresight of accomplished personnel, the College is well-positioned to navigate budgetary turbulence today and into the future. This balanced with structural oversight among the Board of Trustees positions Southern State well to respond to emerging factors in technology, demographic shifts, and globalization and maintain the forward-thinking trajectory required to be competitive in the future.

The capacity to maintain and strengthen the institution is evident in the College's human, physical, and technological resources. With forty years of experience in operating multiple campuses, Southern State has done well to leverage institutional policies and procedures across diverse environments. Universal application is possible because of the commitment to institutional mission and vision and the informed oversight of the Board of Trustees. Further, resources are adequate to accommodate the high standard of quality achieved only through investments in qualified personnel, comfortable, clean, and accommodating learning environments, and a robust, cutting edge technological infrastructure. Planning reflects a critical disposition toward sustaining these elements of the organization.

Looking forward, the College recognizes areas in which planning and effectiveness can be accelerated.

- As noted in the argument, the College acknowledges the need for more data informed decision making. Consequently, the College is actively pursuing the experience of a qualified institutional research professional. Leveraging any and all relationships with partner institutions and organizations, the College is aiming to bring this position to reality in the near future.
- The College is actively pursuing the addition of a fifth campus in Adams County. This demands precision planning at every level including budgetary forecasts. Driven by the aspirations of a previous Board of Trustees this project has grown in complexity as the College strives to ensure adequate funding, relevant programming, and future sustainability.
- Lastly, the College should aim for a more advanced means of documenting systematic improvement. Largely due to the absence of an institutional research office, the College has potential to learn more from itself through a more granular approach to data analysis. An institutional learning approach could accelerate performance, improve sustainability, and generally enhance planning efforts.

Sources

There are no sources.