

Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities

A REGULAR INTERIM REPORT

South Puget Sound Community College
Olympia, Washington

October 24-25, 2005

Prepared by

Dr. Danny A. Gonzales, Deputy to the President
Great Basin College
Elko, Nevada

and

Dr. Jacky M. Hagan, Vice President for Student Services (Retired)
Umpqua Community College
Roseburg, Oregon

A Confidential Report Prepared for the
Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities
that Represents the Views of the Evaluators

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
I. Introduction	1
II. Findings	3
Part A	3
Part B	5
III. Summary	10
IV. Commendations	11

I. Introduction

South Puget Sound Community College is a comprehensive, open door community college that is committed to providing quality educational opportunities to meet the intellectual, academic, vocational, career, personal, and developmental needs of its students and members of the community. SPSCC was founded in 1962 as Olympia Vocational Technical Institute and expanded their mission in 1980 to become a comprehensive community college. The college serves more than 6,000 students quarterly and offers a variety of certificates, AA and AS transfer degrees, and associate's of technical arts degrees. SPSCC primarily serves Thurston County and has students enrolled from Mason County, Grays Harbor County, and Lewis County. Partnerships with regional businesses and communities include customized education and training services, Small Business Development Center training and consultations, educational opportunities with the local school districts, and workforce development.

The purpose of the visit was to conduct a regular interim evaluation of South Puget Sound Community College in Olympia, Washington on October 24-25, 2005. The scope of the regular interim evaluation allows the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) to monitor institutional changes, evaluate the institution's ongoing compliance with the NWCCU eligibility requirements, standards, and policies, and evaluate the extent to which the institution has adequately addressed recommendations from the full-scale evaluation and subsequent visits.

The recommendations reviewed for this visit relate back to the findings from the October 23-25, 2000 Full-Scale Evaluation, the April 19, 2002 Regular Interim Evaluation, and the April 23, 2003 Focused Interim Evaluation.

The following provides the official schedule for the Regular Interim Evaluation visit for Drs. Gonzales and Hagan:

Regular Interim Evaluation Interview Schedule Monday, October 24, 2005

Dr. Danny Gonzales

7:30-8:00 a.m.	Welcome Reception
8:00-8:30 a.m.	Entry meeting with Dr. Minnaert
8:30-9:30 a.m.	Prep Time
9:30-10:15 a.m.	Dr. Beehler, Vice President for Instruction
10:30-11:15 a.m.	Dr. Hutcherson, Vice President for Human Resources
11:15-12:00 p.m.	ARC Faculty Paul Smith-Math/CIS Andrew Sergienko-Philosophy; Heather Williams –ESL/EFL
12:00-1:00p.m.	Lunch with Dr. Minnaert
1:00-1:45 p.m.	Classified Staff Representatives
1:45-2:15 p.m.	Kay Cooper, English Professor
2:15-2:45 p.m.	Jesse Abbott, Mathematics Professor

2:45-3:15 p.m. Charleen Goodrich, Assessment Coordinator
3:15-4:00 p.m. Assessment and Research Council (ARC)
4:00-5:00 p.m. Open Faculty and Staff Discussion

Dr. Jacky Hagan

7:30-8:00 a.m. Welcome Reception
8:00-8:30 a.m. Entry meeting with Dr. Minnaert
8:30-9:30 a.m. Prep Time
9:30-10:15 a.m. Nancy McKinney, Vice President for Administrative Services
10:30-11:15 a.m. College Council Members
11:15-11:30 a.m. Dr. Mark Van Den Hende, Dean of Hawks Prairie Center
11:15-12:00 p.m. ARC Faculty Paul Smith-Math/CIS Andrew Sergienko-
Philosophy; Heather Williams –ESL/EFL
12:00-1:00p.m. Lunch with Dr. Minnaert
1:00-1:45 p.m. Dr. Coats, Vice President for Student Services
1:45-2:30 p.m. Russell Rose, Director of Library/Media Services
2:30-2:45 p.m. Carla Idohl-Corwin, Dean of Student Financial Services
2:45-3:15 p.m. Kathy Lundeen, Dean of Enrollment Services
3:15-3:45 p.m. Student Senate Members
4:00-5:00 p.m. Open Faculty and Staff Discussion

Tuesday, October 25, 2005

Dr. Danny Gonzales

8:00-8:45 a.m. Leonor Fuller, Board Chair and Dick Wadley, Vice Chair
9:00-9:45 a.m. Instructional Deans
10:00-10:30 a.m. Marcia Somer, Accreditation Co-Chair, Professor of Early
Childhood Education
10:30-11:00 a.m. Prep Time
11:15-11:45 p.m. Exit meeting with Dr. Minnaert, Dr. Beehler, Marcia Somer

Dr. Jacky Hagan

8:00-8:45 a.m. Leonor Fuller, Board Chair and Dick Wadley, Vice Chair
9:00-9:45 a.m. Instructional Deans
9:45-11:00 a.m. Prep Time
11:15-11:45 p.m. Exit meeting with Dr. Minnaert, Dr. Beehler, and Marcia Somer

The evaluation team acknowledges the administration, faculty, trustees, staff, and students for the hospitality extended to them. The team also notes that the report submitted by South Puget Sound Community College was thorough, and support documentation was well organized by each standard and provided to the evaluators in a timely manner prior to the visit and during the two-day evaluation. The evaluators also want to thank SPSCC for the excellent scheduling assistance for the evaluation visit.

Workroom exhibits for Part A regarding general recommendations from the most recent full-scale evaluation and Part B concerning institutional changes provided additional clarification and context.

II. Findings

The findings for the SPSCC Regular Interim Evaluation Report are organized in two sections. Part A addresses actions taken regarding recommendations in the last full-scale evaluation committee report and subsequent reports. Part B addresses information related to institutional changes.

Part A

The October 2000 Evaluation Committee Report identified nine General Recommendations. Four General Recommendations were identified in the Regular Interim Report submitted in April 2002. SPSCC has made progress in each of these recommended areas. Each of the recommendations is summarized in the following five categories:

- Institutional effectiveness and evaluation process
- Educational program assessment and integration into campus planning processes
- Part-time faculty evaluation system and review of credentials
- Administrative assignments
- Campus communications

The following evaluates the extent to which SPSCC has addressed these five categories.

Institutional effectiveness and evaluation process.

Concerning General Recommendations 1 and 2 from the October 2000 Full-Scale Evaluation, and with the president and campus leadership spearheading the effort, the college has implemented an institutional effectiveness program that also involves the Board of Trustees. The plan is widely communicated to the college and community. The strategic plan, Visions for the 21st Century, has engaged a number of constituencies and community members. In addition the administration has purposefully developed materials to make public these goals and accomplishments.

Similar but also important to the strategic planning model is the model for educational program assessment. Once the assessment plan is fully developed and implemented, consistence comparative outcomes from all educational programs will make a more significant to institutional planning.

Educational program assessment and integration into campus planning processes.

Regarding General Recommendations 3, 4, and 5 from the October 2000 Full-Scale Evaluation, educational program assessment has begun with the initial steps toward developing a consistent model to apply to all instructional programs. The college should continue its efforts and aggressively pursue the completion of a clearly understood

assessment plan which applies consistent standards across all instructional programs. The assessment plan should then be aggressively implemented, and the outcomes analyzed and evenly integrated into the institutional planning and budgeting processes.

While extensive efforts have been initiated to implement an educational program assessment process for all educational programs, the evaluation team determined that the maturation of the assessment plan and results from the process were uneven and incomplete. The April 2002 Regular Interim Report noted that there was not adequate evidence that the college regularly assess all educational programs. The evaluators did find evidence that several departments had made significant progress. However, some departments seemed unclear as to what constitutes classroom assessment and student learning. For example, job placement is an important program completion outcome, but other measurements are important to evaluate measure student learning.

The April 2003 Focused Interim Report noted that SPSCC developed a grid format that identified course objectives, progress, and outcomes. However, the assessment process has yielded limited and inconsistent complete program evaluation results that have a focus on teaching and learning as included in Recommendation 5 in the October 2000 Full-Scale Evaluation Report. Additionally, there was little evidence provided to the evaluators that program assessments to date were being utilized in campus planning and budgeting processes.

In reference to General Recommendation 4 from the October 2000 Full-Scale Evaluation, the college has identified expected student learning outcomes and published these outcomes in the college catalog for each degree and certificate program. During the last five years, SPSCC has also adopted a new graduation requirement that is intended to measure certificate and degree student outcomes. The Academic Profile (AP) instrument is designed to assess whether or not the students have developed these abilities. All new students are required to complete the non-graded test prior to receiving their degree or certificate. Since this is a new graduation requirement, new students are only now being to complete programs and take the test. Faculty and staff seemed unsure how the results from the AP would actually be used. Since this student graduation requirement is currently being implemented to gauge the college's certificate and degree requirements, it is critical that SPSCC evaluate the scores from the profile and analyze the value provide by the results in its relationship to the larger educational program assessment and institutional effectiveness program.

Administrative assignments.

General Recommendation Six from the 2000 Full-Scale Evaluation Visit and General Recommendation from the April 2002 Regular Interim Evaluation noted the need to review faculty responsibilities associated with administrative assignments. In summer 2001, a task force was established and recommended changes to the administrative and organizational structures of the academic and technical divisions. As a result, administrative division deans were appointed to provide faculty support. Interviews conducted by the evaluators indicated that the reorganization has been a positive change.

Part-time faculty evaluation system and review of credentials.

The evaluation team verified through campus interviews and supporting exhibits that General Recommendations 7 and 8 from the October 2000 Full-Scale Evaluation pertaining to the verification of part-time faculty credentials and part-time faculty evaluation process were addressed in the April 2002 Regular Interim Report. The Human Resources Department provided a copy of a Part-Time Faculty Handbook. This handbook is distributed to part-time faculty and appears to be an excellent resource and method to increase communications and make them aware of policies and procedures, including the evaluation process and three indices for being evaluated. Additionally, the Human Resources Department provided an Excel spreadsheet documenting the credentials of part-time faculty by division. The process also noted the review of transcripts and vocation certifications.

Campus communications.

General Recommendation 9 of the October 2000 Full-Scale Report pertained to communications between administrators and faculty. The April 2002 Regular Interim Report verified that SPSCC addressed the communication issues. The evaluators had the opportunity to meet individually with a number of representatives from the various campus groups such as staff, faculty, students, trustees, and administrators and also in groups such as College Council and the Assessment Research Council (ARC). During these interviews, it was generally stated the president and other members of the college's administration have made sincere efforts to encourage open communications between faculty and administration. Many examples of strategies to improve communications were validated in the regular interim report and focused interim report.

Part B

SPSCC has experienced relative stability over the past five years that can be attributed to a growing local and state economy. The expansion of new facilities and programs such as the opening of the Center for the Arts and the purchase of land in Hawks Prairie are direct results of a stable economy. Additionally, the evaluation team also acknowledges that SPSCC's stability is also the result of an encouragement by campus leaders in promoting a spirit of collegiality that and open communications.

Standard One—Institutional Mission and Goals, Planning, and Effectiveness

General Recommendations from the October 2000 Full-Scale Evaluation regarding Standard One were addressed in Part A of this report.

The evaluation team interviewed a number of campus representatives who freely discussed their participation as members on College Council and indicated that there are opportunities to offer input on strategic planning. The strategic plan focuses on students, educational programs, resources, and the community. The SPSCC Board of Trustees and college leadership is actively engaged in the strategic planning process. The following goals have been adopted by the Board of Trustees:

- Attract and retain a diverse student population and support their success.
- Offer flexible, accessible programs and services responsive to the changing employment and educational needs of the community that foster successful transition to educational and career advancement.
- Develop and use the financial, intellectual, technological, and physical resources necessary to create and sustain high quality programs and services.
- Foster an environment in which students, staff, and faculty of diverse cultures, ages, sexual orientation, races, religions, abilities, ethnicities, and nationalities work and learn in an atmosphere of intellectual freedom and mutual respect.
- Value and nurture its human resources by supporting communication, a sense of community and well-being, personal and professional development, and recognition.
- Be an educational resource for the community and partner with local, regional, national, and international organizations.

The Board convenes study sessions in addition to the regularly scheduled meetings to focus on the key performance goals and outcomes measurements. The outcome of these study sessions involves the review of key findings and issues related to Measuring Institutional Excellence and developing strategies and policy recommendations in coordination with campus leadership. Among other purposes, the focus of these strategies and recommendations is to anticipate change and direct SPSCC's marketing activities. For example, one of the changes pertained to attracting and retaining diverse students. As a result of the strategic planning process, a Diversity and Equity Director position was established. Additionally, a diversity course requirement for graduation was added to the curriculum.

Overall, the Board of Trustees and President are directly involved in discussions which will determine SPSCC's future vision and plan for the Hawks Prairie Center. The Board and President are commended for their active leadership in this area and are encouraged to continue.

Standard Two—Educational Programs and Its Effectiveness

General Recommendations from the October 2000 Full-Scale Evaluation regarding Standard Two were addressed in Part A of this report.

Based on the interviews conducted by the evaluation team, the Assessment Research Council (ARC) was instituted in fall 2003 and is responsible for assessment at the program and division level. This committee shares the primary responsibility with the division deans in the design of the assessment plan. This committee meets twice during the quarter and is designed to institutionalize assessment at SPSCC. It was mentioned that the flexibility of the assessment grid works well for all the divisions. In addition to ARC, it was noted that there are multiple venues to address assessment such as the regular division dean meetings, program advisory board meetings, Instructional Council, and College Council. ARC has also increased communication among divisions if an assessment tool being used is successful. It was noted that ARC is going to focus on the

critical analysis component for assessment, enhance documentation of curricula changes that occur, and review the general education courses and determine how to use the findings from the Academic Profile Instrument (API).

Regarding personnel involved in assessment related activities, there was an institutional researcher that provided the technical assistance for faculty working on assessment and provided consistency; however that position was not filled when vacated. Additionally, the Assessment Coordinator position is a one-third release time position that is held by a full-time faculty member, and this position assists faculty with assessment.

Based on the 2005 Regular Interim Evaluation submitted by SPSCC, supporting exhibits, and interviews conducted during the visit, the evaluation team noted two concerns regarding educational program planning and assessment. The first concern was the need to follow through on the development and implementation of a formal systematic assessment process that will yield course and program learning outcomes that can be incorporated into program evaluation, budgeting, and strategic planning. It was determined the maturation of the assessment plan and institutional processes related to assessment since the October 2000 Full-Scale Evaluation have not been fulfilled. The second concern is that SPSCC evaluate and determine strategies to provide adequate institutional research support that would add value, consistency, and sustainability to assessment activities and program planning. Research support and training especially for faculty in directly assessing classroom teaching and learning as well as conducting program assessments is crucial to assure that SPSCC meet the Commission's standards.

Although the division deans and college administrators have the primary responsibility for assuring educational program planning and assessment, the program falls short in terms of consistency of campus-wide implementation, completeness, analysis, and achieving outcomes used in the strategic planning processes. Additionally, it is not evident that there is a clear understanding and follow-up as to how outcome results will be used. The college's leadership is in a key position to review how to establish a process that institutionalizes the critical analysis of institutional research and data to systematically assess and evaluate all educational programs.

Since the October 2000 Full-Scale Evaluation, SPSCC has made efforts to provide support for institutional assessment and research. During the interviews with faculty, staff, and administration, the evaluation team noted the concerns and suggestions concerning the benefit of reviewing the role of institutional research and assessment support and increase attention to these related functions to enable academic faculty and departments to have additional support that was consistent. There is a consensus that the division deans will continue to work together and with ARC to develop clarity and a clearer understanding and use of consistent assessment standards on a regular schedule for all academic program reviews. Once program reviews are completed, it is important that the evaluations be integrated into to campus planning and budgeting processes.

Standard Three—Students

Although many changes were included in the regular and interim reports, there are three changes that are noted as significant and impact student admissions and grading. SPSCC has implemented new mathematics and English placement test cut scores as part of the student admissions process. As a result, these changes need further analysis to confirm initial positive results. Faculty and admissions staff shared with the evaluators that the changes appear to be resulting in more accurate student course placements.

Significant changes were also made to the student wait-list policy to centralize the process as part of the regular student registration process. Previously, student wait-lists were maintained within each of the academic departments. This change has promoted easier access and a fairer enrollment process. Another change that has occurred is the implementation of a web-based grading system that is utilized by full- and part-time faculty.

The addition to the Student Union Building that was funded largely through student support has also resulted in significantly improved opportunities for student programming.

Finally, the Student Services division has made a commitment to develop standardized assessment procedures for all departments. While previously informal reviews were helpful, it is crucial that a systemic process for program assessment be fully developed and implemented that leads to improvements to the services offered, as well as making a contribution towards SPSCC's strategic planning and evaluation activities.

Standard Four—Faculty

Refer to Part A of this report.

Standard Five—Library and Information Resources

SPSCC's Library and Media Center have embraced online learning strategies in order to keep pace with the growth of instruction and meet the demands of other program changes. During the last five years, the acquisition of the Spydus automated system has made a significant impact on the collections at the library.

Additionally, the library staff have supported an electronic reserve system that now serves most academic disciplines. Faculty benefit from this web service as a means of sharing materials with their students. The success of the online collections and resources as well as the online faculty websites presents a challenge to keep the system current and provide training for students in using the systems. As these accomplishments accelerate the demand for technology, the college will need to continuously evaluate how to meet the increasing demands for web services.

Standard Six—Governance and Administration

It was mentioned in both the 2005 Regular Interim Report and verified in interviews conducted by the evaluation team that the most significant policy implemented involved the reorganization of the instructional administrative structure. In fall 2003, the division director positions were held by full-time faculty that were assigned half-time appointments with division responsibilities. These positions were replaced with full-time exempt administrative positions.

It was also noted in the interviews that the SPSCC Faculty Senate began recently meeting again after being inactive for several years. As the Faculty Senate begins to review its bylaws, there may be a clearer role of its involvement in institutional governance.

In 2003-04, the Assessment Research Council (ARC) was established to facilitate increased communications about assessment and consists of broad campus representation.

As of June 2006, the current long-term serving president, Dr. Minnaert, will retire. Due to his seniority with the college as well as the state community college leadership group, this will represent a significant change at the institution.

Standard Seven—Finance

The evaluation team reviewed the SPSCC's audits for the past five years and noted there have been no significant changes in the financial structure of the college since the October 2000 full-scale evaluation visit. Prudent budgeting decisions and stable state support have resulted in adequate services. However, it is noted that student tuition increases reflect some decline in state support. Currently, decreases in the fall 2005 term enrollments underline the importance of continually balancing resources. The decline in enrollments is being viewed seriously, for it represents the first time in many years the college has experienced reductions in enrollments.

The college has benefited from state support that resulted in the August 2005 acquisition of a significant property purchase for the future full development of a permanent Hawks Prairie Campus. This long term effort is expected to result in a comprehensive second campus for the district in ten years. In the next ten years, SPSCC has secured a 10 year lease for increased instructional space to meet increasing students' needs at Hawks Prairie. This effort has a direct and important relationship to fulfilling the college's missions and goals as outlined in the strategic plan.

It is also noted that leadership for the college's administrative services has changed. The new vice president started in spring 2005 brings previous community college financial management experience.

Standard Eight—Physical Facilities

Three significant changes have occurred in the physical facilities during the last five years that included the construction of the Child and Family Education Building and the Center for the Arts. Also, there was a significant addition to the Student Union Building. While the college has planned for and has identified several building projects, a Natural Science Complex is slated to begin construction in 2007, and a Learning Resource Center is slated to begin construction in 2009. As noted previously in this report, the construction of the Hawks Prairie Campus is to be completed in approximately 10 years.

Standard Nine—Institutional Integrity

Based on the support documentation included in the exhibits and interviews with representatives from the various campus groups, campus policies and procedures demonstrate that SPSCC is ensuring that high ethical standards are present in its treatment of students, faculty, and staff in the college's maintenance of institutional integrity. A number of activities and efforts were noted in the interviews about how policies and concerns have been identified and addressed by the Human Resources Department.

III. Summary

The evaluation team verifies that progress has been made to address the General Recommendations contained in the October 2000 Full-Scale Evaluation and April 2002 Regular Interim Evaluation. This assessment is based on the 2005 Regular Interim Evaluation Report submitted by South Puget Sound Community College and the support exhibits and campus interviews. SPSCC has taken a proactive position and anticipated the opportunities associated with the expansion of campus facilities and programs. The Visions for the 21st Century 2000-05 Strategic Plan demonstrates the foresight by SPSCC and the community to plan for the future.

The assessment plan continues to be a work in progress. The continued development and implementation of a comprehensive and systematic educational assessment plan is critical, and the leveraging of institutional resources and dedication of faculty professional development will help determine the overall success and long-term sustainability of the assessment plan. As stated in Policy 2.2-Educational Assessment: "Assessment of educational quality has always been at the heart of the accreditation process." SPSCC is at a critical point to fully demonstrate the utilization of outcomes assessment across all instructions programs and provide campus-wide examples of successful plans for assessing educational outcomes.

The evaluation team notes that especially the college's faculty are interested and committed to learning about and strengthening classroom evaluation and program assessment and using the results in overall program and campus planning.

IV. Commendations

Through the analysis of statements of evidence based upon information verified in the October 2005 Regular Interim Evaluation by South Puget Sound Community College, institutional documentation submitted prior to and during the visit, and information discovered through interviews with campus constituencies, the following Commendations are issued by the evaluation team:

Commendations

1. The collegiality evident among faculty, students, staff, administration, and division deans is commended and is serving to position SPSCC for continued positive development and change as facilities and programs expand.
2. The SPSCC Board of Trustees and President and staff are commended for their dedication and persistence to fully develop an institutional effectiveness program and strategic planning process that is positioned to provide for college evaluation, vision, and planning.
3. SPSCC is commended for planning facilities for the future, especially in the continued attention and recent land acquisition to fully develop the Hawks Prairie Center.