

Executive Summary

INTRODUCTION

South Seattle Community College is one of three colleges that comprise the Seattle Community College District. Located in a residential area of southwest Seattle, it draws students from the surrounding neighborhoods and throughout the Puget Sound area. In a typical year, the college enrolls 14,000 students from diverse backgrounds and experiences. Historically, the thirty-one year old college has experienced a stable workforce, student profile, and program inventory. During the past five years, however, there have been dramatic changes in each of these areas. The college's strategic planning has been significantly affected by these changes.

Approximately 20 percent of the college enrollment is from apprentices taking apprenticeship courses at the college's Duwamish Industrial Education and Apprenticeship Center (Duwamish) located in an industrial part of town four miles from the main campus. The student profile changes dramatically if only the main campus is considered. If one considers only the main campus, 50 percent of the students are students of color; 38 percent are immigrants or refugees and 57 percent of those students attended high school in another country. These percentages distinguish South Seattle Community College among other community colleges in the state system, and they present unique challenges and opportunities.

Another distinguishing characteristic of South Seattle Community College is its program mix. It has by far the smallest percentage of academic transfer FTEs of any community college in the state. On the other hand, the percentage of English as a Second Language (ESL) enrollment represents one of the highest in the state. It has a very broad spectrum of professional/technical programs, ranging from heavy industrial programs such as diesel mechanic and welding, and "retail" programs such as culinary arts and floristry to high-tech programs such as LAN (Local Area Network) and Webmaster.

Again, challenges and opportunities are presented by this diverse and unique program mix.

A third distinguishing characteristic of South is its relationship with the surrounding community. As the college mission indicates, it is a close relationship. The geographic location of the college and the surrounding area is such that it creates a distinct environment. This has helped to foster a culture in which the community truly takes ownership of and pride in the college to a degree that is not common among urban community colleges. The college's events center, arboretum, one-stop center, and retail operations are all open to the public as a way to enhance the associated educational programs while integrating the community into the college.

One of the most unique features of the college is that it is the site of the future Seattle Chinese Garden. This garden, scheduled for phase I construction in fall 2001, will be the largest authentic Chinese garden of its type in the world outside of China. The project is being funded by a separate foundation not connected to the college. However, plans are being developed to utilize the garden as a catalyst for curriculum development for, not just the obvious program—landscape/horticulture—but for culinary arts, fine and performing arts, history, literature, and philosophy. The plan is to create an Asian Area Studies Program using cultural and societal elements that are the foundation of a Chinese garden as an inspiration and source of learning outcomes. This project will help to bring our community, student body, and curriculums together in a very unusual and powerful way.

FINDINGS

The self-study process helped the college to identify several factors that need further study, clarification, and/or action (Issues and Actions) as well as a number of areas in which the college is achieving excellent results and national recognition (Major Institutional Initiatives).

ISSUES AND ACTIONS

INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

The college is continuously engaged in institutional effectiveness activities that include all the critical elements from mission based goals to decisions based on analysis of information derived from assessing outcomes related to the goals. These activities need to be better coordinated and articulated in order to form a more coherent plan that has its own identity and is readily understood, both internally and externally. Institutional effectiveness activities occur at all levels and throughout the college, but they have not been described in the context of an Institutional Effectiveness Plan per se. Consequently, a common understanding about the nature of, and rationale for, such a plan is lacking. The college needs to develop that understanding by promoting awareness of how the institutional effectiveness activities do tie together and ultimately how they have affected important decisions and policies leading to a better, stronger, more responsive institution.

In an effort to thoroughly integrate institutional effectiveness into the culture of the college, several steps have been taken. An Institutional Effectiveness Committee has been formed with the charge of overseeing the Institutional Effectiveness Plan and monitoring implementation and progress. The fall 2000 Convocation Day had as its theme institutional effectiveness and several professional development activities that day focused on the plan and how it affects various departments and the college as a whole. The ability to effectively work with the Institutional Effectiveness Plan will be added as a performance measure for administrative evaluations. The college will publish a document, for both internal and external communities, that clearly and succinctly describes the plan and will regularly publish results that indicate how well the college is doing in meeting its goals. The same will be done via the new college internet. This has been done before but not in the context of an Institutional Effectiveness Plan.

INTRA-CAMPUS COMMUNICATION

This is a concern of some faculty, staff, and administrators. Five years ago, the college underwent a “reorganization” of sorts that is seen by some as

the cause of campus communication problems, a weak sense of community, and excessive workloads. The degree to which this view is correct has been debated across campus. It ranges from none at all to very significant. Regardless, there is a perception among some that this reorganization resulted in many changes to the campus culture. If the actions that constituted the reorganization are isolated and reviewed, what actually happened was a reduction and relocation of staff, particularly in the instructional areas. Direct support staff and administrators for instructional units were reduced and pooled together in a single location to provide services to large administrative units such as the entire Professional/Technical Program. As the self study indicates, some felt that this injured the *esprit de corps* within affected departments and created some confusion about who was doing what and who was responsible for what.

In order to respond to the concern about communication, certain actions have been taken and/or are planned. The college has developed an intranet that provides information about all major college activities as well as council and committee minutes. Organizational charts, position descriptions, strategic plans, and accomplishments are also part of this intranet. Monthly “lunch clubs” are held where the college community discusses major issues on campus. The Teaching and Learning Center (TLC) will offer to all employees an array of programs that reflect the characteristic elements of a learning organization. It is felt that such offerings will enhance communication and build community. This year the college will conduct a review of the business processes ranging from workflow to information management processes. The way the college does business will be reviewed and evaluated and recommendations will be made on how to improve the work environment and, most importantly, student learning.

ENROLLMENT

There has been a significant shift in enrollments among programs. The self-study provides details about these shifts. What is critical about this at the institutional level is the effect that it has had and will have on planning, staffing, and resource allocation. Full-time enrollments in Associate of

Applied Science professional/technical programs as well as graduation rates have dropped. More and more students are enrolling under the “*a la carte*,” system, i.e., they want specific content and they want it in a format that is easily accessible to them. All of this has created some concern over where the college is going or what the vision is.

Some steps that have been taken (some proactively and some reactively) include the following: The college established stronger connections with industry, which has resulted in the development of more industry-based certification programs, more competency-based modularized programs, and more short-term training programs.

In addition, the college is developing distance education programs, off-site programs, and high-demand programs such as Information Technology, which are funded by state earmarked money.

The vision for how the college meets its mission to prepare students to meet THEIR goals becomes one of flexibility and responsiveness within the context of quality student learning. The Institutional Effectiveness Plan will be evaluated to determine whether or not the college is succeeding at this and revised accordingly.

SHIFTING STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

In addition to its population of “traditional” students, the college has a very high percentage of ESL students, large numbers of welfare reform students, a significant number of students enrolled in short-term programs, increasing numbers of students seeking only specific content and not degrees or certificates, and a large contingent of developmental students. However, the programs and services that are offered to these “nontraditional” students have not always been institutionalized, that is, the college seems to be reacting awkwardly at times with makeshift programs where putting out the fire drives the process. The fundamental structure of the college needs to be analyzed in light of this student profile. How should the college be structured so that providing service to these students is part of the core business rather than a special task where we regularly have to create something a new or “re-invent the wheel”?

The answers to this question will be reflected in strategic planning, and the continual assessment of progress in this area will be part of the Institutional Effectiveness Plan.

A Workforce Education position and an Economic Development position are examples of two positions that have recently been created to serve emerging student and industry needs. But, a comprehensive approach needs to be taken. This year the College Council will be asked to conduct a college-wide study into the implications that the student profile has for organizational process and structure. The Council will make recommendations to the President’s Cabinet regarding this matter.

TURNOVER

There has been significant turnover in staff recently due to retirements and a very strong economy that has drawn some employees away to better salaries and benefits. This has created some concern on campus about the working environment as it relates to retaining good employees. This concern has surfaced even though the recent climate survey indicates good employee satisfaction with the working environment in general.

Several actions have been taken to improve the working environment. The new TLC will offer a full array of professional development opportunities open to all employees. Supervisors are encouraged to assist employees in arranging work schedules so as to allow participation in professional development activities. This is consistent with the college’s learning organization philosophy. Although more needs to be done to support the part-time faculty, there have been significant gains in the areas of salaries and benefits—salaries for part-time faculty were recently increased by an average of over 15 percent.

Salaries for staff in “high demand” areas such as information technology were increased in an effort to reach a more competitive salary and consequently retain staff in these areas. However, as the incredibly strong economy in this area continues and as that economy raises the cost of living in Seattle, the college will need to develop new and stronger programs and policies to retain excellence in its own workforce.

DISTRICT/COLLEGE RESPONSIBILITIES

The District Office, (the district) under the leadership of a new Chancellor, has recently completed a strategic plan that serves as an umbrella for the colleges' strategic plans. This self-study describes the relationship between the plans. The district has taken a more active role in the entire area of research and planning and has hired a Vice Chancellor to coordinate this area. This initiative is not fully developed to date and, consequently, some college personnel are not clear as to the benefits to the college. Also, the respective roles that the district and the college play in this new area are not completely understood by all. The same can be said for the area of administrative services. As more district-wide initiatives are developed, the issue of who does what and why becomes an area of concern.

The district strategy is to identify those programs and services where it makes sense to work together as a district and to clearly define how that work will be done. An outstanding example of where that has happened since the last accreditation visit to South is the highly successful 22 million dollar fund raising campaign that was conducted through a coordinated three college district structure. The colleges received money they never would have had they acted independently.

Another example where coordination at the district level has worked well is in the area of information technology. However, the college's reliance on a statewide legacy Management Information System (MIS) negatively affects its ability to get information in an effective and timely manner. This is not the fault of the district but the results are sometimes attributed to it. Moving to a web-based fully integrated MIS is a top priority for the state system of community and technical colleges.

A new area where district coordination efforts are being expended is distance learning. Again, a new initiative such as this has created some concern over process, roles, and responsibilities. However, there are structures in place, some even defined in union contracts, that allow for considered discussion about such matters as these initiatives unfold. As a result the district and the college are moving ahead in positive ways with innovation and in ways that mutually

benefit the respective missions. As these coordinated efforts grow in number, efforts will be made to clarify responsibilities as well as improve communications between involved units.

LIBRARY AND LEARNING CENTER

January 2000 the new Library and Learning Center (LLC) opened. The capital budget contained \$50,000 for each of two years for acquiring collections. There is some concern on campus that the college has not demonstrated that its commitment to continuing to increase its collections goes beyond this capital budget and into the ongoing operations budget.

In order to respond to this concern, the college will develop a five-year plan that is supported by the operations budget and that will ensure student access to quality collections.

MAJOR INSTITUTIONAL INITIATIVES

FLEXIBLE AND RESPONSIVE PROGRAMS

South Seattle Community College has taken a leadership role in Washington in worker retraining, welfare reform, and employment programs. The college has worked closely with employers, social service agencies, community-based organizations, and other educational institutions to provide technical training, case management, and other support services.

AFFILIATE WORKFORCE SITE

The college was among the first in Washington State to provide short-term training programs for welfare recipients, and at-risk youth who need retraining. These programs utilize a ladder approach, i.e., skills that are obtained in these short-term programs apply towards certificate and degree programs at the college. The ultimate goal is wage progression that leads to long-term employment at livable incomes.

South is the first Affiliate WorkSource (one-stop) site in King County and the only college in the state that houses an Affiliate WorkSource site. Scheduled to open in fall 2000, the site brings together community partners to seamlessly provide comprehensive employment and training services to job seekers, workers, and employers. As a result, the

college's students will have access to a greater array of employment services and resources. The college provides space for a number of community-based organizations on the campus. These organizations provide recruitment, case management, and job placement assistance.

TRIO PROGRAMS

To better serve its diverse population, the college is one of the few colleges in the Northwest to have received all three of the Department of Education's TRIO grants: Upward Bound, Student Success Services, and Talent Search. All of these grants are designed to identify low income, first generation college students and support their successful completion of high school and college. Since approximately 70 percent of the college's students are the first in their families to complete college, these grants provide critical support services.

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

The college has increased its accessibility to students through the use of the world wide web and e-mail. It now offers admissions, registration, and unofficial transcript access to students via the web and e-mail advising. Other advances in technology have brought automated waitlisting and degree audits.

NEWHOLLY

The college has offered educational programs to the residents of the Holly Park Housing Project for nearly 25 years. After receiving a grant from HUD to revitalize the Holly Park community to include mixed-income housing, the community has been renamed NewHolly, symbolizing a new beginning. At the heart of the community is a Campus of Learners housed in a new learning center, which opened in 2000. The college is a major partner in the Campus of Learners, offering programs to reduce the "digital divide" as well as Adult Basic Education (ABE), ESL, technical training, computer programs, and college transfer courses.

LIBRARY AND LEARNING CENTER

After nearly ten years of planning, design, and construction, the college's new LLC opened in January 2000. The new facility features Internet II and the

latest in technology for students, a 96 computer Information Commons, a Teaching and Learning Center, a training lab for faculty and staff, and an interactive television classroom. In addition, the facility centralizes the math lab, Writing Center, and tutoring services.

ASIAN AREA STUDIES PROGRAM

Due in large part to Seattle's close "sister city" relationship with Chongqing in China, the college will be the site of the largest authentic Chinese garden of its type in the world outside of China. This relationship has led to the development of an Asian Area Studies Program at South. Faculty are now developing a certificate in Asian Studies to be offered in 2001. Additional classes featuring an Asian focus are offered through the Culinary Arts and Landscape/Horticulture programs.

DISTRICT DISTANCE LEARNING CONSORTIUM

The college, as part of the Seattle Community College District Distance Learning consortium, offers a wide range of telecourses, video cassette courses, on-line courses, and Northwest Teleweb courses (a combination of television and world-wide-web). Classes for the Associate of Arts (AA) degree programs as well as technical degrees are offered on a regular basis. Student and library services are available to all distance learning students. The consortium was formed Spring 2000 with a goal to provide one-stop, integrated student support services and a district-wide coordinated distance learning schedule. The first such schedule was produced Summer 2000.

FUNDRAISING SUCCESS

Recognizing that public funds will not provide the level of excellence that South Seattle Community College has committed itself to, the college is a leader in the state in raising funds to support students and programs at the college. In the mid-1990s, the college was a part of the Seattle Community College District's successful \$22 million fundraising drive, which provided student scholarships, instructional equipment, and faculty/staff professional development opportunities. A current \$1.2 million campaign is underway to fund a major renovation of the Food Sciences Building, to meet the goals of

maintaining and enhancing one of the leading Culinary Arts programs in the Northwest. The SSCC Foundation awards 100 scholarships each year.

COMMUNITY CONNECTION

As highlighted in the college's mission statement, a strong commitment to partnerships and the community distinguishes South Seattle Community College. The college enjoys exceptionally strong support from its community, evidenced by the fact that nearly 1,000 individuals visit the campus each month. The college has built strong partnerships with the local Articulation Council through its TechPrep and TRIO programs. It serves as the location for the largest apprenticeship-training center in the Northwest, providing relevant instruction to more than 1,000 apprentices. A new building, the ACT Center is being planned to support this training effort. In addition, the outstanding reputation of the ESL and ABE programs has led to contracts exceeding a million dollars to provide basic education to the community and local companies. Strong technical programs have led to contract training with a number of local industries. In addition, the City of Seattle, King County, and private organizations and individuals have partnered with the college in building a new soccer field.