

*Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities*

**A FOCUSED INTERIM REPORT**

**Southwestern Oregon Community College  
Coos Bay, Oregon**

**April 24, 2009**

**Prepared by**

**Laurie Kaye Clary  
Vice President for Instruction  
Grays Harbor College  
Aberdeen, Washington**

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

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

- I. Introduction
- II. Findings
- III. Summary

## **I. Introduction**

The purpose of the visit at Southwestern Oregon Community College on Friday, April 24, 2009, was to conduct a Focused Interim Evaluation. The focused interim report submitted by the Evaluator provides a thorough review and evaluation of the institution's progress specifically regarding Recommendation 1 of the Spring 2007 Regular Interim Evaluation Report:

1. It is recommended that the College identify and publish the expected learning outcomes for each of its degree and certificate programs. It is further recommended that the College develop measures to assess the effectiveness of each of its educational programs and utilize the resulting data to make judgments about program effectiveness, allocate resources, and make necessary modifications. It is recommended that through regular and systematic assessment, the College demonstrates that students who complete their programs have achieved these outcomes. Finally, it is recommended that the institution provide evidence that its assessment activities lead to the improvement of teaching and learning (Standard 2.B.2, 2.B.3).

The evaluation was intended to verify and clarify information contained in the Southwestern Oregon Community College Focused Interim Accreditation Report, March 2009. The analysis is inclusive of statements of evidence from that report, from institutional documentation submitted prior to and during the visit, and discovered through interviews with campus constituencies.

The Evaluator acknowledges the administration, faculty, and staff for the gracious hospitality extended during the focused interim visit. The Evaluator also notes that the report submitted by Southwestern Oregon Community College was clearly written and well organized with substantial documentation. Advance materials and visit preparation were thorough and complete and every request was answered promptly. During the course of the visit, the evaluator met with the President, key administrative staff, faculty, and students. Pertinent documents were examined. Information was provided openly and candidly, and the evaluator was warmly received. It was evident the College viewed the focused visit as an opportunity for discussion and improvement. The following provides an agenda of interviews for the interim evaluation visit:

**Southwestern Oregon Community College  
Focused Interim Visit Agenda  
Friday, April 24, 2009**

7:30 am	Escorted to campus from Hotel- Sharon Smith
8:00 – 8:30 am	Patty Scott, Interim President
8:30-9:15 am	Val Martinez, Vice President of Instruction

9:15-10:00 am	Review of Supporting Materials
10:00-10:45 am	Robin Bunnell, Institutional Researcher
10:45-11:45 am	Walk to OCCI. Lunch
11:45 am – 12:15	Review of Supporting Materials
12:15 -1:00 pm	Meeting with Faculty Senate Members
1:00-1:30 pm	Meeting with students
1:30 – 2:00 pm	Meeting with faculty and others involved in assessment
2:00 – 3:00 pm	Exit Interview Preparation
3:00 - 3:30 pm	Exit Interview with Patty Scott
3:30 pm	Return to Hotel

## II. Findings

**Recommendation 1: It is recommended that the College identify and publish the expected learning outcomes for each of its degree and certificate programs. It is further recommended that the College develop measures to assess the effectiveness of each of its educational programs and utilize the resulting data to make judgments about program effectiveness, allocate resources, and make necessary modifications. It is recommended that through regular and systematic assessment, the College demonstrates that students who complete their programs have achieved these outcomes. Finally, it is recommended that the institution provide evidence that its assessment activities lead to the improvement of teaching and learning (Standard 2.B.2, 2.B.3).**

The Evaluator found evidence that Southwestern Oregon Community College has identified expected learning outcomes for each of its degree and certificate programs. AA/OT, AS/OT and AS degrees combine outcomes identified at the state level, general education outcomes, and discipline study learning outcomes. AGS degrees include statewide general education and distribution requirement learning outcomes. AAS degrees and designated certificates include applicable program learning outcomes identified at the state or national level as well as SOCC related instruction learning outcomes. The College has identified that work remains in linking the newly identified program outcomes to existing SOCC General Student Learning Outcomes.

The Evaluator verified that student learning outcomes for all degrees and certificates have been posted to the College's 2008-2009 online catalog and are clearly identified in the draft of the 2009-10 College Catalog. Transfer, General Education and Related Instruction outcomes are noted under degree requirements while career and technical outcomes are listed within the program descriptions. The Catalog also contains a statement addressing the College's Philosophy of General Education. Due to budget restrictions, outcomes will be included in program flyers beginning in 2009-10, although staff commented that they are pushing to update them sooner if possible.

Students interviewed had some familiarity with the existing General Student Learning Outcomes. They indicated that the SOCC general outcomes are listed on course syllabi and were able to provide specific examples of how these outcomes are emphasized, taught, and assessed. However, students were not clear on why these outcomes are targeted. They also had no knowledge of the newly developed program level student learning outcomes.

**Concern:** While program level outcomes have been developed and published, the Evaluator did not find sufficient evidence to indicate that program level student learning outcomes have been clearly communicated to students, the campus community or the general public.

Assessment of learning outcomes has been progressing on a variety of fronts since the 2007 visit. General education learning outcomes in writing, mathematics and critical thinking are measured through benchmark scores established from the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP) instrument. CAAP was selected in 2007 as the primary tool to support institutional-level general outcomes. Data is collected from the CAAP tests taken by each graduate to analyze the level of achievement of SOCC students. CAAP results for 2008 showed improvement for the three areas measured.

Faculty interviewed identified specific ways that results have been used to improve teaching and learning. Assessment activities include final grades, capstone projects, skills demonstrations and simulations, and practice and actual certification exams. Rubrics are included on course syllabi. Nursing faculty have decided to teach medical calculation each term and are reviewing if, by doing this, they are helping students improve math skills. Faculty stated that setting CAAP baselines and reviewing results has encouraged them to reassess more effective ways to encourage and measure critical thinking. CAAP data was used to make changes to Fire Science/EMT program by purchasing additional learning aids focused on critical thinking

The Evaluator found evidence that, using the Nichols Model, the college has tied degree and certificate outcomes to Institutional Strategic goals and has identified assessment criteria and tasks. While all programs have a current plan on file in TracDat, the Nichols model is still a work in progress. Faculty expressed appreciation of the framework the model provides and the concrete way it requires them to look at data to ensure they have enough information before making changes.

At this point, the College is still putting data into TracDat and providing training on how to access and use the information that is/will be available. The Institutional Researcher has linked institutional research reports to TracDat and is committed to working closely with faculty to make sure that data is easily accessible. She is implementing processes where faculty can provide updates to their assessment activities and outcomes via email. Faculty interviewed were able to clearly identify how TracDat will enable them to link course and program outcomes to budget and to strategic planning and expressed excitement about the possibilities of being able to use program outcomes attainment to formulate and prioritize budgets and strategic directions.

While the College has experienced significant budget challenges and leadership changes since the 2007 visit, the Evaluator found evidence that the current administration has a clear collaborative vision of assessment at both the institutional and educational program level. The SOCC Board of Education has requested new measures of institutional effectiveness that link directly to program outcomes assessment.

There was a consensus among the faculty interviewed that assessment activities are bringing about positive change across the campus. While the use of the Nichols Model and TracDat is still in the infancy stage, faculty conveyed satisfaction with the changes being implemented. Faculty comments to the Evaluator provide evidence that discussions are more thoughtful and faculty is engaged in dialogue about assessment: “We have always done simulation but it is hard to assess—how does it make a difference. We think it works but what is the added value to student learning?” “The brakes have been put on random change.” “It is valuable for us to see how we impact other disciplines and programs.” “It is useful and cross-disciplinary.” “The newer framework developed for program review helps provide a better way for part-timers to connect to the big picture. It has opened our eyes to who needs to be at the table.” “Every employee on campus has an impact on student success.” “There is a culture shift.”

The Evaluator found that Southwestern Oregon Community College has developed and published student learning outcomes for all its degree and certificate programs. The mechanisms are in place to clearly link results of assessment activities to resource allocation and improvement. The Evaluator also found sufficient evidence that faculty understand and have begun to use the results of assessment to improve teaching and learning.

**Concern:** Program outcomes and assessment processes have only recently been identified and implemented so the College has yet to complete a full cycle of measurement using their new processes. Therefore, results of their efforts are not yet available. Until results are available and analyzed, the College will not be able to fully demonstrate that assessment leads to improvement of teaching and learning.

### **III. Summary**

Southwestern Community College faculty, staff and administration made a serious effort to address Recommendation 1 of the Spring 2007 Regular Interim Evaluation Report. Educational Assessment continues to be a work in progress, and the Evaluator found evidence that the College is committed to full implementation and evaluation of assessment activities. Through the analysis of statements of evidence based upon information verified in the focused interim report submitted by Southwestern Oregon Community College institutional documentation submitted prior to and during the visit, and information discovered through interviews with campus constituencies, the following Commendation and Recommendation are issued by the Evaluator:

#### **Commendation**

1. The Evaluator commends the faculty and staff of Southwestern Oregon Community College for their continued focus on and commitment to maintaining and improving assessment efforts during serious budget reductions and significant leadership changes.

#### **Recommendation**

1. The Evaluator recommends that the College demonstrate, through regular and systematic assessment, that students who complete its programs of study have achieved the expected outcomes. In addition, the College must show that assessment activities lead to the improvement of teaching and learning. (Standards 2.B.2 and 2.B.3)