



**Shawnee**  
Community College

**ASSESSMENT FOCUSED VISIT**

**Submitted to:**

**North Central Association**

**Higher Learning Commission**



**NOVEMBER 2007**

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The collaborative effort of the SCC faculty and staff produced this focus report for assessment of student learning. This work is dedicated to all individuals of the Shawnee Community College district who will benefit from SCC's continued commitment to reflection and growth of the educational assessment process. Through the process of rewriting the SCC Assessment Plan, Shawnee Community College had an opportunity to review and evaluate a method of the development of a faculty-driven comprehensive process for collecting and analyzing data. It is through the dedication of the administration, faculty, staff and students that SCC can continue to prosper and grow to meet the educational needs of the residents of the college district.

## INSTITUTIONAL HISTORY

In July, 1996, Dr. Terry Ludwig became the fourth and current president of SCC. Under his leadership, the college remained committed to upholding quality education and community service programs. Dedicated to the expansion of the college, he continued this progress with a new building project which has come to fruition, currently housing additional classrooms, laboratories, and an educational center. He has ensured that the college remains on the cutting edge of technological advances and has brought new high-quality programs and alliances with business and industry. Under his leadership, the college continued to grow in number of students, staff, programs, and grants.

Dr. Larry Choate has been President of Shawnee Community College since January 2005. He is a native of Johnson County, Illinois, and resides near Vienna, Illinois, with his wife, Dianna, a recently retired first grade teacher at Vienna Grade School. Dr. Choate started his postsecondary career at Shawnee Community College in January 1988 as the dean of instructional services. Prior to Shawnee Community College, Dr. Choate was a superintendent at Cypress Elementary and Buncombe Grade Schools. He also served as principal and a teacher at Cypress Elementary. Dr. Choate is a 1965 graduate of Vienna High School. He earned an Associate of Arts Degree from Southeastern Illinois College in 1967. He completed a Bachelor degree in 1969, a Masters of Arts in Guidance and Counseling in 1978, and Ph.D. in Educational Administration in 1991 at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale.

Dr. Choate is very active in professional organizations as past Chairman of the Illinois Community College Chief Academic Officers and the Co-Chairman of the Illinois Articulation Initiative Secondary Education Panel. He is affiliated with the

Illinois Community College Council of Presidents, Chair of the Southern Illinois Collegiate Common Market, Co-Chair of the Southern Five Connect SI Group, and a State Board of Education Evaluator of University Teacher Preparation Programs.

Located near the confluence of the Mississippi and Ohio rivers, the college district is rural and known for its scenic beauty. It also, however, serves three (Alexander, Johnson, and Pulaski) of the eight most economically-challenged counties in the state of Illinois. In early 1999, this portion of the area served by SCC was designated by the United States Department of Agriculture as the Southernmost Illinois Delta Empowerment Zone. The college was instrumental in a community grant writing effort which resulted in the empowerment zone designation. Tourism and agriculture are primary industries in the SCC district.

In the year 2006, the population of the counties served by the college totaled 62,117, spread over an area of 1,446 square miles. The college district has a population density of 44 persons per square mile, compared to 223 persons for the state of Illinois. Between 2000 and 2007, the population has declined, with two counties losing population and three making slight gains.

## **STUDENT PROFILE**

The college serves several different populations, such as the traditional, non-traditional, workforce education, distance learning, escrow, and reverse transfer students.

These categories are discussed later in this chapter.

Based on FY06 data:

- Average age of the SCC student is 29.3
- Female students make up 66.5% of the student population
- Student population is 21.5% minority

## ACCREDITATION HISTORY

The North Central Association (NCA) granted SCC Correspondent Status in March of 1969. Following completion of its initial status report to NCA in May of 1971, the college was visited by an evaluation team in November of 1971. The status of the college was changed to Recognized Candidate for Accreditation in March of 1972 and Candidate for Accreditation in February of 1973.

The first self-study report was completed by SCC in October of 1973 prior to a NCA team visit in January of 1974. NCA granted Accreditation Status as an Associate Degree-Granting Institution in March of 1974, with the next on-site visit scheduled for 1977. Since the 1977 visit, SCC has hosted evaluation teams in 1981, 1987, 1990, 1995 and 2004 with accreditation continued on each occasion.

## ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

Name	Department	Division
Judy Strickland	Co-Coordinator	Humanities
Ruth Smith	Co-Coordinator	Business/Occupational/Technical
Roberta Christie	Mathematics Instructor	Math/Science
Connie Daily	Allied Health Instructor	Allied Health
JoElla Basler	Psychology Instructor	Humanities
Denise Griffith	Allied Health Instructor	Allied Health
Lori Armstrong	Life Science Instructor	Math/Science
Jerry Ainsworth	Computer Science Instructor	Business/Occupational/Technical
Michael Gates	Math/Science Lab Assistant	Math/Science
Joyce Devault	Executive Secretary II	Non-academic Support
Vacant	Adjunct Faculty	
Ron Duncan	Associate Vice President of Institutional and Economic Development	Non-academic Administrative
Tim Bellamey	Vice President of Instructional Services	Academic Administrative

**Note:** Adjunct position is open due to recent resignation of Marsha Nodeen who has served on the committee for the past two years.

## STUDENT ACADEMIC ASSESSMENT REPORT

### **Mandate given by North Central in the 2004 Ten Year Review Report:**

By the time of the Focused Visit in Fall, 2007, the team would expect the college to have developed and implemented a formal, systematic, and comprehensive program of assessment of student learning that includes the following:

- a. Documents a process for collecting, analyzing, and utilizing the data to assess student learning across all disciplines
- b. Documents the implementation of specific strategies for measuring actual student learning
- c. Demonstrates that the process is faculty driven, involving full-time, part-time, adjunct faculty, and appropriate non-faculty staff from all academic divisions and centers in determining outcomes, assessment measures, evaluation, and improvements in the program
- d. Continues to document changes in curriculum, methods of instruction, and academic services/activities based on the assessment
- e. Shows how the results of assessment have been used in the planning and budgeting processes of the college
- f. Reflects the understanding and support of the college leadership and senior administration, and
- g. Shows continual evaluation of the process itself.

### **Statement of Request:**

Shawnee Community College (SCC) requests that this report of evidence of ongoing assessment practices and the utilization of the data from such assessment for

measuring actual student learning and implementing curriculum changes be accepted by the North Central Accreditation review team. This Focused Visit Report is in response to the concern given by the NCA review team regarding the role and function of student academic assessment as conducted by faculty members at SCC. The evidence includes information indicating that areas of organizational structure among faculty, the communication between faculty, administration and various committees, the development of appropriate assessment processes, and the intentional use of these same processes for measuring student academic success are now an integral part of the regular academic procedures at SCC. Furthermore, it is the belief of SCC and the Student Academic Assessment Committee (SAAC) that the following documentation, in connection with the focused visit, will successfully indicate the ongoing assessment plan to be sufficient for the purpose of meeting the academic needs of the student population and the supporting interest groups (i.e., area employers) of this institution.

This report serves to provide evidence of intentional practices in the regular activities of the faculty. Throughout the process of improving assessment procedures, the high percentage of faculty buy-in and participation has contributed to the ongoing success of this endeavor.

## **INTRODUCTION**

SCC's mission is to "serve the needs of the students and our diverse community by providing quality higher education, community education, training, and services that are accessible, affordable, and promote life-long learning." Because of this mission, SCC has committed to an ongoing assessment process which determines that when students

leave the institution they will be competent in the areas that are necessary for their future success, whether it is in employment or transfer education. In order to do this, the college strives for continuous improvement through student academic achievement, the evaluation of programs, and through institutional effectiveness. (Appendix A) SCC has an assessment process that has been developed for the purpose of having a continuous flow of information, evaluation, and change based upon the college's mission and purposes.

The Student Academic Assessment Committee (SAAC) with the support of the administration, is the entity responsible for fostering a culture of assessment at SCC. The mission statement of the SAAC states that “the SAAC will create a working plan that will demonstrate use of intentional and purposeful assessment that is utilized for developing appropriate curriculum and for evaluating student learning to ensure that academic core competencies are mastered.” (Appendix B) It is the expectation of the SAAC to promote the continuous process of assessment at all levels in order to support and improve student learning at SCC. This committee has been comprised of full-time faculty representing all four of the academic divisions, adjunct faculty, administrative staff, and support staff. Fourteen persons have held positions on this committee at various times since its creation in 2004. The intention is for the assessment process at SCC to be faculty-driven so that it will be effective due to the active and ongoing participation of all faculty members at all steps of the assessment process. Because faculty members identify the measurable objectives for students to attain, they are responsible for evaluating the students' learning as well as the curriculum content. The active role of faculty members is necessary for the purpose of strengthening and improving the academic processes at SCC. The SAAC is

intended to be the coordinating body of the student and academic assessment efforts at SCC. It is meant to be a resource to the faculty, staff and students. Part of the committee's responsibilities is to coordinate workshops and other activities. In addition, committee members are available to work with faculty on a one-to-one basis, if needed, to help develop/improve various steps of the assessment process.

The assessment process that has been created since the SAAC has been established is logical and ongoing for the assessment of student learning across academic divisions and in individual programs at Shawnee Community College. SCC's commitment to excellent teaching and effective student learning has been the impetus for the process. It provides the opportunity for faculty members to have ownership at all steps of the process. Direction for assessment of student academics is provided at various levels of the curriculum structure and from various committees to insure reliable efforts in assessment work together to meet the needs of students and the community. The SAAC is working to sustain the culture of assessment on SCC's campus so that there is more engagement of all parties, both academic and non-academic, in the assessment of student learning. The assessment process provides for systematic collection and examination of assessment data to document and improve student learning.

The SAAC was created in response to concerns identified during the NCA visit in October 2004. It began work in January 2005 and was formalized with policy change in September 2005. The SAAC coordinates its work with the Vice-President of Instructional Services. The functions of SAAC include developing and monitoring the Student Academic Assessment Plan, reviewing student outcome data, assisting in identifying program improvement needs, and assisting in evaluating the assessment plan. The SAAC

also provides training opportunities to faculty members and staff in assessment processes. While the SAAC represents the center of faculty endeavors for student academic assessment, there are other institutional committees and processes in place which coordinate assessment issues. These include Curriculum and Instruction (C & I) and the Institutional Effectiveness committees. These committees represent the organizational structure that holds SCC accountable for the development of curriculum, the coordinated efforts of the academic strategic planning process, and the assessment of student academic outcomes within specific courses and programs. The approval of curriculum issues occurs in a collaborative manner with various committees. The curriculum approval process has been changed to be more faculty driven. Previously recommendations for curricular changes were initiated by the C & I committee and approved by the college council. Under the new process, changes are forwarded to the presidents cabinet for approval. The C & I committee is the stage of the process that verifies that course changes and new courses have syllabi that contain measurable objectives that align with the core competencies for student learning. The committee also considers the data that is provided as justification for change when a new program or a program change is requested. (Appendix C) Specifically defined committee responsibilities are identified in the college policy manual. (resource room – Item #1)

The SAAC meets on a regular basis for the purposes of providing assistance to all faculty members and gathering data. (minutes and ongoing progress report are in the resource room – Item #2) The SAAC strives to include all faculty members in all student academic assessment activities. There is 100% participation of all full-time faculty members. Adjunct faculty also participated in assessment activities.

Since the implementation of the SAAC, many of the committee members have attended various professional development activities to become educated about student academic assessment processes and the impact of student academic assessment on learning. Information was also gained on additional ways to use data from current student academic assessment artifacts at SCC for program and curriculum changes. Likewise, several members have attended the annual NCA meeting held in Chicago. (lists of conference attendees in resource room – Item #3)

In addition to formal professional development opportunities, individual faculty members have been encouraged to attend faculty development workshops on campus for the purpose of writing instructional objectives, completing data collection surveys, and networking to determine how various departmental assessment processes can be used across all academic divisions. (workshop content and in-service agenda in resource room – Item #4) Faculty members work within their own individual divisions to develop unit plans as part of the colleges planning and budgeting process.

Student academic assessment is an integral part of the college's overall strategic planning process. Data collected through this process is used in program evaluation and planning. Data also influences divisional requests in the institutional planning and budgeting process. In all of the activities, faculty members within each division are encouraged to be involved with, own and move the assessment effort forward in such a manner as will best benefit individual programs. The division chairs document changes for the various departments/programs within their respective divisions. (resource room – Item #5) These reports are shared as part of the discourse to determine assessment that can be used across the academic divisions. Tasks of the divisional faculty include writing

measurable objectives for each course and devising strategies, either direct or indirect, to measure whether student learning is taking place.

In relation to division chair reports, faculty members develop the standards and set the criteria for making judgments regarding student learning. These are evidenced in individual course syllabi. (resource room – Item #6; Appendix D demonstrates samples of revised measurable objectives) Professional judgments, internal benchmarks and national comparisons are used in determining levels of student learning. The intent of the process is to allow the faculty to control the work of assessment at the point of direct interaction with the students at the divisional, program and course levels.

A matrix of student learning and institutional assessment has been created to document how the process of assessment occurs during a student's entire relationship with SCC. It indicates assessment activities which measure both student learning and institutional effectiveness. (Appendix E)

The SAAC provided all faculty members with notebooks containing NCA requirements/expectations, SAAC generated documents, and printouts of core competency data to use as references as SCC continues to use measurable outcomes of student learning to drive curriculum and implement positive change. (resource room – Item #7) This data is also available in an online format located on the SAAC website that can be accessed via the SCC intranet. (resource room – Item #8) This website is available to all SCC faculty and staff and is intended to inform them of the actions of the SAAC and the assessment process on campus.

Assessment collaboration occurs across all academic divisions and non-academic entities including an allotment of time on the agenda during the fall and spring faculty in-

services. This allows for assessment networking activities among faculty and the supporting offices (i.e., the Institutional Research Office, Management Information Systems department, and Curriculum and Instruction Services). A student academic assessment retreat was held in October 2007. This first off-campus assessment professional development activity for faculty was held to facilitate in-depth communication across academic divisions. The success of this event has led to the decision that it will become an annual activity. Expression of informational needs from individual faculty, departments, divisions and the SAAC can be easily communicated during these times. Gathering and/or analysis of data can also occur at these times. This integrated communication effort enhances the institution's ongoing strategic planning process for successful student learning. It is the understanding of the SAAC members that their responsibility is to develop, implement and improve the assessment process as a collaborative effort with all persons at SCC. It is the responsibility of the SAAC to ask for input from outside sources and to accept recommendations when applicable.

As part of the institution-wide assessment process, students are involved because it is their learning that is being evaluated. While enrolled in the SEM 111 College Orientation class, students are informed of the college's Institutional Research Office and activities that will be conducted through this office throughout their academic career at SCC. (Appendix F) Also, in addition to all students participating in direct evaluations of student learning (i.e., completion of assessment projects, exams, portfolios, etc.), they have the opportunity to participate in indirect evaluations. They are allowed to complete the Student Satisfaction Survey. The Student Satisfaction Survey, accessed online, allows students to evaluate the quality of instruction that they receive and the attitudes of the

faculty members that they interact with. (resource room – Item #9) Students are made aware of the work of assessment through active participation in institutional processes and faculty discussion with the students in both formal and informal interactions. Student success data is also generated by the Institutional Research office.

The data from the Student Satisfaction Survey is compiled and disseminated from the Institutional Research Office. Faculty members use that data to determine what periodic changes may be needed in course delivery and content evaluation so that optimal opportunities for student learning are provided.

The administration of SCC is an active part in the process so that the culture of assessment can be encouraged and supported at all levels. The administration at SCC facilitates course, discipline and program changes as suggested by the faculty in response to the interpretation and analysis of assessment data. Time and money are provided by the administration for cross-division and institution-wide assessment dialogue and activity. The administration also integrates the assessment process into the planning and budgeting processes of the institution so that approved evaluations for measuring student learning, the associated costs, and subsequent changes to curriculum and programs are achieved.

Five examples of assessment, some specific to student learning and others specific to program change, will be presented in this document as representative of the activities on campus to demonstrate the complete assessment process.

## ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The academic structure of SCC is contained in four divisions—Allied Health, Business/Occupational/Technology, Humanities, and Math/Science. A total of thirty-three (33) departments are represented in these four (4) divisions. The courses in these various departments are taught by forty-two (42) full-time faculty members and approximately one hundred twenty-five (125) adjunct faculty members. Previous documentation of assessment provides evidence that ongoing evaluation of student learning has occurred in the various programs/divisions at SCC but with little or no overlap. These types of assessment have included, but are not limited to, national licensure, certification or professional examination, portfolio development, pre- and post-testing, standardized examinations, surveys, and interviews. Because of the varied representation of academic programs, the SAAC determined common terminology to be used when discussing assessment at SCC, developed a process of assessment that could be implemented across all curriculum areas, and identified core competencies for all SCC students. (see Appendices G, H, and I)

### **Step One**

In **step one** of the assessment process, the core competencies were identified after considering conversations with faculty and students, and during advisory council meetings with area employers of SCC graduates. The core competencies represent the qualities that are needed for students to succeed after leaving SCC whether they complete an AAS degree for employment, complete an AA/AS degree for transfer to a four-year institution or obtain continuing education credit. Once identified, these core competencies were compared to and found to be aligned with the Goals 2010 strategic plan and the core

indicators. (Appendix J) It is evident that while faculty members strive for collaboration across academic divisions in regard to student academic assessment, the core competencies for SCC students do align with the institutional goals.

### **Step Two**

**Step two** of the assessment process required an assessment audit to be conducted to determine if in fact programs did address the core competencies with measurable objectives and evaluate those objectives using artifacts. In order to document that assessment processes were providing information regarding student learning and were embedded within courses, an online survey was created with the help of the Management Information Systems (MIS) department. This survey provided more detailed academic information from full- and part-time faculty regarding the evaluation of the core competencies at the course level than had previously been collected regarding assessment. (Appendix K) This data indicated that all of the core competencies are addressed both directly and indirectly in what would be considered a sufficient number of courses. (faculty members' entries in resource room – Item #10; compilation of data is Appendix L) Direct evaluations of student learning include tests, projects, papers, presentations, case studies, clinical evaluations, lab observations, portfolios, and interviews. Indirect evaluations of student learning include artifacts that directly address one core competency, but also impact another core competency.

Because a majority of SCC students take general education classes as required in nearly all of the certificate and degree programs, a program audit was conducted to verify that the students leaving SCC with a certificate or degree in any program has received

instruction and evaluation on all of the core competencies, regardless of their major.

(sample program audit – Appendix M; complete audit in resource room – Item #11)

### **Step Three**

**Step three** occurred when, as previously mentioned, instructors met during an assessment workshop to ensure that all course objectives were written in measurable terms to attain core competencies. A variety of samples were given to faculty to use as guidelines. (Appendix N) Also during this step of the process, information from the DACUM report of the cosmetology program, an external review of the agriculture program, and minutes/recommendations from the advisory council meeting for the electronics department were provided. (Appendix O, P, and Q)

### **Step Four**

**Step four** required dedicated communication across academic divisions to determine what artifacts were being used to evaluate student success in regard to the core competencies. As noted in the academic division chair reports, there are many constant types of evaluation of student learning in progress at SCC. (Item #5) These varied methods assess the core competencies in direct relation to student learning and the needs of each program within the divisions. Non-academic sources of data are also used to address the need for program changes. Five (5) examples of the assessment process, two specific to student learning and three specific to program change, which use specific artifacts for evaluation were identified.

### **Steps Five through Seven**

The **remaining steps** of the assessment process at SCC will be demonstrated in this document by citing examples that are representative of the complete assessment process at SCC.

### **Written Communication**

Our assessment audit revealed that communication was the core competency that most instructors selected as the one that they address most frequently, both directly and indirectly. (Appendix L) During conversations to determine credible artifacts for evaluation of the core competencies, a recurring statement heard from faculty members was that their students did not have what instructors consider to be college-level writing skills. Examination of information about written communication gathered from the core competency surveys indicated that there was a discrepancy between what faculty members stated verbally about student writing ability and what they indicated in their surveys for student success in the area of written communication. In spite of faculty members' concerns, the collected data about written communication showed a level of successful completion of those courses with a "C" or better.

Because of this discrepancy, the SAAC began **step five** of the assessment process and looked for possible artifacts that could evaluate written communication across academic divisions. In Fall 2006, the Humanities committee sponsored a college-wide emphasis on the Holocaust, culminating with a presentation from two Holocaust survivors. Faculty members in all divisions were encouraged to incorporate Holocaust activities in their classes. Since many instructors were using written assignments to demonstrate an application of content knowledge, the SAAC chose to collect and

evaluate these cross-curricular writing samples. Sixty-five (65) papers were received from diverse academic areas—composition classes, nursing classes, speech classes and early childhood education classes. (resource room –Item #12) The scores from the writing samples were gathered and summarized in **step six** of the assessment process. The papers were scored holistically by SAAC members representing all divisions with 83% accuracy. The papers were read twice and scored using a standard writing rubric developed by Educational Testing Service. (Appendix R)

The assessment process continued with **step seven** as the data was interpreted and analyzed. The results of this scoring indicated that faculty members from various academic divisions can agree and apply common writing standards with a high degree of consistency. However, differences in assignments made it difficult to equate all papers and provide reliable and valid information about the level of student writing success across academic divisions at SCC. (resource room – Item #13)

As a result of these differences, the committee proposed a short beginning-of-semester written assignment to be administered at a common time during the first week of class to gather writing samples in a more controlled environment to provide data to supplement instructors' perceptions of student writing. The writing has occurred, but the scoring among faculty is still in progress. The information gathered from the evaluation of these artifacts will be used to determine future steps for improving written communication across the disciplines.

While the results may indicate a need for implementation of Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) activities, revisions must be made in the testing and scoring processes of the written communication core competency across academic divisions. It is

anticipated that because the writing sample was given as part of the pre-test in the participating courses, the sample will be repeated as a part of the post-test in the same courses so that a comparison of student scores can be compared for the purpose of determining which type of WAC would best meet the academic needs of students at SCC. Also as a part of this process, many faculty members from various academic divisions have indicated a reluctance to score writing assignments due to the fact that it is not their area of expertise.

As part of the faculty assessment in-service that recently occurred, instructors of English Composition who have had experience with WAC at other institutions presented information regarding the program and the various ways that WAC activities can be implemented at SCC.

### **Problem-Solving**

The uniform pre- and post-test evaluations conducted by the Math and Science departments were identified as representative of a key assessment process at SCC because most of the certificate and degree programs at SCC require students to take courses that are taught in these two departments. Analysis of this data can provide valid assessment of the academic core competency of problem-solving.

The assessment process for this core competency continued with **step five**. The math and science pre- and post-tests were designed by those same instructors as multiple choice tests. The information sought included post-test averages, standard deviations for each section, and items missed most. Four (4) science courses and eight (8) math courses conducted pre- and post-tests in Fall 2005. A total of thirty-three (33) sections participated. Three hundred ninety-two (392) students completed the post-tests.

(Appendix Sa - Sd) The scores from the math and science tests were gathered and summarized in **step six** of the assessment process. The summary of data for the math and science tests stated the percentage of increase in correct answers per course section and identified the items most missed on the tests. The percentage increase ranged from thirteen percent (13%) to two hundred eighty-six percent (286%). The five most missed questions on each test were noted.

The assessment process continued with **step seven** as data was interpreted and analyzed. Data from the math and science pre- and post-test has been gathered for five semesters. There has been a fluctuation in the student results in both math and science. Possible causes include a summer eight (8) week instructional period versus a fall/spring sixteen (16) week instructional period. It might also be caused by an absence of full-time lead instructors and an increase in part-time instructors. Or, it could be due to a decrease in enrollment which would accentuate any decline. Further data analysis will be conducted to determine the cause of fluctuation in student results.

After all of the participating math and science instructors had received individual student results, compiled test results, comprehensive results of each class and comparative results for all sections of the courses, feedback was collected. Possible changes include rewriting some test questions for clarity to ensure that they measure the stated objectives, rewriting measurable objectives in course syllabi to align with the core competency of problem-solving, hiring an additional instructor, providing increased/intentional communication among full- and part-time faculty, and giving the same pre- and post-tests.

## **Cosmetology Program**

Community cosmetologists completed a survey for **step five** of the assessment process. (Appendix O) The purpose of the DACUM report was to determine if the facilities of the Cosmetology department were sufficient to meet the needs for training of future area employees. The information from the DACUM report ranked the tasks required by a cosmetologist according to the opinions of area employers of SCC Cosmetology graduates. These same employers then scored these tasks as to their criticality in a job, the frequency with which they would occur in a job, whether the tasks should be included in a basic training program and if tasks should be included in in-service training programs.

As part of **step six**, information from the DACUM report for the Cosmetology program was summarized. This same information was reviewed and discussed as **step seven** to identify necessary program changes.

The analysis of the DACUM report for the Cosmetology department led to the conclusion that the facilities were not sufficient to prepare graduates for employment in current work environments in the communities served in the college district. The decision was made to renovate the department. The renovation was completed in December 2005.

## **Agriculture Program**

An external review of the Agriculture program by a professional consultant was conducted for the purpose of determining the effectiveness of the Agriculture program at SCC. This was **step five** of the assessment process. (Appendix P) This external review surveyed the following groups: twenty-two (22) graduates, of which five (5) responded; thirty-five (35) agribusinesses, of which 14 responded; and nine (9) high school

agriculture teachers, of which two (2) responded. The review looked at “course completers,” physical facilities, and articulation.

As part of **step six** the information in the external review of the Agriculture department was summarized. The analysis of this summary in **step seven** determined that “the SCC district has many needs for agriculture education because it has such a broad range of segments in the agriculture industry. There is still viable traditional agriculture, including both crop and livestock farm producers and various agribusinesses, that needs to have well-prepared employees and entrepreneurs. That part of the agriculture industry is contracting, but is certainly a visible part of the community and the economy.”

The very specific recommendations of the review included adding an Agriculture A.S. degree, eliminating the current Agricultural Sciences AAS degree and replacing it with an Agriculture Business Management AAS degree for a one-year “experiment.” Suggestions were also made to increase recruitment for the program and to schedule offered courses “in alternate years until enrollment can increase enough to justify offering them annually.”

### **Electronics**

The advisory council meeting met the need in **step five** for the assessment of the Electronics department. It was conducted for area employers to review the current program and provide suggestions for changes in the curriculum to meet their needs for qualified staff. (Appendix Q) The summary of these suggestions were **step six** of the assessment process. Three area hospitals advertise for employees with associate degrees in Bio Medical Electronics.

After the review of the electronics program, the suggestions made by the advisory council recommended removing some courses and adding others to meet the changing needs of the job requirements in the community. This analysis was **step seven** of the assessment process.

### **Closing the Loop**

**Closing the assessment loop** to meet the academic needs of SCC students has occurred in the areas of student learning and program change. The five examples that have been presented as representative of the activities on campus demonstrate the use of the assessment process and how it continues to fulfill the mission of SCC.

The cross-division communication regarding the core competency of communication is active among instructors. Additional workshops for informing faculty members on creating and scoring writing assignments for accurate assessment of student learning will be conducted. Additional changes include formalizing a process for collecting and evaluating writing samples so they can be summarized and analyzed to determine ongoing changes that can be implemented in all academic divisions at SCC to improve student writing. The Student Academic Assessment Committee is considering using English Composition II as a capstone course for measuring the core competency of Written Communication. The SAAC and English faculty will work together to design an appropriate assessment measure that demonstrates mastery of written communication. That measure will also provide a way to pinpoint specific areas of writing that need improvement.

The faculty in the Math and Science departments made the determination that changes could be made to improve student learning in the core-competency of problem-

solving. Future data will be compared to the data of the last five semesters and analyzed to determine whether additional changes should be made. Since students from all disciplines take math and science courses, this data can be used to assess the core competency of Problem-Solving.

Program changes due to assessment have occurred in the Cosmetology, Agriculture and Electronic departments at SCC. As a result of the DACUM report on the Cosmetology department, administration identified and made available the necessary funds to renovate the facility. These upgrades allow students to practice the necessary tasks as identified in the report in a simulated environment that replicates the workplaces in the communities of the SCC district. Hence, the core competency of Employability is being met in this department.

The changes in the Agriculture Science program at SCC as a result of the external review included a complete program change. In addition to the Associate of Applied Science degree in Agriculture, students can now expand upon those courses and complete an Associate of Arts transfer degree with the choice of five majors. Networking with four-year universities has resulted in “hands-on” field experiences and exposure to research for SCC students. Positive reports on these experiences have indicated that there may be collaborative internships for the coming summer semester.

Based upon the review of the advisory council for the Electronics department and interviews with graduates, the program was edited to remove those courses that were considered unnecessary in the workplace or that contained duplicated course content. Emphasis is now being placed on systems repair and maintenance, especially in the

medical field. The ongoing assessment process will identify artifacts that will be able to measure student learning in these areas.

### **FUTURE PLANS**

The SAAC has identified areas that need to be addressed and/or continued by SCC in the ongoing assessment process. The assessment process indicates that “surveys and other data sources” from non-academic generated data are to be conducted. The SAAC found during the assessment audit that there is an abundance of data available, but that faculty need to have more discourse to determine what questions need to be asked when obtaining information specific to student learning and program change. In essence, the SAAC was overwhelmed with what was available to them. As a result, the SAAC is in the process of creating a more useful method of consolidating the non-academic data so that faculty will be able to discern the portions that are beneficial for driving changes at the program level.

While there have been evaluation methods identified to address the core competencies of Communication and Problem-Solving across academic divisions (i.e., writing samples and math/science pre- and post-tests), there is still a need to identify an evaluation method for Employability across all academic divisions. This is currently addressed in pockets – more comprehensively in the Allied Health and BOT divisions. It is the intention of the faculty to increase opportunities for communication to see how needs and evaluation methods for this core competency overlap from one department/division to the next.

There has also been an increased awareness by faculty members that a survey for local employers needs to be created. This survey would be used to identify whether the curriculum content at SCC is preparing students to meet the expectations of employers and the communities served by SCC. The Institutional Research Office has committed to working with the faculty in creating this survey and gathering and summarizing the data.

Few faculty members indicated in the core competency surveys during the assessment audit that they use rubrics to score artifacts when evaluating student learning in regard to any of the core competencies. The SAAC is gathering sample evaluation rubrics. These are shared with the faculty members to be used as is or as guides in creating their own. The SAAC will continue to provide assistance to faculty members as this practice increases at SCC.

Another area that the SAAC will address in the future is the amount of participation by part-time faculty in the assessment process. The means to cause this to occur will include identifying more methods and frequency of communication between full- and part-time faculty members.

It is the intention of the SAAC and all faculty members at SCC to collect and analyze data received from evaluating students to determine if student learning, teaching practices and curricula are doing as well as they can or if they are improving on a continuous basis. The college is committed to the continued development and implementation of data driven decision processes. However, now that a complete cycle of the seven-step assessment process has occurred, the SAAC will consider revising and simplifying the plan. Whether the assessment cycle is revised or remains as is, one core

competency will be highlighted per academic year on a rotating basis. Ongoing evaluation of assessment processes will nurture the culture of assessment at SCC.

## **CONCLUSION**

Faculty members at SCC realize that no single evaluation tool will provide a true and complete picture of student learning. Because of this, the SAAC and faculty members will continue to use a variety of assessment approaches to obtain a more balanced, accurate picture of student learning at SCC. Faculty members are also aware that the process is ongoing. As mentioned earlier, SCC faculty members are still actively learning how best to pose questions about non-academic data in order to obtain an actual measure of student learning. This focused dialogue and reflection between faculty members, administration, and various committees continues to provide ownership for all parties to the process. These conversations will benefit the institution as they continue to facilitate changes in regard to curriculum and program development at SCC and for institutional improvement. The goal is to have a constant connection between the assessment of student learning, strategic planning, resource disbursement and program review so that there can be a comprehensive campus-wide process of decision making for the benefit of students and the community.

Through its continued efforts, SCC is committed to using appropriate and effective assessment processes for understanding and improving student learning while continuing to cultivate a constant culture of assessment. Data will continue to be used to identify and validate the need for curriculum instructional change. And while the external motivator for an active assessment process is the NCA criteria, the internal motivator is

the desire to focus on SCC's mission and purpose to meet the needs of students and the communities that are served by the college. The "needs of our diverse community" will be met when our students reach their maximum potential and are better prepared to be productive and contribute to their families and communities.