

*Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges  
Commission on Colleges*

**A Full-Scale Evaluation  
Committee Report**

**Skagit Valley College  
Mt. Vernon, Washington**

**April 6-8, 2009**

*A Confidential Report Prepared for the Commission on Colleges that  
Represents the Views of the Evaluation Committee*

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## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	1
General Summary .....	2
Standard One: Institution Mission and Goals, Planning and Effectiveness.....	3
Standard Two: Educational Program and Its Effectiveness .....	4
Standard Three: Students .....	15
Standard Four: Faculty Evaluation.....	20
Standard Five: Library and Information Resources .....	22
Standard Six: Governance and Administration.....	26
Standard Seven: Finance.....	27
Standard Eight: Physical Resources .....	29
Standard Nine: Institutional Integrity .....	30
General Commendations .....	31
General Recommendations .....	32
List of College Personnel who were interviewed .....	33

## Introduction

This report summarizes the Evaluation Committee's full-scale visit to Skagit Valley College (SVC) on April 6-8, 2009. A general narrative of the Committee's findings is included. The report concludes with the general commendations and general recommendations.

The evaluation was conducted based on the Accreditation Handbook, 2003 edition, published by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities. The Committee's charge was to verify the accuracy of the institution's Self-Study, evaluate the institution's compliance with each of the accreditation standards, commend this institution for outstanding accomplishments, and make recommendations where compliance with accreditation standards may be in doubt or improvement toward meeting accreditation standards may be needed.

The Committee commends and sincerely thanks President Gary Tollefson and his staff for the very enthusiastic and warm reception shown the Committee. The Committee expresses appreciation to all those who contributed to the Self-Study, were interviewed, or in any other way facilitated the evaluation effort. Faculty, staff, and administrators were accessible, forthright, and candid. Committee members had immediate access to policies, records, and documents.

The Self-Study team, Lisa Radeleff, Administrative Assistant to the President, and Dr. Maureen Pettit, SVC's accreditation liaison officer and Institutional Researcher also deserve special thanks. The Self-Study prepared by the college in advance of the team's arrival was well done and reflected broad-based participation by all college constituencies. It was especially effective in its analysis of educational programs, student services, and faculty. The college was candid in its appraisal of institutional strengths and weaknesses. The team was especially pleased to be able to confirm the representations in the Self-Study that Skagit Valley College is deeply committed to student success and that employees find the overall working culture to be respectful and collegial. The general recommendations at the end of this report also reflect the opportunities for improvement identified by the college during its Self-Study process. Hopefully, the Self-Study will continue to serve the institution as a guide to implement the recommendations made by the Self-Study team and by the Evaluation Committee.

SVC can be proud of the administration, its very dedicated faculty and staff, and especially its students who represent the College so well. The specific and general commendations and recommendations of this report are intended to stimulate even more progress for the benefit of the students, the community, and the College.

## General Summary

Since 1926, Skagit Valley College has provided post-high-school educational services to the valley and adjacent island communities. For the first fifteen years, the College's offerings were exclusively academic. In 1941, a few vocational programs were added, and in the late 40's "general interest" courses also became part of the curriculum. While the 1967 Community College Act formally recognized or established comprehensive community colleges in Washington, Skagit Valley had been functioning as such for nearly two decades.

More recently, Skagit Valley College has been recognized for its results on the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (2007) and by the MetLife Foundation for its student retention and student engagement efforts (CCSSE, 2004).

In fall 2008, the college served 6,805 students, with about 4,599 receiving instruction on the Mount Vernon campus, 1,628 being served at the Whidbey campus in Oak Harbor, and the remainder being served by the South Whidbey Center, San Juan Center at Friday Harbor, San Juan Island, the Business Resource Center and through distance education. Its physical plant is impressive, and the care for facilities and grounds reflects a sense of pride and commitment to quality.

The College has an impressive and comprehensive strategic plan and has a history of using validation measures to assess the effectiveness of the plan. As this effort goes forward, the College has the opportunity to further develop its capacity to measure, report, and improve SVC's institutional effectiveness. The Evaluation Committee found Skagit Valley College to be a college of sound quality and innovation, particularly with respect to General Education, Learning Communities, and facilities planning.

The College meets all Eligibility Requirements for accreditation. Faculty and staff commitment to students are uncommonly extensive and highly valued. The administration is committed to inclusion and effective communication throughout the organization, and the College is held in high esteem by its employees and its communities.

As per Commission Policy A.5, the Evaluation Team did not receive any third party comments regarding the accreditation status of Skagit Valley College.

## Standard One: Institution Mission and Goals, Planning and Effectiveness

Skagit Valley College is a comprehensive community college that serves the diverse educational needs of a three county area. Through its mission, the college is charged to provide educational services that comprehensively address the varied needs of its diverse community. The college supplements its mission statement with a set of core values, general education learning values, and goals and objectives that direct how its mission statement is to be accomplished.

The mission, vision and values statements of the college were adopted in 2007. The college is satisfied that the mission and values statement reflect current aspirations and appropriately direct college activities. The Evaluation Team concurs with the judgment of the college and further found that it reflects the actual work of the college.

The college has also developed a five-year Strategic Plan, which was adopted by the Board in 2006. The planning process included all stakeholders in the college and the community. Through a participatory process, the college identifies strategic priorities within the strategic plan and these become the foundation of the college's Institutional Effectiveness efforts for a two-year period. Strategic priorities are used by administrators and faculty/staff to identify unit goals and ways to measure progress toward those goals.

Assessment of learning outcomes and review of data are both an important part of the planning process. By including the General Education Learning Values and associated learning outcomes in the strategic plan, the college has ensured that student learning has a clear role in the strategic plan.

The college schedules regular progress reports on strategic initiatives at regular meetings of the district's Board of Trustees. These monitoring reports to the Board of Trustees ensure that the strategic plan receives ongoing scrutiny at the highest levels of the institution. Members of the Board of Trustees, when questioned, were knowledgeable at a satisfying level of detail about the strategic planning process and current progress on priorities.

Finally, strategic initiatives are incorporated in the college's budget development process. Because of the timing of their development, strategic initiatives may not receive budget allocations until the second year of the process. This linkage between budget and strategic priorities is more understood by administrators than by faculty and staff. In particular, employees expressed a desire to receive information about rationale and reasons for supporting or rejecting resource allocations. In its entirety, the strategic planning and institutional effectiveness processes work to ensure that the overall behavior of the college is focused, purposeful, and strategic.

## Standard Two: Educational Program and Its Effectiveness

### A. General Education/Related Instruction (Policy 2.1)

Skagit Valley College has a long record of innovation and leadership in general education. The current set of General Education Learning Values & Outcomes is the product of a thorough, inclusive review and revision process that was conducted from 2001 to 2005. Following adoption of the Learning Values & Outcomes and subsequent structuring of the program, a General Education Implementation Committee was created in 2007. That group is a standing committee in the College's governance structure and continues to respond to emerging issues and provide general oversight.

The Associate in Arts University & College Transfer, Associate in Business, Associate in Pre-Nursing, Associate in Science, Associate in Applied Science Transfer-Early Childhood Education, Associate in Music, Associate in Visual Arts, Associate in Arts General Studies, and Associate in Arts General Studies SOCNAV (for active duty military personnel and adult family members) degrees require a substantial component of general education that is coherent in design and of collegiate level. The areas of study, credits required, and course options are clearly presented in the college catalog. In addition to fulfilling the major areas of knowledge identified in Policy 2.1 (humanities and fine arts, natural sciences, mathematics, and social sciences), the aforesaid associate degrees have requirements in physical education, integrative learning, diversity, and "learning into action."

The Associate in Technical Arts degree, which is offered in a range of career fields, incorporates related instruction in the required areas of communication, computation, and human relations, as well as physical education, cooperative education, general education, and diversity. The areas of study, credits required, and course options are clearly presented in the college catalog. Furthermore, all professional technical certificates of an academic year or more in length include related instruction in the required areas of communication, computation, and human relations. It may also be noted that academic and professional technical departments work closely to ensure the related instruction needs of students in Associate in Technical Arts degree programs are met.

It was evident during the days of the evaluation visit that Skagit Valley College is justifiably proud of its general education. Faculty, staff, and administration have devoted inestimable time over many years to conceiving, implementing, and continually enhancing a general education program that is reasoned and meaningful. In addition to the traditional components, there is a significant focus on application and integration, whereby students take part in learning communities (integrated combinations of two or more courses from different disciplines) and integrative experiences (curricular or co-curricular experiences integrating two or more areas). In conclusion, the College is to be applauded for its ongoing work in meeting the general education and related instruction requirements of the Northwest Commission.

### B. Educational Assessment (Policy 2.2)

Following the 1999 NWCCU site visit, SVC immediately began to respond to the Commission's recommendation to develop program-level outcomes assessment and to demonstrate how outcomes data is used for improvement of academic programs. Under the direction of the Director of Institutional Research and the leadership of an engaged group of faculty, a committee planned an

assessment strategy. The committee custom-designed the Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan (LOAP) procedure, and over the subsequent four-to-five years, the LOAP procedure was fine-tuned. Most faculty and academic administrators still see the LOAPs as a “work in progress.” Also in 2000, the college began developing a procedure for five-year reviews of instructional programs.

Learning Outcome Assessment Plans are based on the core list of eleven General Education Learning Values. The GE Learning Values are in turn composed of about 51 specific learning outcomes. Each program/discipline was asked to select the GE learning values that were most meaningful to their program, and to develop a short list of measurable learning outcomes tied to these GE values. Faculty were given the leeway to identify and design the instruments for measuring the outcomes.

Evidence indicates some inconsistency in the structure and detail of the programs’ LOAPs. Several restricted groups of students (typically in majors course) are assessed, but in general, the majority of students and courses are not routinely assessed. (2.B.3) For example, the Science Program uses the American Chemical Society’s standardized exam as an assessment tool for students who were completing the three-quarter General Chemistry & lab sequence. The ACS exam is nationally normed; therefore, it provides quantitative, statistically meaningful data which indicate how well the SVC chemistry students have learned the material. However, the assessment tools for many other disciplines are much more subjective. These tools typically use open-ended or essay questions which are analyzed qualitatively. We noted that some of the samples sizes were quite small and may not provide valid and reliable feedback.

In general, the professional technical programs LOAPs were complete, with the exception of the Nursing program. Document-based evidence provided to the accreditation team indicates only one learning outcome for all of the nursing departments, and the document did not provide evidence of its use in improving the programs teaching/content. (2.B.3.) The internal program review done by Skagit Valley College in May 2007 also indicated the same deficiency in the nursing outcomes. No documents were provided to this team that indicated learning outcomes or assessment for the LPN or RN re-entry programs, even though they might be viewed as semi-autonomous departments. (E.R. 12)

The academic programs’ LOAPs were typically more inconsistent than those prepared by the professional technical programs. Several academic courses were not included in the LOAP procedure. For instance, courses in oceanography and geology were not part of the Science program’s LOAP, because science faculty decided to concentrate their assessment efforts on the science series courses geared toward A.S. transfer students.

Several of the Math and Science faculty stated that they are involved in other types of less structured/formal assessments. For instance, the Biology and Nursing faculty are in constant communication with one another, due to the need for continuous adjustment to the anatomy & physiology curriculum. The Computer Science faculty use in-class assessments as needed for specific courses. The Math faculty use mandatory placement tests as a preliminary assessment instrument and are routinely examining completion and pass rates in their courses.

The college needs to increase consistency in the linkage between the learning outcomes and the specific objectives of each course. The college’s website has links to learning outcomes for each course, but these outcomes are not consistently included in all course syllabi. Stronger documentation of learning outcomes in each course syllabus is needed. (2.B.2.)



The Director of Institutional Research reported that this summer she plans to study a sample of transcripts of recent SVC graduates to determine the extent to which the General Education Learning Values have been addressed by the degree programs. The evaluation committee feels that this analysis will provide valuable information on the efficacy of the college's General Education program. (See General Recommendation #1).

In addressing the 1999 recommendation outlining SVC's deficiencies in assessment of academic programs, procedures were also developed for the periodic review of instructional programs. The Program Reviews which have been completed since 2004 are complete and appear to provide useful information to the college. There is abundant evidence of reciprocal feedback between the programs/departments being reviewed and the college Cabinet. The Program Advisory Committees for the professional technical programs provide a helpful external perspective to the program review process, and it is suggested that the academic programs consider inviting external evaluators to contribute to their program reviews.

Program Reviews are being used as "viability studies" for certain programs which are struggling with low enrollments. The information gleaned from the Program Reviews will be used to decide if the programs will be phased out. Therefore, it is apparent that the Program Reviews are contributing to the college's strategic planning process.

In general, the evaluation committee suggests that SVC work to increase the consistency of the LOAP process. The groundwork is laid and significant work has been done, but we noted that not all programs' plans are complete and well-executed. Several courses, in particular the General Education courses that are part of the AAUCT degree, should be given more inclusion in the LOAP process. The college's administration should continue to provide training so all faculty will understand and effectively implement the LOAP process (see General Recommendation #2).

### C. Distance Education (Policy 2.6)

In 2000 the College shifted to online delivery for distance education with the express purpose of providing "maximum access to learning across a large geographic district" for students. Since 2003 the eLearning program of the college has been fully integrated into the College's instructional programs. Division chairs and unit administrators are responsible for staffing and scheduling. New courses to be offered online (eLearning) are approved by the same process as any other new course. If a course previously taught in a more traditional mode (face-to-face in the classroom) is going to be offered as an online or hybrid course, the new offering must be approved by the Educational Vice President to assure consistency. Hybrid and online courses are indicated in the course schedule by symbols so that students can easily identify those options.

Many degree requirements can be met through eLearning courses and eLearning appears to be meeting the needs of students. There are 1,200 course sites in the Blackboard Course Management System (CMS) with 5,000 user accounts. Data from 2007-2007 indicate that eLearning generated 21% of total district FTE. Students can complete a two-year transfer degree (AAUCT) or an Associate of Technical Art degree (ATA) in two areas: Computer Information Systems and Multimedia and Interactive Technology.

Enrollment and other support services are readily available to students online. They can apply and register online, pay tuition and fees, access the library, order books through the bookstore, request transcripts, access grade reports, and get a degree audit. Real-time online advising (available since Fall 2006) has been assessed and students express a high degree of satisfaction with this service.

Faculty rights regarding copyright or ownership of materials is specified in the negotiated agreement 2007-2010. The agreement does not explicitly address materials related to course materials in online or hybrid mode. The college and the faculty may want to clarify expectations regarding eLearning materials.

Training and support for faculty who offer eLearning courses is provided through eLearning staff in IT and the Center for Learning and Teaching. IT also maintains the Blackboard Course Management system, provides technical support and maintains the network infrastructure and hardware.

The College strategic planning priorities for 2008-2009 include a goal to “enhance delivery of eLearning,” recognizing the need to improve eLearning support services, assure the quality of courses, programs and curricula, and enhance student success. Working through the College Governance Steering Committee, a “solve and dissolve committee” was formed to work on these issues. This is indicative of commitment to maintaining quality and extending eLearning opportunities to students throughout the district.

#### D. Social Sciences, English, Arts and Communication

The Arts & Communication Division (Academic English as a Second Language, Communication Studies, Fine/Performing Arts, and World Languages) and English & Social Sciences Division (Behavioral/Social Sciences, Business/Economics, College Success Skills, and English) serve students with interests in college transfer, general education and related instruction, and personal enrichment. In addition to the Associate in Arts University & College Transfer, degrees by major and articulated transfer degrees include the Associate in Business, Associate in Music, and Associate in Visual Arts.

The various programs are, for the most part, supported by sufficient human, physical, and financial resources. Capable leadership is provided in Arts & Communication and English & Social Sciences by experienced faculty members who function as division chairs. Full- and part-time faculty possess appropriate degrees and experience. There is a sense that some areas may be overly reliant on part-time faculty. There are also instances where programs function in aging or temporary facilities. However, there have been recent improvements to Hodson Hall and Tarro Theatre, and a replacement building for Lewis Hall is in the planning stage. Many existing classrooms and labs are equipped with modern technology, and there is hope a language and speech lab can be funded in the near future.

General education and majors courses articulate well with four-year institutions. A set of courses in developmental English is also offered. In all program areas, there is evidence of coherent design, appropriate sequencing, and effective coordination among faculty within and across campuses and centers. Faculty are supported in their efforts by library personnel, library holdings are considered to be sufficient to support instruction in the respective programs, and library resources are utilized in the learning process.

All areas in the Arts & Communication and English & Social Sciences divisions are engaged in program-level assessment through the Learning Outcomes Assessment Plans (LOAPs). At the course level, learning objectives appear in course syllabi, and course outlines show the College's general education outcomes have been mapped to individual courses. While LOAPs have been used for several years, review of the documents made available to the Evaluation Committee revealed that programs are at different stages in terms of developing intended outcomes and conducting assessments. It is important to note, however, that many ambitious assessment projects have been undertaken by programs in Arts & Communication and English & Social Sciences, with analysis and use of results to affect change and improvement in teaching and learning. On a related note, it is not apparent that assessment conducted at the grassroots, program level is collectively reviewed at higher levels in the institution to help the College systematically gain a broad sense of its performance relative to its general education outcomes. (2.B.1)

In summary, the various programs in Arts & Communication and English & Social Sciences provide a breadth of quality offerings. The involvement and enthusiasm of faculty in developing and delivering the College's general education programs, in particular the integrative learning component, is most impressive and praiseworthy. During the visit of the Evaluation Committee, faculty and student engagement in meaningful teaching and learning was on consistent display.

#### E. Mathematics, Science, Physical Education

In order to validate the information presented in SVC's self-study on the college's Mathematics, Science and Physical Education programs, a wide variety of information was reviewed on-site including Standard Two exhibits describing college policies and summarizing pertinent data, Program Review reports, complete file of 2008-2009 course syllabi, current file of Learning Outcomes Assessment Plans for each program, and a personal tour of the math & science classrooms, labs and gym facilities.

Faculty and academic administrators appear to be highly committed to teaching and learning, and are enthusiastic and student-focused. Current facilities in the Mathematics and Physical Education areas appear adequate. A visit to the Mathematics Center indicated that it is well-used, spacious and comfortable for students. Drop-in tutoring was available. Students were taking advantage of the computer stations located around the periphery of the room. The Biology, Chemistry, Physics and Geology classrooms and labs in Angst Hall are in the process of being "packed up" for relocation to the new science building in a few weeks. The science faculty are eagerly anticipating the move to the new facilities, which will have state-of-the-art labs and instructional technology. The evaluator was not made aware of any problems with insufficient human, physical or financial resources.

The Math, Science, and Physical Education programs' instructional policies, methods and delivery systems are compatible with the mission of SVC – "to expand opportunities and horizons for students." Programs are generally evaluated by the Cabinet on a regular five-year schedule under established policies. Each program has its own unique Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan, which is reviewed annually.

Degree programs are well designed and appear to be consistent with the other public colleges and universities in Washington. The Math and Science departments are acutely aware of the needs of students transferring to state universities, and it appears that transfer articulation issues are addressed. According to the available Class Schedules, courses are conveniently sequenced for developmental and

transfer students. While the Evaluation Team had some questions about the consistency of the Learning Outcomes Assessment Plans, since 2000 SVC has made a concerted effort to develop and improve the LOAPs for each program. (2.B.1)

The objectives for the Associate of Science degree are clearly defined. A list of learning outcomes is available for most courses, although the evaluators had some difficulty locating the lists. The courses and programs described in the SVC catalog were congruent with the information gathered on the site visit.

All courses offered in Math, Science and PE are assigned credit in quarter hours, and all courses carry appropriate credit. Course fees are reasonable and appropriate.

Records of the Instruction Committee indicate that it meets regularly and completes its tasks appropriately. The Division Chair indicated that the Instruction Committee follows college policy and carefully scrutinizes new course proposals.

The former and current Division Chairs indicated that the faculty carefully plans the annual course schedules so that students can complete sequences in a timely manner. Online courses are being developed in many of the disciplines, and these “e-courses” allow for increased accessibility for students.

#### F. Allied Health Programs

Allied health programs include Nursing, Licensed Practical Nursing, Medical Assisting, and Certified Nursing Assistant and they are delivered at either the Mount Vernon campus or the Whidbey Island campus.

The Medical Assisting program provides flexible and practical training to a wide variety of students at Skagit Valley College. Students may select certificates in medical assisting, medical front office, medical billing/coding, pharmacy technician and phlebotomy technician. A dedicated set of faculty also provides an associate’s degree for students (ATA). Faculty in this department are involved in curriculum development and modification; they actively solicit input from their advisory committee. All syllabi examined include relevant learning outcomes and assessment. This program has recently been accredited by an external agency for Medical Assistants, the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP). The department also reports annually to a second external agency, the American Association of Medical Assistants (AAMA) on graduation rates, employers, and clinical externship sites. There has been a recent turnover in leadership in this program; there are now two co-chairs, both experienced and capable.

The Medical Assisting program will soon be housed in a new campus building, the Science and Allied Health building. Faculty was very involved in the planning of that facility, and indicated that they have been included in decision-making on planning.

Library and informational services are rated highly by faculty and they commend those areas of the college for their strong support of their Medical Assisting students. There are numerous articulation agreements and partnerships with external agencies, all are accredited healthcare agencies in the region. Graduates of these certificate programs find employment in their field readily available, often

with multiple job offers. The faculty is initiating online, e-learning teaching options for the future, the career fields in these programs are growing even in this time for regional job loss. Learning outcomes are assessed routinely and used to improve the teaching and content of the program.

This Nursing program has grown in the past few years, and the excellent quality of instruction has been preserved in the process. The Nursing program is under the supervision of the Director of Allied Health Education, with two campus departments - Whidbey Island Center and Mt. Vernon Campus. At Whidbey Island there is a stand-alone Licensed Practical Nurse Program (LPN) that offers a certificate honored by the State of Washington, an LPN to Registered Nurse completion program and both are approved by the National League of Nursing (NLN). The various nursing and other healthcare departments constitute one of the largest divisions at Skagit Valley College.

The Mt. Vernon campus offers an associate degree in Nursing (ATA degree) that is credentialed through the National League of Nurses (NLN). This department just recently completed external accreditation by the NLN successfully. The nursing department at Mt. Vernon has just started special admission policies to mitigate past problems with student retention and success.

The Whidbey Island and Mt. Vernon programs are for the most part independent of each other, and not of the same design or intent. They all fall under the broad umbrella of "Nursing," but are not intended to be one program. Both campus locations also offer Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) training for students.

The Mt. Vernon ATA Nursing Program is fully credentialed and certified, with high success rates on the national nursing board exams – the NCLEX. The program has fully developed and comprehensive policies for students, with wide dissemination. Faculty provides strong mentoring and advising support for students. Curriculum is the product of nursing faculty, the nursing advisory committee and regional articulation with acute-care facilities. Interviews indicated strong linkages with regional hospitals, and nursing supervisors/staff. Graduates of all these nursing programs readily find jobs in their career field, and there is strong support for the departments in the community. Several regional hospitals serve as clinical sites for nursing students, and all are accredited.

Nursing students at Mt. Vernon campus may elect to withdraw from the program at the end of their first year, and complete a Practical Nurse course. The successful completion of that course enables them to sit for the Licensed Practical Nurse exam. They may continue on with their R.N. studies, or leave the program as an LPN (possibly returning later for completion). The University of Washington at Bothell - Nursing Program has a presence on the Mt. Vernon campus, allowing registered nurses to complete coursework for a Bachelors Degree in Nursing (BSN). Faculty has been working for some time on nursing student career pathways for the region.

Faculty indicated that they have recently had very good support for nursing students from the library and information services. Many courses in the departments now require student research, and the college staff have helped by educating nursing students on the wide range of information that they have available for their use.

Document based evidence provided to the accreditation team indicates only one learning outcome for all of the nursing departments, and the document did not provide evidence of its use in improving the programs teaching or content as required by Standard 2.B.3. The internal program review done by

Skagit Valley College in May 2007 also indicated the same deficiency in the nursing outcomes. No documents were provided to this team that indicated learning outcomes or assessment for the LPN or RN re-entry programs, even though they might be viewed as semi-autonomous departments.

#### G. Whidbey Island Campus, South Whidbey Center, and San Juan Center

Consistent with the College mission to build strong communities, Skagit Valley College provides both credit and non-credit learning opportunities. The team confirms that all credit courses and programs offered at the multiple campus sites are subject to the institutional course approval and evaluation processes. Full-time faculty representing appropriate disciplines are involved in the planning and evaluation of the special learning activities. The Whidbey Island, South Whidbey, and San Juan college programs are under the direct supervision of the Vice President of the Whidbey Island Campus. This vice president is directly responsible to the president, thus demonstrating that off-campus programs are an integral organizational component of the college.

The Whidbey Island Campus (WIC) maintains programs offered by 30 full-time and 75 part-time faculty. While focusing on the basic general education liberal arts/transfer degree requirements, the WIC also provides training in six technology certificate and degree programs (i.e., Marine Maintenance Technology, Practical Nursing, Registered Nursing, Computer Information Systems, Office Administration and Accounting Technologies, and Health and Fitness Technician). The institutional mission is fully supported at the WIC with a physical plant of five buildings which include state-of-the-art science, nursing, and computer labs in recently constructed Oak Hall.

The college also maintains instructional centers in South Whidbey and San Juan islands. Both of these centers focus on offering general education/university transfer courses. In addition to traditional classroom offerings taught by part-time faculty, students rely heavily on eLearning offerings to complete degree requirements.

#### H. Business Resource Center and Other Non-Credit Programs

The Business Resource Center located in downtown Mount Vernon provides programs in industrial safety and business development. The Center helps community members create, grow and operate successful small businesses through free business consulting and low cost non-credit contract training. The Center's wide range of community partners provides input and vision for identifying its goals and objectives. The Business Resource Center is in a transitional stage which will give future emphasis to Latino small business development and community leadership skills, while de-emphasizing the community enrichment and recreational courses offered locally by other organizations and agencies.

The Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) and the Skagit Valley Head Start Program reach throughout the district serving more than 500 children and their families. Both programs collaborate closely with school districts and other service providers to provide early learning and embedded intervention services for children with special needs. Program goals, planning, outcomes and evaluation adhere to federal and state regulations and are closely monitored under the direction of college administration.

The San Juan Center has welcomed thousands of visitors to the northwest through its highly successful Elderhostel program. The Center conducts approximately 40 Elderhostels each year between the

months of April and October. Each Elderhostel is a standard program consisting of 22 hours of varied educational experiences. Under the leadership of the Vice President of the Whidbey Island Campus, Skagit Valley College retains sole and direct control of each program it creates and is in compliance with Policy A-6 – Contractual Relationships with Organizations Not Regionally Accredited. The institution is commended for establishing the San Juan Elderhostel. The popularity and expansion of this non-credit program exemplify the creativity and innovation of the faculty, staff, and administration of Skagit Valley College.

## I. Adult Basic Education/English as a Second Language

The Adult Basic Education/English as a Second Language (ABE/ESL) program is a growing program at the Mount Vernon Campus. Seventy-one percent of the students are Hispanic (compared to 17% college-wide), and most attend evening ESL classes. The ABE/ESL courses are managed enrollment which provides students and faculty more structure and has enhanced enrollment and retention. In addition, the program is multi-subject and multi-level classes which provide for varied levels of entry and proficiency. The Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (IBEST) and Academic English as a Second Language (AESL) programs have provided needed language tutoring and instruction for technology and transfer students with language barriers. The implementation of the ESL new student orientation has helped students become better adjusted to the college climate and in a better position to succeed. The institution should be commended for its innovative changes made in the ABE/ESL program. The implementation of the student orientation, expansion of the evening program, creation of the managed enrollment, and multi-subject/multi-level entry points have provided students with a more inviting learning atmosphere which has paid dividends through an upturn in enrollment.

## J. Workforce Programs

The Workforce Education division of SVC includes all of the professional and technical programs as well as the Business Resource Center, contract and short term training, community education/personal enrichment courses, WorkFirst, Night School, Project Director for PTE Student Success, WorkSafe Institute coordination, and Allied Health Education. Numerous non-credit workshops and personal enrichment courses are offered each quarter. The PTE program offerings are distributed throughout the year to maximize the ability of students to matriculate successfully and in a timely manner.

The strategic planning and subsequent developments implemented by the staff and faculty of the SVC have led to a number of changes both organizationally as well as programmatically throughout the institution. A major objective for the division along with the development and maintenance of PTE programs is a movement toward increasing the number of customized and contract training offerings and decreasing the number of personal enrichment courses offered by other venues within the region. This process has also resulted in the recent centralization of the instructional activity in support of workforce training and development under the direction of the Dean for Workforce Education. The institutional self study points out that this step was taken to acknowledge and place further emphasis upon the college's overall commitment to holistic workforce development. Information gained through the onsite evaluation of the institution supports this contention.

A review of the records of program evaluations as well as strategic planning documents and interviews with faculty and staff supports that SVC workforce programs are evaluated on a regularly reviewed schedule through a well established and thorough review process. Information gained from these reviews is used in making decisions regarding program and service improvement. Staff and faculty are recruited, hired and evaluated through well maintained procedures. Regular input from advisory committees is used in creating, maintaining and constant improvement of the institutions workforce programs and services. Processes are in place to insure that third party evaluation and accreditation are administered appropriately and in a timely manner. Communication lines between the institution and related professions represented by these programs and services are nurtured and well maintained in order to meet the needs of SVC's various communities of interest for quality lifelong learning.



Augmented support for student success is enhanced through services provided by the Project Director for Professional Technical Student Success.

The evaluator found consistency between the findings outlined in the self study documents and observations of the daily operations of the institution. There is considerable evidence that supports the contention that planning and improvement strategies have led to a much better overall interaction between and among SVC staff and faculty in the professional and technical programs and the general education and remedial support staff and faculty. These processes have also led to a strengthening of the communication lines between the institution and the various communities and professional organizations which depend upon SVC for workforce development and qualified graduates.

Since the last evaluation, the people of SVC have created a number of new programs and certificates including: AA-ST Early Childhood; AAs in Business, Pre-Nursing, Visual Arts, Science, and Music; ATAs in Educational Paraprofessional, Medical Assistant, Midrange/Mainframe Computing Systems, Multimedia and Interactive Technology, and Park Services and Protection as well as certificates in Business Management-Food Chains Retail Management, Chemical Dependency Professional, Dialysis Technician, Entrepreneurship, Health and Fitness Technician, Interpreter Certification Preparation, Pharmacy Technician, Process Technology, Waste/Wastewater Treatment Tech.

SVC staff, while addressing the need for additional program choices, found it necessary to suspend or delete the following less viable options. The discontinued degrees include ATAs in Agricultural Technology, Computer Repair, Graphic Arts Production, Parks Operation and Maintenance, Midrange/Mainframe Computing Systems, and Telecommunications Network Technology. The deleted certificates were Dialysis Technician (intermittent), E-Commerce, Management Information Systems, Process Control Operator, while the Truck Driving Certificate was suspended.

The college staff have not only expanded the number of offerings available to students but also faculty and staff have increased their ability through additional distributed education offerings to serve students who have been negatively affected by time, distance and scheduling constraints. Examples of this are the successful delivery of the Computer Information Systems and the Multimedia and Interactive Technology programs with totally online options. Students are increasingly able to fulfill the various prof/tech program requirements by taking additional online and hybrid courses.

The requirements for completion of all applied technical degrees and certificates include the appropriate number of related instruction, core program and related courses. Both professional technical and general education faculty agree that ongoing collaboration has increased the effectiveness of the college's general education and support course offerings in meeting the computational, communication, and writing needs of professional technical students.

Interviews and observations of programs found that the Program evaluation process for professional and technical programs is well conceived, useful to both administration and faculty and is consistently employed throughout the institutions professional and technical programs. These evaluations follow established procedures outlined in the Guidelines for Review of Instructional Programs /Departments. From the evaluations an Outcome Assessment Plan is established and administered for the program. This documentation is maintained in the office of the Dean of Workforce Education. The evaluation schedule is developed by the College Cabinet on a yearly basis to ensure that each PT program is evaluated at least once every five to seven years. The evaluator found ample evidence that information gained through these evaluations has been used to guide curricular as well as budgetary

and staffing decision making and problem solving. The process as reported by various faculty and administrators to be extensive, thorough, and practical and includes an additional and extensive process for review of programs deemed to

Throughout the compilation of the program and department reviews, faculty and support staff have demonstrated their ability to insure ongoing program quality and currency through combining the evaluation process with input from program advisory committees as well as maintenance of numerous communication networks tied to the community and related professional and technical third party accreditation and oversight procedures. Examples of maintaining third party accreditation are: the NATEF certification updating process in the Automotive Program, reporting requirements for the American Association of Medical Assistants, the Welding Programs adherence to the standards of the American Welding Society and the Washington Association of Building Officials.

All of the PT programs have well established and well documented advisory committee meetings. These committees are comprised of program-related representatives from business and industry and are used extensively for input on curricular modifications, trends in the field as well as sources for employment opportunities for program graduates. Program advisory members have also provided access to much needed sources for equipment donations. Advisory meetings for all programs are held at least twice a year with many meeting quarterly.

SVC faculty and staff are to be commended for the quality of workforce education and for the excellence of the programs and services committed to this endeavor.

Support for the emphasis upon workforce education comes from all levels within the institution as well as from the board of trustees and community leaders. The President has formed the Presidents Roundtable on Workforce Development which includes industry representatives as well as representatives from economic development forums and members of the community's workforce development council. While numerous examples exist to support this contention, the strongest may be the institution's reorganization to include a division of Workforce Education.

The Workforce Education Division of SVC as a whole is to be commended for the quality of service to students and the community it serves. The Dean of Workforce education established the Growing the Workforce Committee, a Program Development Learning Community dedicated to multi-disciplinary and cross-functional strategic planning. This group includes all divisional and program department heads and whose primary objective is to insure application of assessment data. Documents supported by onsite review indicated widespread support of this process. There is ample evidence to indicate that planning is approached as an ongoing process. One example is the additional "just in time" adult basic education and developmental needs support given to PTE student through a team teaching effort of content and support faculty working together in the same classroom. Another example is the dual language course offerings within the Early Childhood Education program. These and numerous other examples indicate the division's successful application of program assessment data to improve programs.

### Standard Three: Students

Last academic year a woman came to Counseling and Career Services saying her mother had never earned a high school diploma and very much wanted to do so now. The mother had left high school in her senior year to marry and raise a family. Some years later she took courses of interest, but never declared intent to earn a degree or certificate. The mother's academic record was evaluated and she was found to lack only the math requirement. The mother resisted, saying she was not a good math student, but after awhile she was convinced to enroll in the appropriate math section. As she had limited mobility, accommodations were made that included allowing her to take the course from home and with her daughter delivering and collecting her daily assignments. She finished the course on schedule, earning an "A." She became a high school graduate at age 90 and is expected to participate in the ceremony this spring. The Director of Counseling told this story to illustrate the ways that students are supported in achieving their goals at Skagit Valley College.

The Mission of Student Services is to promote learning and connectedness. Learning Outcomes (LOAPs) include that students with disabilities will succeed at the same rate or better; that graduates of the Displaced Homemakers Center will develop strategies for managing barriers to employment and training; that international students will integrate with campus life within the first quarter of attendance; and that students receiving financial aid will demonstrate an understanding of the satisfactory progress policy.

The organization and overall functioning of Student Services effectively provide services consistent with the mission and goals. The Interim Director interprets the mission to mean that Student Services is the "translator" or liaison between the student and the institution and its systems. Others in leadership positions also report their purpose as supporting students to meet their goals, broadening their horizons to opportunities, and removing barriers between them and success. Programs housed under the broad umbrella of Student Services include: academic advising; career counseling; evaluation of transfer credits; academic support for 1<sup>st</sup> generation college students, for the economically disadvantaged, and the disabled; counseling and advocacy for disabled students, veterans and their dependents, dislocated homemakers, workers needing retraining, international students; students of color and diverse cultures; high school students taking courses for college credits; and, economically disadvantaged students and other students applying for financial aid. Student Services also houses the College's outreach and recruitment efforts, which extend into high school, middle school, and as young as fifth grade; housing and food services; intercollegiate athletics; Student Government and Leadership; and student-centered media including radio and print media.

Student services and programs are staffed by qualified individuals whose academic preparation and experience are appropriate to their assignments. The Interim Dean of Student Services holds a Master's of Education. The Directors and Counselors hold Master's degrees in fields related to their assignments. Coordinators hold Bachelor's degrees and many years' experience specific to their assignments. Assignments are delineated in the Organizational Chart and services are defined in the Student Handbook. The performance of personnel is evaluated annually. Some Counselors also teach, and thus participate in student evaluation "opinionaires." Some customer service surveys are also administer.

Policies and procedures for the development of student programs and services are in place and available to personnel. The Department of Student Services operates under the same Mission and LOAPs, all of which are compatible with one another. Personnel are able to explain the overall policies, how they are applied in their service, and how they interface with other services. Human, physical, and financial resources for services and programs are allocated on the basis of identified needs as according to the Strategic Plan, Goals, and Priorities, and are adequate to support the services and programs offered.

The Student Services has developed its own Mission and Learning Outcomes to measure efficacy and to provide a method and process for making programmatic changes based on evidence. Student Services takes an “assessment within service delivery” approach to self-evaluation, suggesting that services are assessed internally against measurable outcomes using appropriate instruments and methods. This enables Student Services to respond quickly to changes in student demographics, community and state economic situations, and needs of the community. Examples include:

1. Analysis of data collected on outcomes indicated that students are more successful when they interact meaningfully with teaching faculty. The analysis challenged Student Services to create new measures that include the amount of time faculty spend with students, which led to a redesign of the way students are advised, currently shifting to using faculty advisors.
2. Internal and external analysis inspired in part by raising numbers of 1<sup>st</sup> generation students and changing economic factors led to the establishment of new programs and expansion of existing ones.
3. Documented increase in Hispanic/Latino population led to creation of Spanish language and multi-language programs and delivery models, including a Spanish language radio program broadcast to the general community and the hiring of multi-lingual front-line workers at admissions and records.
4. Facility remodel was inspired by data collected on student engagement.

SVC provides many clubs to meet the interests of students, including Student Government. International students are involved in Student Government for the first time this year. Other leadership opportunities exist in activities like “Calling All Colors” and “Champions of Diversity,” both under the purview of MSS. The Honor Society also provides student leadership opportunities, although participation fluctuates. Leadership opportunities are published in both versions of the Student Handbook, as well as the Course Catalog.

Ten years ago the Students Government negotiated a reallocation of student activity fees, resulting in one-third of the fees devoted to student-earmarked and determined capital projects. The recently remodeled Campus Center is one example.

At the Student Forum, four representatives present reported that other students don’t know what student government can do for them. Later they recounted a student government-driven decision about money allocation between SVC and WIC. They were unhappy with the experience, feeling it put them “between a rock and a hard spot” as the decision was made with minimal faculty advising or moderating. They were also unhappy with the outcome, which included cutting funding for the student government advisor and the elimination of another job, which they suspected was due to outspokenness of person in question.

The policies on students' rights and responsibilities, including those related to academic honesty and procedural rights, are clearly stated, and can be found in the Student Handbook, Student Handbook/Day Planner, Course Catalog, and quarterly Schedule of Classes. Application and sanctions take into account the special needs of some students. The safety and security of students and their property are explained in the Student Handbook.

The college publishes both a Course Catalog and quarterly Schedules that are available to both enrolled and prospective students. These documents include: the mission and goals of the college; requirements and procedures for admission; students' rights and responsibilities; academic regulations; degree-completion requirements; credit courses and descriptions; tuition, fees, and other charges; refund policy; and other items relative to attending the institution or withdrawing from it. The Student Handbook also includes information on student conduct, grievance policy, academic honesty, student government, student organizations and services, and athletics. Graduation requirements are also included and are consistently applied in both the certificate and degree verification process. Appropriate reference to the Student Right-to-Know Act is included in required publications. New Student Orientation (NSO) includes and enforces most if not all of the above outlined topics.

The methods used to award credit and to determine achievement are clearly stated and available to students. Academic records are accurate, secure, and comprehensive, and in compliance with FERPA regulations. SVC awards only Associate's degrees, certificates, and occupational endorsements; therefore, the need to evaluate theses and dissertations does not exist. There is also no institutional portfolio requirement. Distinctions are clearly made between degree and non-degree credit and courses, with regard to both internal credits and transfer credits. The distinctions and process are published in the Course Catalog.

Records of enrolled students and those in the process of admission, including any and all transcripts, are permanent and kept in their complete state. They are in a fireproof safe; duplicate files are kept in electronic media in a local bank vault. Data and records maintained in computing systems have adequate security and provision for recovery in the event of disaster. The information-release policy respects the right of individual privacy, ensures the confidentiality of records, and is FERPA-compliant.

Skagit Valley College is an open entry institution. Recruitment is broad-based, intentional, and evidence-based. Staff take an interdisciplinary team approach to tasks. Collegiality and collaboration are evident among staff, faculty, and administration as they meet challenges in the face of reduced resources. Students reportedly pick up on the positive attitudes and unconditional support, undoubtedly increasing their probability of success.

Student admission policies are consistent with the mission of the college. Qualifications for admission to the institution and its programs include:

- Placement testing is required in Math and English using nationally validated instruments
- Placement testing is required for English Language Learners (ELLs) using best practices instruments
- Pro/tech students follow a proscribed schedule outlined in catalog and the web site
- Prerequisites, which are strictly enforced, exist for many classes

All students are held to the above requirements. In addition, students are required to participate in advising regarding administration of interest surveys, establishing goals, and understanding degree requirements.

SVC students can participate in “Express Advising.” All counseling staff are cross-trained on all issues. Students can drop-in for a ten-minute counseling or advising session with whoever is available. Non-students are also eligible to participate in this service, which is available seven days a week, including evenings. Staff participate in weekly meetings to coordinate services, share information, and guide one another. In addition, Career Pathways guide sheets are produced and circulated. Finally, staff participate in an email group named, “District Advising Issues.” (In the face of electronic savvy, staff report that their biggest challenge now is that they are more “wired” than are their students or potential students.)

The “assessment within service delivery” approach to self-evaluation allows the institution to focus on the needs of a wide variety of student characteristics and needs and respond quickly in the form of services and programs. Students are placed according to criteria that are best practices and appropriate to the characteristics above.

All student policies, including admissions requirements, degree requirements, and policies governing student conduct are published in the Student Handbook (both versions). The appeal process is also published in that document, as is the policy for readmission of students who have been suspended or terminated. The exception is policies regarding Nursing and other special programs, which have “manuals” that spell out additional or different policies.

The Financial Aid Director interprets his mission and the mission of the department to “allow students to be here and achieve their goals by removing financial and economic road blocks.” The goal is also to serve in a timely manner. He reports that two weeks used to be a long wait for a determination or check, and he sees that as the economy falls, students respond with greater desperation and anxiety. This has changed considerably in the last 30 years. In addition, the need is greater with more dislocated homemakers and out-of-work students. The loan default rate has risen from 9% in 2005 to 12.2% for 2007. (The rate for 2008 is not yet valid). The Financial Aid Office conducts workshops for high school students to learn what is available and to prepare for college. The Director answers calls from high school counselors and other agencies, whether or not the prospective student will attend SVC. Service provision is intentionally “community-based.” Financial Aid categories and availability are published in the Course Catalog.

A New Student Orientation (NSO) for all new students is conducted the day before classes begin. The Recruitment and Admissions Counselor is responsible for oversight of NSO. In addition, Running Start and other programs conduct NSOs specific to their programs.

Health care is readily available to residential students through Student Life. In addition, any student has access. The Health Care Coordinator is housed in Student Life, and a variety of health-related issues and resources are available just outside the office.

Limited student housing is available at SVC. It consists of 136 beds situated in 36 individual 4-bedroom apartments with a shared common area in each. Residents currently consist of about one-half international students, one-fourth student athletes, and one-fourth students from special programs. Housing is generally full and augmented by placing international students with families in the community. Housing is owned and operated by the Foundation; fiscal and other liability is not the responsibility of SVC. The complex was built in 1993 and meets recognized standards of health and

safety. No food services are provided on site at the housing complex because all units have a kitchen. However, Food Services operates a cafeteria in the Campus Center. The Culinary Arts program is responsible for the operations of the cafeteria. The instructors hold certificates to supervise. All workers have food-handler's permits, which the instructors have the ability to award.

SVC has many co-curricular activities and programs to foster the intellectual and personal development of students consistent with the mission. Many co-curricular activities and programs speak to the needs of traditionally under-represented students. These include clubs of interest, Student Government, Honor Societies, Fine and Performing Arts (including a student art gallery), Calling All Colors, Champions of Diversity, intercollegiate sports, and other leadership opportunities. According to the Director of Counseling, "We have services for 100% of students, but not 100% of students are involved." The co-curricular activities are evaluated using the same methods as services, and adhere to the LOAPs. In addition to intercollegiate sports, the grounds of SVC include indoor tennis courts, fitness center, playing fields, and running and walking trails. The Associated Students of Skagit Valley College own and operate Cardinal Cove, which features 300 feet of waterfront including college-owned sailboats.

SVC operates two bookstores, both located in the Campus Center. The first is a traditional bookstore that supports educational programs and contributes to the intellectual climate of the campus community by stocking text books, art supplies, sundries, uniforms, and other items needed to complete programs. The Bookstore is an auxiliary operation of SVC and is not subsidized by the college. The other bookstore is operated by Business students and carries mostly gift items and imports.

SVC operates a radio station, publishes a student newspaper, and maintains a student art gallery. The radio station broadcasts to the general community in English and in Spanish.

Intercollegiate athletics has the same goals as other Student Services programs – to promote learning and to support students to meet their goals. These program and financial operations are consistent with the educational mission and goals of the institution and are conducted with appropriate oversight by the governing board, chief executive officer, and faculty. SVC participates through its membership in the North West Athletic Association of Community Colleges (NWAACC). SVC has thirteen teams – seven for women and six for men (the odd number is because there is no men's equivalent to volleyball). The calendar is set conference-wide taking into account student schedules. Athletes are required to maintain appropriate GPAs, maintain good attendance, refrain from illegal substances, among other things. The athletic program is funded through student fees and fundraising activities, except for a few line items such as the salary of the Athletic Director and maintenance. SVC athletes are held to the same academic standards, degree requirements, grading policies, student conduct regulations, financial aid opportunities and awards as are other students.

## Standard Four: Faculty Evaluation

Skagit Valley College has effective processes for the selection, development and retention of competent faculty. Many of the career/technical programs report their faculty qualifications to external accrediting agencies, in addition to internal college departments. College exhibits and documents provided evidence that transfer faculty meet or exceed minimum qualifications. In addition, faculty is provided opportunities to participate in academic planning and curriculum development. Faculty is very involved in student academic advising, and is utilizing the new online advising tools the college has implemented. The faculty is encouraged to participate in institutional governance, especially in strategic planning, financial planning and facilities planning.

Most documentation and interviews indicated that faculty workloads appear to reflect the colleges' mission and goals, allowing faculty sufficient time for their professional development. Policies on faculty salaries and benefits are widely available, and easy to understand. Evidence and interviews indicate that these are administered fairly.

The college provides for regular and systematic evaluation of faculty work performance. The process is not clear for part-time (adjunct) faculty. (4.A.5; Policy 4.1) The pre-tenure evaluation process is comprehensive and very thorough, while the criteria and process for post-tenure faculty and part-time faculty are not as well documented and appears to be inconsistent. Interviews with college faculty and staff during this visit indicate some confusion also on who is to conduct part-time faculty evaluations, and exactly how often they should occur. There was also confusion about the use of a faculty evaluation checklist. Some indicated that the opinionnaires were the guidelines for faculty evaluations, while others described opinionnaires as student evaluations only. Some department faculty indicated that administrators were tasked with contracted faculty evaluations, and that part-time faculty evaluations were to be conducted by department chairs (peers).

The difference in evaluation criteria between contracted faculty and part-time faculty is confusing, and not well explained in college documents. (4.A.5; Policy 4.1) In its Self-Study, the college indicated an awareness that further work is needed to clarify the part-time faculty evaluation processes, criteria and timing. The Evaluation Team agrees with this suggestion. (See Recommendation #3.)

In spite of financial distress, the college appears thoughtful and reflective in consideration of the number of contracted faculty versus part-time faculty. This is commendable. Interviews indicated faculty appreciation for the processes developed in collaboration with administration and human resources.

Faculty scholarship and research are encouraged by the college. In career/technical areas, the college actively encourages faculty to maintain currency in skills and expertise. All faculty interviewed by the accreditation team appeared to consistently understand and appreciate data driven decision-making within the college, and in their teaching practice. Professional development is respected and appreciated by all college faculty and staff, and the policies and guidelines about these opportunities are clearly stated and disseminated.



College faculty are involved in grant solicitation, foundation funding and other private funding under the appropriate guidance of administration. Past efforts have helped the college in the nursing program expansion, among other worthwhile efforts.

Skagit Valley College appears to have a particularly collegial and collaborative organizational culture, and the faculty has provided much leadership and effort in effective teaching, student learning and department efforts to facilitate student success (learning communities). Innovation and collaboration appear to be thriving among college faculty.

## Standard Five: Library and Information Resources

The Norwood Cole Library (Mount Vernon Campus) and the Whidbey Island Campus Library provide resources and services that support student learning in the library, on the campuses, and from any location where digital resources may be accessed via the Internet. Library faculty are actively engaged in helping students acquire 21<sup>st</sup> century information literacy skills through a well-planned program of library instruction, adapted as needed to meet the needs of face-to-face, one on one, classroom delivery, or web tutorial. Library staff members are eager to create an environment where people feel comfortable, where user needs are met as they drop in for group study, use computers, read or browse through the collection, or ask for help at the reference desk.

The libraries support three other campus centers (via courier delivery and/or mail). Library services are also accessible through a well-designed web presence, by telephone, email, and instant messaging.

As user needs evolve, libraries must adapt with new technologies and services. The Self-Study documents some of the shifts in recent years; expanding access to digital resources (subscription databases, e-book collections), additional computers available in the libraries, more emphasis on information literacy, 24/7 accessibility of collections and reference support. The libraries are still important places for students to go for group study and conference rooms, course-related or recreational reading, to browse through book and periodical collections, or a quiet place to study. Equally important, the library is the place to find faculty and staff who are knowledgeable and eager to help.

The core collection of print and related resources is developed with the goal of supporting the instructional programs of the college. These resources include print, non-print (audio, CD, DVD, VHS), online periodical and reference databases, e-Books, and other Internet sources. Librarians have made a concerted effort to update the collections and discard dated materials. A district-wide collection analysis in 2007 showed that 28% of the collection was published after 1990. Collection development at SVC is considered to be a shared responsibility; library faculty have subject liaison responsibilities with faculty in specific subject areas.

The library's collection development policy and effective organizational linkages between library faculty and instructional faculty support effective collection development practices in all formats. User preferences and anywhere/anytime accessibility are factors driving increased investment in eBook collections, subscription databases and other digital resources.

One library faculty member serves on the Instruction Committee which reviews changes in degree requirements, new programs, degrees and certificates of 45 credits or more. Participation in the committee facilitates planning for collection development to support new and emerging needs in a timely manner.

The campus visit confirmed the strong commitment the college and library staff have made to information literacy as an important learning outcome related to student success. It should be noted that information literacy is one of the General Education Learning Values adopted by the Skagit Valley Board of Trustees on April 11, 2006. There are several ways students can gain information literacy skills. Librarians offer one-on-one assistance in the library. The library website has an information

literacy tutorial. Library faculty provide classroom instruction in the library and in the classrooms at the request of teaching faculty. They have been “embedded” in eLearning and hybrid courses. The librarians created a marketing plan for outreach activities and to increase awareness of what the library/librarians have to offer. This year they successfully applied for funds from the student technology fee to be used for replacing computers in the library. There is considerable evidence of their proactive approach to gaining professional expertise through workshops and other professional development activities. As noted in the self-study, a variety of tools and techniques have been used over the years to assess information literacy instruction. A more systematic plan with rubrics, and student learning objectives is now in place. This will improve the quality of assessment in this critical area.

The libraries at MVC and WIC are staffed for hours of operation that best meet the needs of each location given current budget levels. The Norwood Cole Library is open 63 hours per week (Monday through Friday). The Norwood Cole Library at MVC includes groups and individual study spaces, conference rooms, and comfortable seating around the library. A remodel doubled the floor space and maintained abundant natural lighting throughout. The carpet was replaced recently. Furnishings in the public use areas are well maintained. Group study areas are available and also designated quiet study areas. Shelving is sufficient to accommodate growth in the physical collection. Staff work areas and office spaces are adequate and well-organized for their intended use.

Due to time and travel constraints, the evaluator was not able to visit the library at Whidbey Island. The Whidbey Island Campus library is open 65 hours per week including 9-5 on Saturday. Web-based/online access to library resources is available 24/7 through the library website.

Each library has open student computer labs. The availability of computers has been substantially increased at each location since the last full-scale evaluation. The student computer labs are managed and staffed by the Information Technology and eLearning unit. Wireless internet access is also available in both libraries.

The library administrator and the professional staff have appropriate professional qualifications (MLS degrees from ALA accredited programs) and many years of experience. These individuals have been involved in professional development and continuing education activities throughout their careers and active participants in college committees. Several library faculty have received SVC Exceptional Faculty Award(s). Technical support staff members also have years of experience and valuable skills that enable them to keep library materials and services accessible to faculty, staff and students.

The self-study describes some of the loss of financial support for library personnel, collection development and goods services in recent years. Funding for the library dropped to 2.6% of the overall college budget in 2008-09 (from 4.6% in 1998-1999). In an era of rising costs for library materials and services (including the staffing required for ensuring accessibility), the college may face some difficult decisions in maintaining resources to support student learning.

The libraries continue to be valuable physical spaces for students who use these spaces to meet a variety of academic needs. Digital collections and services are valuable assets which may indeed expand the range of information resources available to all. However, these assets are also subject to cost increases and cannot sustain economies of scale. If they are to be used to greatest advantage, library faculty must be positioned to support users. Strengthening information literacy instruction will be essential to student success.

District library staff participate in the planning process for the libraries in an annual meeting. The current action plan is clearly based on the SVC 2008-09 Strategic Plan. Assessment is one of the strategic goals. (Goal 5) Librarians plan to survey students to assess the implementation of information literacy instruction. Another example of planning related to goals is related to Goal 4: Facilities and Technology. The Norwood Cole library plans to implement a printer/copier management system which should be cost effective and efficient to meet the goal of “sustainable, improved and modernized learning and working environments.”

Following on a grant-funded workshop, the library developed a marketing plan to raise awareness of library services among faculty and students. The plan was successfully implemented. The turnout at some special outreach events was excellent.

The library followed through on CCSSE data that indicated a need for additional online resources. Student responses indicated that most students use off-campus computers to access online library resources. A greater range of digital resources is now available and an online information literacy tutorial. A library blog is a source of direct student feedback.

A variety of library reports are used to monitor usage of facilities and collections. These include: circulation reports, usage by format (microfiche, E-books, databases) the number of library orientations and reference transactions, gate counts at both locations, and budget expenditures. There is, in short, a wealth of data to draw on. The Dean for Library, Learning Resources, and Basic Skills, through a variety of organizational linkages and with the assistance of her staff, is able to represent the interests of the library to the administration and effectively plan for the future.

## Information Technology

Information Technology, eLearning, and Media Services were combined into one administrative unit in 2006 to improve the coordination of services. IT provides essential technology infrastructure and support services across the district for administrative and academic computing including web-based systems. This is a challenging role as institutions move toward a teaching/learning environment that is dramatically different from the past in terms of access, interaction, curriculum and instruction.

In 2000 the College shifted to online delivery for distance education in order to provide “maximum access to learning across a large geographic district” for students. Since 2003 the eLearning program of the college has been fully integrated into the College’s instructional units. The instructional units schedule courses, handle faculty contracts, and budget for part-time faculty. Many degree requirements can be met through eLearning courses and eLearning appears to be meeting the needs of students. There are 1,200 course sites in the Blackboard Course Management System (CMS) with 5,000 user accounts. Data from 2007-2007 indicate that eLearning generated 21% of total district FTE. Training and support for faculty who offer eLearning courses is provided through eLearning staff in IT and the Center for Learning and Teaching. College strategic planning priorities for 2008-2009 include a goal to “enhance delivery of eLearning,” recognizing the need to improve eLearning support services, assure the quality of courses, programs and curricula, and enhance student success. Working through the College Governance Steering Committee, a “solve and dissolve committee” was formed to work on these issues. This is indicative of commitment to maintaining quality and extending eLearning opportunities to students throughout the district. The Dean of IT and Distance Learning has analyzed

course offerings by location and delivery mode to establish the basis for decisions which will help the College maximize accessibility and cost effectiveness. The new distance learning fee will generate funds to provide additional IT support for the anticipated expansion of eLearning.

IT Network Services covers many elements that are essential to networking functionality across the district including the wide area network, email, server management and HP 3000 connectivity. The unified network and email system dates from 2003. All staff members have email accounts accessible on and off campus. Students and alumni have SVC accounts through Google Mail and those accounts are automatically entered into the CMS to facilitate eLearning and hybrid courses.

IT Web Services encompasses many internet and portal functions that have quickly become part of the student services landscape such as online advising, admission and registration forms, library services, financial aid application, online schedule and catalog searching. For example, MySVC EduApps features an RSS feed which can disseminate announcements and emergency notifications. A Website Advisory Committee (WAC) made up of individuals representing important stakeholders district-wide, works with the web services administrator to improve functionality on the College website.

Media Services is one of the service areas that changed dramatically over the past ten years. With the implementation of “smart classroom technology” it is no longer necessary to deliver equipment to the classrooms because multimedia stations are in place in 45 classrooms. Media Services now supports instruction by checking out multimedia equipment as needed, assists with video production related to instruction, as well as, video editing and development of student multimedia projects.

Computer Labs are still an important feature of campus life although CCSSE data (2007) indicate that 69% of Skagit students are most likely to access the web from home. General access computing labs and specialized labs accommodate a variety of instructional needs in many locations throughout the district. Wireless services are available at Mount Vernon Campus, Whidbey Island Campus, the South Whidbey Center and the Marine Technology Center.

The extensive deployment of information technology equipment across the district in various locations requires a systematic approach to planning. The Dean of IT and Distance Education has a detailed Gantt chart to represent key requirements across functional areas. This is only one example of the many planning tools IT uses to leverage the substantial investments in staff time and fiscal resources to support this critical functional area.

## Standard Six: Governance and Administration

All colleges and universities have experienced difficulty in the current economic environment. Skagit Valley College is no exception as it struggles to meet growing student demand with its constrained resources. Despite these struggles, it is worth noting that SVC's strong leadership has made careful and deliberate choices that have helped the college avoid the crisis atmosphere that exists at many other colleges. The leadership of the college deserves substantial credit for creating a sense of stability on campus, even though hiring processes are frozen and many administrators are assigned to interim duties to cover vacancies.

The level of morale among all employee groups and the student body was remarkably high. It is absolutely clear that employees support the work of the college, enjoy working for the college, and have confidence in its future. Likewise, students are enthusiastic about the quality of education they are receiving and demonstrate their support of the college in all manner of ways. This near universal support for the college is not accidental. The high morale and support that the college enjoys grows out of good leadership at all levels; e.g., the President, Board of Trustees, employee associations, student government. Respect and collegiality are reinforced values on campus.

SVC's Board of Trustees is composed of engaged and thoughtful policy makers. They understand at a deep level the issues confronting the college, and present a stable and calm demeanor that positively impacts the overall campus culture.

Internal governance at the college was reviewed and updated in 2001. A district-wide Governance Steering Committee acts as a clearinghouse for proposed changes. There are several standing committees that review, research, and make recommendations about changes related to Instruction and Student Services, General Education Implementation, and Sustainability. Although employees who are directly involved in the governance committees are aware of processes for making changes, other employees appear confused and unsure about how these committees work, and how decisions are made. The college is encouraged to continue to communicate and include employees broadly in the process.

More important than any single committee is the sense on campus that participation opportunities are numerous and college decision-making is a shared process that respects all points of view.

## Standard Seven: Finance

Skagit Valley College maintains well-defined financial planning and operation processes which are consistent with national and state laws and regulations. The College's financial planning is guided by the Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM). The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) has responsibility for the college system's operating and capital budget requests and for allocation of those budgets to colleges; however the SVC's Board of Trustees has statutory authority to develop and implement the College's budget based upon rules and guidelines issued by the SBCTC.

SCV financial officers use a planning process that is collaborative and inclusive and is strategically guided so that funds are appropriately distributed to each area and department in the overall context of fiscal stability. The Board of Trustees participate in budget considerations and are informed of changes or events regarding fiscal issues. College financial officers have recognized potential state-mandated budget reductions may occur and that continued financial planning, including developing multi-year revenue and expenditure projections will continue to be highly important. This is a challenging exercise in an uncertain fiscal environment. SVC's capital budget planning is conducted within the framework of the College's master plan which is tied to the College's strategic plan.

The College develops and publishes an annual budget. The SVC Board of Trustees conduct detailed reviews of budget planning and budgets changes when they occur.

The College's debt structure is low. The College only has two capital debts totaling \$3,300,000 (FY07/08). The issuance of debt is controlled by State policies and procedures issued by the Office of the State Treasurer. Debt is approved by the SBCTC and State Legislature. Debt service payments are made from auxiliary operations, student fees and local funds, and do not detract from funding for academic programs. Debt financing has been used to improve facilities at the San Juan site and the Mount Vernon campus. SVC'S debt is periodically reviewed by the Board of Trustees.

SVC's enrollment has remained strong for the last three years. State funding has recently been reduced due to economic issues facing the State of Washington. This has resulted in reductions in staffing and operational budgets. Budget issues faced by the College have been well communicated to the campus community and the College has established principles and criteria to guide planning for these reductions

Primary sources of funds for the College's general operating budget are state appropriations and tuition. All students pay general fees. Course fees are attached to some courses as appropriate, and sales and service fees are charged in auxiliary enterprises. The College has been successful in obtaining additional funding for capital projects from both the State of Washington and local resources.

The College's financial information indicates a history of financial stability. College staff members monitor various financial indicators to ensure that corrective actions can be pursued where such may be needed, and budget and financial reporting is well developed. The financial management system used by all Washington Community and Technical Colleges is an antiquated system that creates challenges for daily operations and reporting.

SVC's transfers among major funds and interfund borrowing are legal and prudent and follow regulations set forth by the GASB as constructed by the OFM and are approved by the Board of Trustees.

The College provides adequate resources to support all of its offering. During the yearly budget process all departments have the opportunity to submit their budget needs for the upcoming fiscal year. Budget request are compiled and prioritized according to the College's strategic goals. The College reviews programs on a regular basis and makes adjustments accordingly. The College has made a commitment to increasing faculty salaries over the past eight years. The College has moved faculty salaries from the bottom quarter of all Washington Community and Technical Colleges in FY2000-01 to the top quarter in FY2007-08.

Operational reserves are adequate and are maintained at about 10% of the general operating budget. Per SBCTC policy, the College is not allowed to have negative fund balances at fiscal year end.

The College has identified and actively manages numerous sources of student financial aid, including several types of aid that originate with the institution itself. The student loan default rate for SVC has fluctuated from a low 6.8 in FY 2005 to a high of 12.2 in FY 2007. Major auxiliary operations consist of the bookstore and copy center which are self supporting. The College's general operating budget does not include any funding from these auxiliary operations.

The President reports on the financial condition of the College to the Board of Trustees on a monthly basis and other times as needed. The College's financial management is overseen by an experienced, dedicated group of financial officers. Expenditures are controlled and cash is managed according to state requirements, and are subject to regular annual audits. Investment activity is governed by the State Treasurer's office and is periodically reported to the Board of Trustees.

The College's financial information is included in the State of Washington's basic financial statements. Annual audits of these statements and supporting records are conducted by the Washington State Auditor's Office (SAO) to ensure compliance with generally accepted accounting principles. These audits encompass reviews of federally financed student aid and internal accounting controls. All recent audits have been unqualified and have contained no audit exceptions. In addition to SAO audits, the SBCTC performs an annual internal audit on selected fiscal operations.

The Skagit Valley College Foundation serves as the primary fundraising arm of the institution, with complementary activities performed by many College departments. Established in 1977, the Foundation is an affiliated but independent non-profit governed by an elected board. The Foundation is audited annually by an independent public accounting firm. The Foundation maintains an endowment investment policy.



## Standard Eight: Physical Resources

The College has developed a campus master plan that is tied to the College's strategic goals through a collaborative and open process that has used input from all areas of campus.

Campus facilities at both the Mount Vernon and Whidbey Island locations have seen renovations and new constructions in the last several years that have caused a significant transformation to each location. Currently the Mount Vernon Campus is in the final stage of construction of a 67,000 square foot Science and Allied Health building that is planned to open for classes in September 2009. The renovations and new construction have replaced outdated space and have added new space for the changing and growing instructional, administrative and student service needs at all locations.

The campus is well maintained and the staff in the facilities and operations unit of the College is experienced, professional and committed to the institution. They are appreciated and respected by the campus community. Staffing reductions that have been made in the past may lead to a reduced ability to properly address maintenance issues as the campus continues to add additional square footage that contains mechanical and environmental systems that are becoming increasingly more technical.

The College appears to provide a safe and secure environment and campus building and grounds are handicap accessible. Overall the College is well equipped. Computing equipment for students, faculty and staff is up to date and the College is completing a computing equipment replacement schedule. Instructional equipment is adequate to serve the college instructional programs.

## Standard Nine: Institutional Integrity

Skagit Valley College demonstrates its commitment to institutional integrity in a number of important ways.

The college conscientiously reviews publications and important documents to ensure that its representations to students and the public are accurate and timely. The college catalog is published every other year and may, at times, contain slightly outdated information. But, even in this case, substantive program of study catalog representations are honored by the college for full two-year periods.

The College Board of Trustees also operates under a policy covering its own ethical standards. This policy on Board Member Code of Ethics covers appropriate decorum as board members, conflict of interest, and confidentiality in matters of a sensitive nature. The Center for Learning and Teaching has sponsored several well-attended ethics workshops over the past several years.

Perhaps most significantly, the college has enhanced its mission statement by the addition of a Core Values and General Education Learning Values. The core values of SVC, as expressed in the values statements, speak to respect, academic freedom, mutual cultural understanding, and honest, respectful communication. These values are lived out at SVC, as evidenced by a campus culture that obviously reflects respect, courtesy, and high morale at all levels.

Academic Freedom issues are appropriately addressed in collective bargaining agreements (Article IV, Section 12) and other policy documents. The Evaluation Team found no evidence of faculty concern regarding issues of academic freedom. Likewise, no evidence was found that students had concerns relating to academic freedom.

Student discipline codes and other college rules and regulations are published and most are available through college website. Appropriate provisions for due process hearings are made in all college disciplinary processes.

## General Commendations

1. Skagit Valley College is commended for the exceptionally high morale and collegiality demonstrated by its faculty, staff, and leadership. The Evaluation Team was deeply impressed by the strong enthusiasm for the work of the College and commitment to serving students. The College community is working together to meet the current challenge of serving increased student needs at a time of decreasing resources.
2. Skagit Valley College is commended for its innovative partnerships with local community organizations, public schools, government agencies, and businesses to provide resources for shared facilities, to offer jointly-sponsored cultural events and programming, and to ensure strong alignment between the College's professional technical offerings and community workforce needs.
3. Skagit Valley College is commended for its world renowned Elderhostel program and for receiving national recognition for leadership in the development of effective learning communities. These exemplary learning experiences bring external recognition to the College, and foster personal satisfaction for the faculty, staff, and students who work and learn together in the programs.
4. Skagit Valley College is commended for its innovative changes in the ABE/ESL program. The implementation of student orientation, expansion of the evening program, creation of managed enrollment processes and development of multi-subject/multi-level entry points has provided students with a more inviting learning atmosphere and allowed the college to serve more students.
5. Skagit Valley College is commended for an open and participatory strategic planning process, resulting in a strategic plan that drives decisions and resource allocation. By embedding assessment of the General Education Learning Values and Learning Outcomes into the strategic plan, the College has ensured that the central work of the institution, student learning, has a clear place in the Strategic Plan.

## General Recommendations

1. The Evaluation Team recommends that the College demonstrate, through regular and systematic assessment, that students achieve the Learning Outcomes as defined within the General Education Learning Values. Although the College has provided evidence that Learning Outcomes are assessed in a variety of courses throughout the institution, it is unclear the extent to which individual students achieve a sufficient number of learning outcomes through their course requirements and electives. (E.R. 12; 2.B.2)
2. The Evaluation Team recommends that the College continue its efforts to increase consistency in the implementation of the outcomes assessment process and increase the understanding of faculty and appropriate staff about the assessment needed to continually improve student learning, based on assessment results. (2.B.3)
3. The Evaluation Team recommends that the College regularly and systematically evaluate all faculty at least every five years. In particular, evidence indicates the need to increase consistency in the evaluation of part-time faculty. (4.A.5; Policy 4.1)

The following people were interviewed during the evaluation visit:

3 WIC Students

Adriana Scarez

Alan Muia, Interim Dean of Student Services

Alicia DeVoll

Andy Friedlander, Drama

Anita Ordonez, Counselor/Director Multicultural Services

Anji Viola, International Programs

Ann Zukoski, Faculty, Physics, General Education Coordinator

Anne Ziomkowski, Counselor/Director Women's Programs

Barbara Martinez-Griego, ECE

Ben Munsey, Basic Skills

Bernie Andringa, Diesel

Bill Overby, Criminal Justice

Bob Malphrus, Human Services

Bobbi Ashe, Basic Skills

Brad Smith, Math/Science/PE Division Chair

Brian Hanchett, Director of Counseling

Business Resource Center, Director of Community Education

Caleb Boston

Carl Young, Information and Marketing

Carolyn Batchelor, Library, WIC

Catherine Ryder, Transfer Credits Evaluator

Catherine Wessels, Instruction and Student Services

Charlotte McRill, Faculty Librarian WIC

Christa Schulz, International Programs

Christina Garcia, Library

Calleen Coorough, MIT

Connie Bonner-Britt, ECE

Cynthia Scaringe, Mt Vernon Nursing

Dan Nelson, Welding

Dani Cox, Culinary Arts

Daniel Graber, Math Faculty / Former Division Chair

David Muga, Social Science

Debra Lisser, Board of Trustee

Denny Reid, Disability Support Services

Diane Johnson, Music

Don Piercy, Board of Trustee

Elena Bianco, Faculty Librarian MVC

Emi Fredlund, Counseling

Ernest Tutt, Communications Studies

Francisco Tamayo, English and Literature

Fumiko Hagsaka, Basic Skills

Gail Bruce, Transfer Counselor

Gary Eckermann

Gary Knutzen, Athletic Director

Gary Tollefson, President  
George Fuhr, IR  
George Biehl, WIC Chemistry Faculty  
Harriet Custer, Executive Vice President, Instruction & Student Services  
Hilda Halliday, Computer Science  
Jan Helm, Whidbey Nursing  
Jan Morley, Business Office  
Jennifer Handley, Faculty, English, Chair, General Education Implementation Committee  
Jere Lafollette, Human Services  
Jim Jolly, Career Services  
Jill Weber, E-learning  
Joan Youngquist, Dean of Academics  
John Stephens, Board of Trustee  
Julie Bishop  
Karen Bade, Recruitment and Admissions Coordinator  
Karen Bruno, DSS  
Katherine Shannon, Basic Skills  
Kathy Kuba, ABE/ESL Coordinator  
Kathy Nansel, Instruction and Student Services  
Kelli Tolf  
Ken Nelson, IT  
Kim Hall, Bookstore  
Kim Requa, Director of TRIO  
Kristina Niemeyer  
Kurt Dunbar, History  
Larry Cook, Maintenance  
Larry Sult, Faculty, Philosophy, Chair, Arts & Communication  
Laura Cailloux, Dean of Workforce Education  
Les Standwood, WIC – Communications Dept Chair  
Lily Garza, Business Office  
Linda Hendrick, Faculty Librarian MVC  
Linda Smith, Faculty, Speech, Former Chair, Arts & Communication  
Linh Dang  
Lynn Dunlap, Faculty, English  
Lynn O’Neal, Medical Assisting  
Margaret Mills, Faculty Librarian MVC  
Marilyn Haren, Student Services  
Mark Bushaw, Welding  
Martin Hahn, Culinary Arts  
Mary Alice Grobins, Business Office  
Mary Darden, Counseling, WIC  
Maureen Pettit, Director, Institutional Research  
May Haley, Basic Skills  
Michael Witmer, Faculty, Psychology, Assessment Coordinator/Liaison  
Mick Donahue, Vice President Whidbey Island Campus  
Mike Abbott, VA Services Coordinator  
Mindy Coslor, Dean for Library, Learning Resources, and Basic Skills

Nancy Dooley, Business Office  
Neta Simpkins Cahill, Faculty, Intensive English Language, Chair, English & Social Sciences  
Nida Tautrydas  
Norma Lisherness, IT  
Pam Albright, Medical Assisting  
Pam Church, Director of Career Services  
Ron Schaffner, Automotive  
Rory Rochelle, Director – Allied Health  
Rose Brierly, Running Start Advisor  
Sally Dixon, Computer Information Services  
Sandra Palm, Science  
Sandy Leber, Athletics  
Scott Hall, Automotive  
Shannon Heinzman, IT  
Sheri Sager, Counseling  
Sindie Howland, Admissions and Registration  
Sinead Fitzpatrick-Plagge, Work First  
Stephanie Hunter, Library  
Steve Epperson, Financial Aid Director & Women’s Basketball Coach  
Sue Sather, Communication Studies  
Sue Williamson, Director, Human Resources  
Ted Maloney, Paralegal  
Ted Rodriguez, Electronics  
Teresa Miller, Library  
Tom Bates, Dean of Technology and Distance Education  
Tom Moser, Chair, Board of Trustee  
Trish Barnes, English and Literature  
WIC Biology Instructor  
WIC Tutoring Lab Coordinator