Skagit Valley College

Mount Vernon, Washington

Year Three Peer-Evaluation Report (virtual)

Spring, 2013

Evaluation Committee

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Introduction

SVC opened in 1926 and serves northeast Washington on the main campus in Mount Vernon. Whidbey Island is the second campus location, located in Oak Harbor, and the South Whidbey Center is in Clinton on Whidbey Island, and the San Juan Center is located in Friday Harbor and is accessible only by boat or air.

In 2011, SVC was named an Achieving the Dream Institution, recognized for its improved efforts with student success initiatives.

In Fall 2012, the College served 5,660 students (3,950 FTE). Roughly 44% were enrolled in university transfer programs of study, 37% are professional-technical degrees or certificates, and 8% were taking basic skills courses. 11% were enrolled for personal enrichment. Half of the fall 2012 cohort was part-time (less than 12 credits); 58% was female. 165 students were international students and 540 were enrolled as Running Start students (dual-enrolled in high school and college). The student population is 70% white, 16% Hispanic, 5% Asian/Pacific Islander, 3% African American, and 1% Native American.

In March 2012, President Gary Tollefson retired after serving nine years, and Dr. Thomas Keegan was hired. Since then, President Keegan has made several significant changes to the administrative structure, among them restoring full time positions for the District Vice President for Instruction, the Vice President for the Whidbey Island Campus and college centers, the Library Administrator position, and the Director of Nursing. Additionally, a new and key position of Director of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness was created to increase focus on planning and institutional assessment.

SVC was initially accredited in 1948. This status was reaffirmed with a full-scale visit in 1969, and accreditation has been reaffirmed regularly since then. SVC started the seven-year cycle with its Year One Self Study in spring of 2011. Below is the accreditation history of the College in chronological order.

1948	Initial accreditation
1969	Full-Scale visit: accreditation reaffirmed
1974	Regular Interim: accreditation reaffirmed
1979	Full-Scale: accreditation reaffirmed
1984	Regular Interim: accreditation reaffirmed
1985	Confirmation: Whidbey Island Campus status confirmed
1989	Full-Scale: accreditation reaffirmed; progress report required in spring 1991.
1991	Progress: report accepted with exception (Voc. T&I related instruction concern) Progress report required. Report submitted and accepted fall 1991.
1994	Regular Interim: accreditation reaffirmed; progress report required in spring 1996.
1994	President Ford retires; Dr. Lydia Ledesma appointed president.
1996	Progress: report accepted.
1998	Substantive Change relative to distance learning activities.
1999	Full-Scale: accreditation reaffirmed; request report addressing recommendations for spring 2001.
1999	Substantive Change: new Associate of Science degree offering.
2001	Substantive Change: Associate of Music degree offering.

2001	Progress: report from 1999 accepted.
2002	Notification: ECE degree offering.
2003	Closure: Graphic Arts Production Tech program discontinued.
2004	Regular Interim: reaffirm accreditation. Reports on prior degree program changes and substantive changes reviewed and accepted.
2006	Substantive Change: approve Associate of Pre-Nursing.
2006	Progress: report accepted.
2008	Substantive Change: approve Health/Fitness Tech Certificate and Associate in Tech Arts.
2009	Comprehensive: accreditation reaffirmed.
2011	accreditation reaffirmed based on Year One Evaluation (seven-year cycle).
2012	President Tollefson retires; Dr. Thomas Keegan appointed president.

Assessment of the Institution's Self-Evaluation Report and support materials

As part of the virtual visit, evaluators reviewed materials (Year Three Self Evaluation Report, appendices, catalog, and various supplementary online materials). The virtual visit occurred between April 11th and April 19th, 2013. In preparation, SVC staff assisted the team in creating a schedule for interviews and also responded to additional requests for information and resources. During that time frame, the team of three evaluators conducted thirty interviews by phone (and one on Skype) and reviewed evidence electronically using both publicly accessible and protected intranet resources provided by the college. The evaluators found documents easily, a tribute to the effort and responsive efficiency of the SVC ALO and staff. SVC faculty, administration, students, and staff were collegial, hospitable, and candid in their interviews with the evaluators.

Overall, the evaluation team found the Year Three Self-Study Report to be candid, honest, and clearly written and organized. In general terms, the Skagit Valley College Year Three Self-Study Report addressed Eligibility Requirements and Standards appropriate to the scope of this evaluation. Evaluators found reasonable evidence in the report and through other sources to support the conclusions stated or implied in the self-evaluation report. The SVC report offered documentation, analysis and synthesis derived from a critical self-evaluation and reflection on the results of that self-evaluation.

Brief summary of methods used to verify contents of the institution's self-evaluation report

This Year Three Peer Evaluation was a virtual visit; that is, the team did not physically visit the campus or any of the campus centers. However, as evaluation teams normally do, this team reviewed SVC's Year Three Self Evaluation Report and all ancillary materials and examined the college's website and available electronic resources found therein. The college provided intranet access to the team for protected or internal documents that would normally have been used to verify or substantiate standards during a site visit. The breadth and availability of print and electronic materials created a "virtual team room" where evaluators could access any documents needed. In place of face-to-face interviews to verify and explore how the college meets standards, these "visits" were conducted via phone and Skype video conferencing interviews. Team meetings were conducted by phone before, during, and after the "visit." The team relied on documentation to assess physical plant, notably accident reports, strategic plans for physical plant and operations, and deferred maintenance reports. Ultimately, the team effectively replicated the site visit time and effort required to assess the college's Year Three Self Evaluation Report, paying particular attention to the charge to evaluate Standard Two, the adequacy of resources and capacity relative to SVC's potential to fulfill its mission, meet its core theme objectives, and potentially achieve the planned outcomes for programs and services.

Topics addressed as addenda to the institution's Self-Evaluation Report

Credit Hour Policy
There is evidence the College identifies and follows credit-hour guidelines in accordance with State of Washington policy (SBCTC Policy Manual, Chapter 4, Appendix B: Credit Hours/Credit Equivalents by Type of Instruction).

<u>Year Three Updates on the SVC Year One Peer-Evaluation Report Recommendations</u>
As noted in the Year One Peer-Evaluation Report (spring 2011), SVC responded to the three recommendations from the 2009 Comprehensive Visit as follows.

- The Year One evaluators noted SVC had made significant progress in "establishing a system for measuring student attainment of general education learning outcomes," and SVC was encouraged to continue this good work. Year Three evaluators recognize the ongoing efforts here and suggest the 2009 recommendation has been substantially satisfied.
- The second recommendation addressed in the 2011 Year One Report concerned learning outcomes and assessment plans. Again, the Year Three evaluators found evidence of an effective evolution in this area and suggest the 2009 recommendation is being met.

In both cases, final evidence will be apparent in the Year Seven Comprehensive Report, and that team of evaluators should verify the continued efforts in the areas associated with measurement and use of general education learning outcomes.

- As for the 2011 Year One review of the third recommendation addressing systematic and consistent evaluation of part-time faculty, Year Three evaluators found evidence that this recommendation has been satisfied.

Eligibility Requirements 2-21

This summary statement addresses Eligibility Requirements 2 through 24 for this Year Three Peer-Evaluation Report. As evaluators reviewed SVC's Year Three Self-Study Report and supporting and supplemental materials, conducted interviews, and verified compliance with accreditation standards, they found evidence and have confidence that SVC substantially meets Eligibility Requirements 2 through 21.

Section One

Standard 1.A Mission
SVC revised its mission statement after a 10-month strategic planning process, and in January, 2013, the College's Board of Trustees adopted the following Mission Statement:
"Skagit Valley College provides opportunities for students in pursuit of their educational and employment goals, while contributing to the economic and cultural enrichment of our communities." The mission statement is widely published, is properly approved by its governing board, and is generally understood by the community (1.A.1).

SVC's revised mission statement clearly connects with its Core Themes, and the College articulates institutional accomplishments or outcomes that indicate an acceptable threshold or extent of mission fulfillment (1.A.2).

Report on Standard 1.B Core Themes
Evaluators found evidence that SVC identifies core themes that individually manifest essential elements of its mission and collectively encompass its mission (1.B.1).

Evaluators found evidence that the institution establishes objectives for each of its core themes and identifies meaningful, assessable, and verifiable indicators of achievement that form the

basis for evaluating accomplishment of the objectives of its core themes. Evaluators also found ample evidence of purposeful and wide spread engagement as the new president and the larger campus community, including faculty, staff, students and the board, focuses on Core Theme objective and measurement refinement. The president is to be commended for developing a plan involving regular communication and discussion relative to integrating Core Themes into the College's other planning processes and cycles. As noted in the Year Three Report,

> The revised Core Themes, Objectives, Indicators, and Thresholds guide the College's planning and assessment efforts. The College's planning and assessment process includes: operational plan, instructional plan, enrollment plan, recruitment plan, progress and completion plan, and facilities master plan. These plans are designed to align activities at all levels with the College's Mission, Core Themes, and Strategic Priorities. In addition, an annual and seven-year planning calendar was developed. These planning tools were implemented in Winter Quarter 2013 [ending March 22, 2013].

Evaluators also note the College's response to prior concerns about the objective and measurement of the Community Core Theme. The College has started using two national assessment tools to evaluate success: the Gelmon Community Engagement Rubric (a self-assessment tool designed to help the institution evaluate its level of engagement with the community) and the Carnegie Community Engagement Framework (another self-assessment tool focusing on the institution's activities and community engagement) (1.B.2).

Evaluators also recognize the College's candid appraisal of their ongoing progress. As noted in the Year Three Report,
> while the indicators of effectiveness for student progress and completion are meaningful and consistent with the nationwide agenda, a close examination reveals the need to further develop an additional means for measuring student learning at the institutional level. A nationally normed assessment instrument will be identified in the Spring of 2013, with plans to begin benchmarking measurement activities in the 2013-2014 academic year.

Section Two
Standard 2.A Governance
Governance (Standards 2.A.1 through 2.A.3)
Evaluators found evidence that SVC has an effective and widely understood system of governance with clearly defined authority, roles, and responsibilities. Moreover, the decision-making structures and processes consider the views of faculty, staff, administrators, and students as appropriate (2.A.1, 2.A.2).

The institution generally monitors its compliance with the Commission's Standards for Accreditation, and it considers the impact of collective bargaining agreements, legislative actions, and external mandates (2.A.3).

Governing Board (Standards 2.A.4 through 2.A.8)
Per Washington state code, SVC has a functioning governing board consisting of five gubernatorial appointees who are all voting members. They appear to have no contractual,

employment, or financial interest in the institution. Evaluators understand the board acts only as a committee of the whole, and no member or subcommittee of the board acts on behalf of the board except by formal delegation of authority by the governing board as a whole (2.A.4, 2.A.5).

There is evidence the board establishes, reviews regularly, revises as necessary, and exercises broad oversight of institutional policies, including those regarding its own organization and operation. Evaluators also found evidence the board selects and evaluates regularly a chief executive officer who is accountable for the operation of the institution. It delegates authority and responsibility to the CEO to implement and administer board-approved policies related to the operation of the institution. The most recent evidence of this process was in the appointment of the current president, Dr. Thomas Keegan, in 2012 (2.A.6, 2.A.7).

The board regularly evaluates its performance to ensure its duties and responsibilities are fulfilled in an effective and efficient manner, and the most recent board self-evaluation was conducted in 2012 (2.A.8).

Leadership and Management (Standards 2.A.9 through 2.A.11)
Evaluators found evidence that Skagit Valley College has an effective system of leadership, staffed with highly qualified administrators with appropriate levels of responsibility and accountability. Specifically, the President's Cabinet is the College's Leadership team, and is responsible for leading the planning, management, and assessment of the College's operations. The Cabinet generally meets once each week (2.A.9).

Dr. Thomas Keegan assumed the presidency in March 2012. Dr. Keegan came to Skagit Valley College from Peninsula College, where he held the presidency for 11 years and he has 34 years of experience in the Washington Community and Technical College system. President Keegan holds appropriate degrees for the position (Ed.D., M.Ed., and B.A.) Notably, Dr. Keegan earned his Associate in Arts Degree at Skagit Valley College. He has full-time responsibility to the institution, and he serves as an *ex officio* member of the governing board (2.A.10).

Evaluators recognize SVC employs a sufficient number of qualified administrators who provide effective leadership and management for the institution's major support and operational functions and work collaboratively across institutional functions and units to foster fulfillment of the institution's mission and accomplishment of its core theme objectives. It is worth noting that under President Keegan's leadership, key administrative positions have been rehired and in some cases, repurposed, as a response to improving economy. Evaluators recognize this to be a positive development, one that strengthens leadership and management across the institutions and its campuses (2.A.11).

Policies and Procedures
Academics (Standards 2.A.12 through 2.A.17)
Based on interviews and examinations of the faculty Collective Bargaining Agreement, faculty guidelines, and the College's Operational Policies and Procedures, evaluators found evidence that academic policies are clearly communicated to faculty, administrators, and staff (2.A.12).

The library Mission Statement, policies, contact information, hours of operation, and maps are published on the library website, which provides multiple ways for patrons to get library assistance, including in-person, by phone, by email, and through ASK-WA, the 24/7 live chat reference service (2.A.13).

Evaluators found evidence the institution develops, publishes widely, and follows an effective and clearly stated transfer-of-credit policy that maintains the integrity of its programs while facilitating efficient mobility of students between institutions in completing their educational programs. Specifically, the College's transfer-of-credit policies are based on the Transfer Student Bill of Rights endorsed by the Student Services Commission of the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges which ensures that students receive appropriate credit for courses completed at other accredited institutions, while maintaining the integrity of its degree programs. This transfer policy is provided in the College's Catalog and the student transfer website. Moreover, there are opportunities for information and advising for new SVC students to learn about transfer resources, and transfer specialists are available at each campus and center to provide students with information and resources to help them plan for transfer to a four-year college or university. The College's student homepage has resources for students considering transfer to institutions in-state and nationwide. Finally, students can use secure online and registration tools to view their courses and perform a degree audit in preparation for transferring courses (2.A.14).

Evaluators found ample evidence of clearly stated, readily available, and fairly administered policies and procedures regarding students' rights and responsibilities. Specifically, SVC annually revises and distributes a code of Student Rights and Responsibilities that includes the Code of Student Conduct as well as additional policies and procedures and the definitions and processes for College disciplinary actions. The Student Handbook includes valuable information for students concerning various services and agencies on campus, and it also provides information about computer labs, student email accounts, eLearning resources, and campus safety. It also has links to College web pages that outline students' rights and responsibilities, the grievance procedure, and the constitution of the Associated Students of Skagit Valley College. In addition to the online version, printed Handbooks are available in the Student Life office, the ASSVC office, and the Counseling and Career Services office (2.A.15).

There is clear evidence the College adopts and adheres to admission and placement policies that guide the enrollment of students in courses and programs through an evaluation of prerequisite knowledge, skills, and abilities to assure a reasonable probability of student success at a level commensurate with the institution's expectations. Its policies regarding continuation in and termination from its educational programs are clearly defined, widely published, and seem to be administered in a fair and timely manner (2.A.16).

Evaluators found evidence the institution maintains and publishes policies that clearly state its relationship to co-curricular activities and the roles and responsibilities of students and the institution for those activities, including student publications and other student media. Specifically, the Dean of Student Services Office oversees co-curricular activities for both campuses. Student fees in support of student activities and programs comply with the Revised Code of Washington (RCW 28B.15.041 and RCW 28B.15.045). College policies and procedures

clearly state the roles and responsibilities of students and the College with regard to student activities and fees. The College belongs to the Northwest Athletic Association of Community Colleges (NWAACC) and complies with the conference's NWACC (2.A.17).

Human Resources (Standards 2.A.18 through 2.A.20)
Evaluators found evidence that Human Resources policies and procedures are published as part of the Colleges Operational Policies and Procedures and are regularly reviewed. A review is currently underway and HR will be adding new policy to ensure appropriate policies are consistent, fair, and equitably applied to all (2.A.18).

There is evidence employees are provided with information regarding their conditions of employment, work assignments, rights and responsibilities, and criteria and procedures for evaluation, retention, promotion, and termination at initial hire and orientation. Most applicable conditions of employment are also covered in the respective collective bargaining agreements (2.A.19).

Evaluators found the College ensures the security and appropriate confidentiality of human resources record with appropriate procedures for handling records, locked cabinets, and security alarms for physical records. Electronic records are similarly protected by passwords and electronic restrictions on access (2.A.20).

Institutional Integrity (Standards 2.A.21 through 2.A.26)
Evaluators discovered the institution represents itself clearly, accurately, and consistently through its print and electronic announcements, statements, and publications. Through various means, the College communicates its academic intentions, programs, and services to students and to the public and demonstrates that its academic and professional/technical programs can be completed in a timely fashion. There is evidence the College regularly reviews its publications to assure contemporary accuracy in all representations about its mission, programs, and services. Specifically, the College print materials encourage students to visit the website for the most up-to-date information and the website is updated on an ongoing basis (2.A.21).

Through a series of local operational policies and state codes, SVC makes efforts to maintain high ethical standards in managing and operating the institution, responsive to a large constituency which includes the public, the Commission, and external organizations. The College also is guided by such policies in the fair and equitable treatment of students, faculty, administrators, staff, and other constituencies. Complaints and grievances are addressed in a fair and timely manner (2.A.22).

Evaluators found evidence that SVC follows clearly defined policy that prohibits conflict of interest on the part of members of the governing board, administration, faculty, and staff. Specifically, the College serves Washington State and the local Community College District 4, as set forth in the enabling legislation (RCW 28B.50.040), and rules governing conflict of interest are set forth by the state (42.52 RCW and rules and advisory opinions adopted by the state Executive Ethics Board). The College also makes efforts to adhere to ethical standards, and to that end, the Center for Learning and Teaching has sponsored several ethics training workshops open to all employees District-wide over the past several years (2.A.23).

SVC maintains clearly defined policies with respect to ownership, copyright, control, compensation, and revenue derived from the creation and production of intellectual property; these policies are defined in Article IV, Section 9 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement (2.A.24).

The institution accurately represents its current accreditation status and avoids speculation on future accreditation actions or status. It uses the terms "Accreditation" and "Candidacy" (and related terms) only when such status is conferred by an accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. Evaluators found evidence in the College Catalog and other publications that accurately use the term "Accreditation" to reflect the current status of Skagit Valley College (2.A.25).

SVC follows prescribed contracting procedures based on requirements and advice from the Office of Financial Management and State Attorney General. All contracts are approved as to form by the College's assistant attorney general, and there is evidence of a clearly defined internal process that satisfies Commission requirements (2.A.26).

Academic Freedom (Standards 2.A.27 through 2.A.29)
SVC has documents that address protection of academic freedom for faculty (found in the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) and students (located in SVC Student Rights and Responsibilities (SRR). Each of these documents is vetted and approved by the appropriate boards and agencies as required. Moreover, through these documents, the College supports an environment of pursuit and dissemination of knowledge, and teacher are held to high standards concerning accurate and objective dissemination of knowledge and derivative scholarship (2.A.27, 2.A.28, 2.A.29).

Financial Oversight and Management (Standard 2.A.30)
The institution has clearly defined governance policies regarding Board and President expectations in Board Policy EF-1 Fiscal Health and Stability. These policies include strict requirements for financial planning, board approval and monitoring of operating and capital budgets, reserves, investments, fundraising, cash management, financial integrity, reducing liability, protecting property, limiting spending, and collecting debts. In addition, the college follows accounting policies and procedures established by the State of Washington Office of Financial Management (OFM) and documented in the State Administrative and Accounting Manual (SAAM).

All of the financial functions of the college are organized under the Vice President for Administrative Services who reports to the college President. These include financial and business services, bookstore, and facilities and operations. The school complies with Washington state audit cycle requirements, which may or may not match NWCCU audit cycle needs (2.A.30).

Report on Standard 2.B Human Resources

The institution employs a sufficient number of qualified personnel to maintain its support and

operations functions. Criteria, qualifications, and procedures for selection of personnel are clearly and publicly stated and are in compliance with Washington requirements. Job descriptions accurately reflect duties, responsibilities, and authority of the position and are regularly benchmarked against similar positions in Washington state colleges and government (2.B.1).

Administrators and staff are evaluated regularly with regard to performance of work duties and responsibilities in accordance with Washington Public Employee Association agreements (2.B.2).

The institution provides faculty, staff, administrators, and other employees with appropriate opportunities and significant financial support for professional growth and development to enhance their effectiveness in fulfilling their roles, duties, and responsibilities. The college is embarking on an initiative to promote mentoring within all work groups (2.B.3).

Consistent with its mission, core themes, programs, services, and characteristics, the institution employs appropriately qualified faculty in each discipline sufficient in number to achieve its educational objectives, establish and oversee academic policies, and assure the integrity and continuity of its academic programs (2.B.4).

Faculty responsibilities and workloads are commensurate with the institution's expectations for teaching, service, scholarship, research, and/or artistic creation. Workload is governed by the collective bargaining agreement (CBA) (2.B.5).

Faculty members are all evaluated in a regular, systematic, substantive, and collegial manner at least once within every five-year period of service. The CBA and evaluation process specifies the timeline and criteria by which faculty are evaluated; utilizes multiple indices of effectiveness, each of which is directly related to the faculty member's roles and responsibilities, including evidence of teaching effectiveness for faculty with teaching responsibilities; contains a provision to address concerns that may emerge between regularly scheduled evaluations; and provides for administrative access to all primary evaluation data. Probationary faculty are evaluated quarterly. Where areas for improvement are identified, the institution works with the faculty member to develop and implement a plan to address identified areas of concern. The Vice President of Instruction addresses evaluation annually with the faculty (2.B.6).

Report on Standard 2.C Education Resources

Skagit Valley offers a number of transfer degrees, professional/technical degrees, and occupational certificates. All programs and degrees are consistent with the college's mission, particularly with respect to academic transfer and workforce preparation. (2.C.1)

Transfer Degrees

- Associate in Arts University and College Transfer (AAUCT)
- Associate in Business
- Associate in Biology
- Associate in Pre-Nursing
- Associate in Science
- Associate in Applied Science Transfer – Early Childhood Education
- Associate in Applied Science Transfer – Environmental Conservation

- o Associate in Music – Articulated to Western Washington University
- o Associate in Visual Arts – Articulated to Washington State University

Non-Transfer

- o Associate in Arts General Studies
- o Associate in Arts General Studies – SOCNAV (Service Opportunity College for Navy military personnel and adult family members)

Professional/Technical Degrees

- o Associate in Technical Arts
- o Program Certificates
- o Micro-Certificate of Completion

Program outcomes are clearly published on the college web site under the appropriate degree. Course outcomes are given to students via the course syllabi and via a link from the course schedule into the master course database (2.C.2).

Based on review of materials, evaluators suggest that program outcomes also be added to the college catalog to make the college's information in this area more readily apparent to students.

Programs undergo a program review on a regular five-year cycle. The instructional program/department review addresses both qualitative student outcomes assessment activities and quantitative data related to enrollments, retention, and efficiency. Describing how the results were used to improve program quality is a focus of the review process.

Credit hours assigned to instructional activities follow the policies established by the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC). The rules for setting credit values and equivalents are listed in the SBCTC Policy Manual, Chapter 4, Appendix B: Credit Hours/Credit Equivalents by Type of Instruction. The SVC Operational Policy and Procedures Manual (OPPM) Section 4200 implements SBTC policy: "As part of the process for adding new courses or modifying existing courses in the College's course outline system, division/department chairs and instructional administrators review the type and number of contact hours and credit equivalent for compliance with College policy. The Vice President for Instruction reviews and has final approval for all course outline information, including credit assignment. Upon final approval, credit assignment and other course outline information are entered into the College's course outline system."

The admission and degree requirements are clearly defined and widely published. For those programs with restricted entry, the admission requirements are outline in the college catalog and appropriately published on the college web site under the specific program (2.C.3, 2.C.4).

The Instruction Committee is the primary vehicle for curriculum development at SVC. This committee is made up of faculty, deans, and a student representative and is tasked with making recommendations on new programs and certificates as well as to existing ones. Members

represent both primary campuses, are voluntary, and serve three-year terms. Representatives also attend statewide curriculum meetings.

Faculty as well as department or division chairs regularly participate on faculty selection committees. These selection committees make the recommendations of successful candidates to the appropriate Instructional Dean (2.C.5).

SVC librarians provide research assistance and useful resources to faculty. Each library faculty member is assigned instructional departments and act as liaisons to faculty in their respective disciplines. Librarians and faculty meet regularly to discuss curricular needs (2.C.6).

The process for awarding credit for prior learning at SVC is based on the recommendation from the SBCTC. Credit can be granted through the College's Credit for Prior Learning program, Petition for Advanced Standing, or through the Credit by Examination process. A maximum of 30 credits is allowed, but no more that 25% of the total required degree or certificate credits can be approved in this manner. The Dean of Workforce Development is the administrative office who oversees the approval process.

To obtain credits for prior learning, the student is required to complete the Petition for Non-Traditional Credit: For Prior Learning, the Prior Learning Outcome Assessment Form, as well as provide supporting documentation that validates the student's prior learning skills and knowledge level. The petition for Advanced Standing operates similarly but does not result in credits being awarded but can be used to satisfy prerequisites. Credit by Examination occurs at the course level where an examination is given by a course instructor. The resulting course grade based on the exam is posted to the student's transcript (2.C.7).

A number of processes have been created in the state of Washington in order to provide guarantees to students that coursework will transfer between community colleges and four year institutions. Students transferring into or out of SVC benefit from the described transfer agreements listed below:

- The 2010 Washington State Legislature passed Engrossed Second Substitute House Bill 1795 which required "Community and technical colleges, jointly with the four-year institutions of higher education, [to] develop a list of academic courses that are equivalent to one-years' worth of general education credit and that would transfer for that purpose to any other two or four-year institution of higher education." The implementation of Bill 1795 created a list of courses that comprise the Washington State First Year Transfer List commonly referred to as the "Washington 45". Students may take any course from the list and be assured that it will satisfy a core requirement at all public universities and most private universities. SVC offers most of the courses on this list.
- The Direct Transfer Agreement (DTA) is a statewide policy about transfer. A qualifying DTA associate degree is generally defined as that degree awarded by a community college to students who have completed a transfer curriculum designed to fulfill most general education requirements for a baccalaureate degree program in Washington State. The approved DTA degree programs follow specific guidelines established by the Intercollege Relations Commission (ICRC), a commission of the Washington Council. This structure creates consistency between two year and four year institutions in Washington.

- State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) has supported the design of specialized transfer degrees for Biology, Business, Pre-Nursing, and Science. The resulting Major Related Program (MRP) agreements between the community and technical colleges and Washington baccalaureate institutions assures two year transfer students that they have met the prerequisites and general education requirements to be admitted as juniors to the baccalaureate institution (2.C.8).

<u>Undergraduate Programs</u>
All of the College's transfer degree programs are modeled on the statewide Direct Transfer Agreement which contain requirements in communication skills, quantitative skills, health and physical education, skills designated courses, integrative learning experience, and diversity as well as distribution requirements in the natural world, culture, and arts (2.C.9).

SVC has developed general education learning outcomes common for all programs. General education learning values and outcomes have been defined in the following areas: application & integration, information literacy, critical thinking, communication, community & cultural diversity, global & local awareness & responsibility, individual awareness & responsibility, aesthetics & creativity, scientific literacy, and technology. The full list of definitions and outcomes is listed in the "General Education Learning Values and Outcomes" publication and is posted on the College website.

Methodology to assess the effectiveness of general education outcomes is in place. The Office of Institutional Planning and Effectiveness conducted a survey of 2008-09 graduates. This survey sought student feedback on whether the distribution of general education experiences had been full filled within their coursework. Results were published in March 2010.

Professional and Technical certificates of 45 or more credits contain clearly identifiable related instruction in communications, computation, and human relations skills. Courses which are skills designated as writing, speech, reading, and quantitative are identified within the course schedule by a special symbol (W/R, S/P, B/K, or Q/M). Faculty members who are qualified by discipline are responsible for delivering such courses (2.C.10).

SVC provides an option for students wishing to fulfill their GED requirements while also working on a technical certificate via the I-BEST model. Programs in welding, auto, early childhood education, nursing assistant, and manufacturing are available in this delivery mode 2.C.11).

<u>Graduate Programs (Standards 2.C.12 through 2.C.15)</u>
Skagit Valley College does not offer graduate programs or courses.

<u>Continuing Education and Non-Credit Programs (Standards 2.C.17 through 2.C.19)</u>
Continuing education courses are offered by the college in the primary areas of personal enrichment, cultural enrichment, skill exploration, and skill upgrade. All courses are consistent with the College's mission to provide "opportunities for students in pursuit of their educational

and employment goals, while contributing to the economic and cultural enrichment of our communities." All continuing education courses at the College are offered for non-credit.

Program specific continuing education courses are offered through the respective academic area and are designed and evaluated by the program faculty. Overall responsibility for maintaining standards in offerings is vested with the Workforce Dean (2.C.17, 2.C.18).

Continuing education students are enrolled in the College's Student Management System as non-credit. Course enrollment and complete records are available to students upon request (2.C.19).

Report on Standard 2.D Student Services

Student services at SVC are comprehensive and reflect a response to the diverse needs of the college community. The many available support options for students are consistent with the college's core themes for access, achievement, and community. Other than the traditional role of admissions, placement, advising, and financial aid the College is to be complimented on its support to student success via its variety of orientation session offerings, one on one support, counseling, tutoring, life transitions, and help for needy students through support for child care. Specific support is also available to veterans, under-represented groups, and international students. Cultural activities which add value to the campus environment include support for student clubs, performing arts, and athletics.

SVC became an Achieving the Dream institution in 2011 with a focus on increasing completion rates for underserved students. Goals were established to support the College's core themes by placing a high priority on those students who "lack high school credentials, do not possess English language or literacy skills, are first-generation college students, are underprepared, economically disadvantaged, or suffer disadvantages through discrimination against race, ethnicity, creed, sexual orientation, or disability" (2.D.1)

The Mount Vernon Security Services Department includes a staff that provides campus security services to the SVC community. SVC Safety Officers do not have arrest powers but are authorized to enforce campus policies and assist police agencies.

The Security Department communicates with students and staff regularly on safety and security issues. Examples of communications include safety tips published in the student newspaper and the distribution of handbills about vehicle safety in campus parking lots. Notifications of recent crimes that may affect the campus communities are posted. Beginning in 2012, security tips and information are broadcast over the college's radio station in English and Spanish to reinforce preparedness and provide information to the campus community. Campus buildings and individual rooms are locked when they are not in use. Security personnel are available to escort staff and students to and from their vehicles. No individual is admitted into a building without verification of identity and determination that he or she is authorized to enter. Keys to campus facilities are only checked out to authorized personnel. Nighttime lighting at all campuses and centers is regularly assessed and improved.

The College complies with the reporting requirements of the Clery Act. The Annual Security

and Fire Safety Report includes three years of campus crimes and fire statistics, campus security policies and procedures and information regarding programs available to educate the Skagit Valley College community on safety and crime prevention (2.D.2).

Admission is open to all high school graduates. Degree seeking and full-time students must submit an application and take a COMPASS placement test that will place students in the appropriate English and math classes. SVC has implemented mandatory advising to make sure students are aware of graduation requirements, college resources, and opportunities.

The College web site contains useful information for students wishing to attend SVC. The *New Student "Next Steps" Information* sheet is a valuable tool which guides the student through the process financial aid options, attending group advising sessions, registering for class, paying fees, obtaining a personal id number, parking and transportation, and understanding their FERPA rights (2.D.3).

In the rare event that programs are eliminated, SVC provides a planned sequence for "teaching out" students involved in the program. This process provides an avenue for students to complete their coursework while no new students are allowed to enter the program. Students are also assisted by counselors in utilizing online classes, independent courses, and offerings of other colleges (2.D.4).

SVC's comprehensive catalog contains all required student-information elements and is easily accessible both in printed form and on line. A review of the catalog and program listings on the college web site confirms that all program requirements for completion are clearly defined.

Items that are accessible online but not in the printed catalog include the core themes and expected learning outcomes for programs. General education requirements for the various types of professional degrees and certificates are presented in the catalog before the program listings; however, it is not clear within the program listings how the general education requirements can be met. They are embedded in the suggested course sequence only. Evaluators suggest it might be helpful to more clearly articulate the general education components by listing them outside the course sequence (2.D.5).

Specific admission requirements for programs that have restricted entry are included. These requirements include prerequisite coursework, background checks, and drug tests (2.D.6).

Student records are retained for accuracy and access through the Hershey student records management system. Records are protected following Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) requirements. FERPA regulations are detailed in the college catalog and on the SVC website. Directory information is clearly outlined in both locations. The College provides training for new faculty and staff through an online tutorial and adds updates when new FERPA guidelines occur. New hires must sign a statement of confidentiality upon hire (2.D.7).

SVC assists students in the attainment of their educational goals through grants, scholarships, loans, and work-study. Federal, state, and institutional funding sources are available. Detailed information on financial aid options are published in the college catalog and prominently posted on the college web site. The Financial Aid web site is designed to facilitate student applications through its "Getting Started", "Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)", "How to Apply", and direct links to outside resources (2.D.8).

Policies which outline academic standards, credit completion limits, maximum credits allowed, and appeals process are communicated to students in *The Satisfactory Academic Progress* publication which is also posted on the web. The College monitors its loan default rate annually. The College has noted a recent increase in default rate, but has attributed it to rising tuition and fees (2.D.9).

SVC Academic Advising is organized within Counseling and Career Services. Academic Advising's mission is to provide students with accurate information about college policies, course and program requirements, and to introduce student to other college services.

All new degree seeking students (full time and part time) are required to meet with an advisor prior to registration. New degree-seeking students must undergo Compass placement testing. Small group advising sessions of approximately twenty students are utilized to inform students about degree options, financial aid, student life, support services, and keys to being a successful college student. Each group session is led by a team of counselors, advisors, and faculty. All advisors receive training and are updated to changes in policies and curriculum as they occur (2.D.10).

Co-curricular activities are organized and conducted by a combination of staff form the Office of Student Life and the Associated Students of Skagit Valley College. The Associated Students is a self-governing body supervised by the Director of Student Life. Activities support the College's core themes of Achievement and Community by focusing on learning opportunities and building a culture of collaboration (2.D.11).

SVC operates the college bookstore as an auxiliary enterprise. The bookstore is self-supporting and conducts quality surveys and focus groups to ensure that the bookstore is continuing to provide quality service and reasonable prices to students.

On campus housing is available in the Campus View Village. Housing is reserved for Skagit Valley College students enrolled in at least 6 credits per quarter.

SVC offers eight intercollegiate sports for women and seven for men. SVC is a member of the Northwest Athletic Association of Community Colleges which governs the number of grants-in-aid allowed per sport and establishes academic credit requirements.

Students in sports must follow the same admission standards and procedures and financial aid requirements as in place for other students (2.D.13).

Students taking SVC online courses must verify their identity by providing their SVC username and password. This is the same procedure as required by on site traditional enrollees (2.D.14).

Report on Standard 2.E Library and Information Resources

The two SVC Libraries are Norwood Cole Library (Mount Vernon Campus) and the Whidbey Island Campus Library. Library services are available to the faculty, students and staff of Skagit Valley College. Access to library services is available through the regular network id login process. The library also provides limited access to community members outside SVC since no countywide library system is available.

The libraries are seeing a decrease in paper volumes as more and more access is available online. SVC libraries are expanding online access to databases, purchasing additional E-Books, and providing access to other libraries via inter-library loans. An excellent example of online resources is ARTstor. ARTstor is an online database of approximately 300,000 images covering art, architecture and archeology.

Access to technology is available in the libraries in the form of netbooks, laptops, and desktop computers. Approximately fifty netbooks are available for students to check out for up to one week, twenty-four more are available for in house usage, and forty desk top units are available in the library.

Inter-library loan requests can be made to other state community colleges and universities. SVC is also connected to the Online Computer Library Center consortium (OCLC) which provides access to the resources of over 23,000 libraries (2.E.1).

Recent strategic planning of key stakeholders of the library produced an action plan which desires to meet a college goal of implementing 21st century technology. Examples of a few elements of the plan include:

1. Restoring recent budget cuts which reduced the number of tenured library faculty and restoring support positions. Some funds were replaced by reassigned time from other departments and creative scheduling, but approximately eight hours of access were lost to the college community from these cuts.
2. Provide better stewardship of resources. A recent table top drill focused on developing an improved disaster recovery plan.
3. Increasing the number of laptop/netbook computers available to students for checkout.
4. Updating the library management system.
5. Improving the library effectiveness to better serve the growing Latino community (2.E.2).

Support for the college's mission and core themes is maintained through the libraries' commitment to information literacy. The library has established liaisons that focus on specific academic areas. Over one hundred information literary sessions designed to improve research skills were offered in 2010-11 alone. Library instruction sessions are designed to meet the specific needs of the individual, class and/or group. An online information literacy and academic integrity tutorial (TILT) is also available for self-paced instruction (2.E.3).

Library staff continuously monitors usage data, collects faculty input, and conducts research in their assigned subject areas to determine library purchases. Circulation statistics guide the removal of old materials. For example, on line rates have grown from around 130,000 accesses per year to approximately 148,000.

Library faculty members also assess library services using the same Outcomes Assessment Plan used to assess courses and programs. Key outcomes include:

1. Students can identify and choose appropriate information sources: a component of Critical Thinking
2. Librarians will provide online reference services to provide students with better access to resources.
3. Information Literacy will be viewed as an important component of the college's general education values.

Highlights of the library assessment plan for evaluating instruction include the use of pre and post-tests gauging the effectiveness of information literacy instruction. Plans are to follow students for the next year and to compare retention rates with those who were not involved in information literacy instruction (2.E.4).

Report on Standard 2.F Financial Resources

The College demonstrates financial stability with sufficient cash flow, healthy financial ratios and has established reserves to support its programs and services. Despite declining state support of over 24%, financial planning reflects realistic development of financial resources, and appropriate risk management to ensure short-term solvency and ability to meet anticipated long-term obligations. The college has little debt and has a conservative approach to limit future liabilities (2.F.1).

Resource planning and development is carefully reviewed by College leadership. Planning and budgeting projections appear to be conservative and realistic. Students are involved in areas of interest such as technology fee expenditure decisions. The college budget process is inclusive and transparent to invite broad campus participation. Budget policies, guidelines, and processes for financial planning and budget development are clearly defined and focused on the strategic priorities of the college (2.F.2).

The college complies with the Statewide Administrative and Accounting Manual (SAAM) policies and procedures. It has also supplemented state requirements with appropriate local policy and procedure to improve financial effectiveness. The college budget process is inclusive and transparent to invite broad campus participation and is developed with core theme, Strategic priorities, and department goals in mind (2.F.3).

The college ensures timely and accurate financial information through its use of the Washington State accounting system. Their system follows generally accepted accounting principles and provides numerous reporting options. Access is controlled by role-based security profiles. Compliance is reviewed annually by outside auditors from the state audit division (2.F.4).

The college has embarked on long term capital planning with a Facility Master Plan to accommodate future growth consistent with their mission and core theme objectives. Long-range capital plans support the institution's mission and goals and reflect projections of the total cost of ownership, equipment, furnishing, and operation of new or renovated facilities. These plans assist in obtaining capital construction funds from the state legislature and State Board of Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) Most physical facilities are owned without any debt service. The college has one facility being constructed with Certificates of Participation (COP) with a special appropriation for debt service on the project (2.F.5).

The college currently has only one auxiliary enterprise in the bookstore. Auxiliary operations are self-sustaining for operating and capital requirements. The bookstore is self-sustaining and neither contributes to or receives funds from the general fund (2.F.6).

The college has an external financial audit by the Washington State Auditor's Office (SAO) and has been found to be in compliance with generally accepted auditing standards with no material findings noted. Results from the audits, including findings and management letter recommendations, are considered in a timely, appropriate, and comprehensive manner by the administration and the board of trustees. (2.F.7)

All college fundraising activities are conducted in a professional and ethical manner and comply with governmental requirements. The college has a clearly defined relationship with the Skagit Valley College Foundation and contributes to strengthened ties between the college and community. The foundation is audited annually by a private auditor (2.F.8).

2. G Physical and Technological Infrastructure

Physical Infrastructure (Standards 2.G.1 through 2.G.4)
The college has constructed or obtained physical facilities that are accessible, safe, secure, and currently sufficient in quantity and quality. Innovative funding strategies have enabled program enhancing projects such as the new Lewis Hall currently under construction. Several major facility improvement projects have been completed in recent years and space for additional growth is available to support the institution's mission, programs, and services (2.G.1).

The college currently adheres to policies and procedures regarding the safe use, storage, and disposal of hazardous or toxic materials. Compliance with the college Hazardous Materials Management Plan is reviewed regularly by the Facilities Department and regular training is provided to college employees as required (2.G.2)

The college has developed and is using a master plan for its physical development that is consistent with its mission, core themes, and long-range educational and financial plans. The college has engaged consultants and members of the college and surrounding community in preparing a new plan with an expected completion of July 2013. The college regularly reviews and updates the master plan (2.G.3).

Equipment is sufficient in quantity and quality and managed appropriately to support institutional functions and fulfillment of the institution's mission, accomplishment of core theme

objectives, and achievement of goals or intended outcomes of its programs and services. Maintenance and inventory is tracked on a CMMS database and prioritized needs for new equipment is reviewed for funding annually (2.G.4).

Technological Infrastructure (Standards 2.G.5 through 2.G.8)
The college provides an extensive technology platform to support both academic and administrative operations. The college is expanding the wireless network to ensure all locations have robust access to internet resources for students and staff. The college is in the process of updating their administrative support system as part of a state-wide initiative over the next four years (2.G.5).

The college provides instruction and support for faculty, staff, students, and administrators in the effective use of technology and technology systems through the information technology department that provides training help desk support, self help support, and classroom technology support. The faculty is provided support and training to use instructional software tools. Opportunities to expand the technology literacy of students, staff, and faculty are provided through help desks and the Center for Learning and Teaching. Students are integrated into the process expanding both customer access and their own educational development (2.G.6).

The college involves representative committees to provide guidance for technological infrastructure planning from its technology support staff and constituencies who rely on technology. This feedback on what works best enhances the priority and direction for institutional operations, programs, and services and academic support enhancement initiatives (2.G.7).

The college has established a regular technology life cycle update and equipment replacement plan to ensure technology is kept current and is keeping the total cost of ownership low while maintaining a current technological infrastructure. The college is investing in systems to enhance student success with open source resources, and lecture-capture equipment (2.G.8)-

Summary

Overall, evaluators found the virtual atmosphere friendly and cooperative. Materials provided generally were clear and accurate. Through interviews and review of materials, evaluators noted the general sense of confidence with the new president, and his early time at SVC has been marked with celebrating a collegial environment and intentional, frequent, and regular communication at all levels, from board to staff. Evaluators also recognized progress is being made relative to refining Core Themes and evolving, appropriate metrics. Ultimately, evaluators felt confident that this review of resources and capacity indicated the College is on track moving forward to the Year Seven Comprehensive visit.

Compliments and Commendations

Compliments

Evaluators compliment the College's inclusion of the learning communities in its transfer course requirements, a process that has received national attention and has been featured at several national conferences. Evaluators also compliment the College for its commitment to cooperative education experiences.

Evaluators compliment the college library on its commitment to providing library-use instruction across the campus frequently and at many levels.

Finally, evaluators recognize the administration, particularly President Keegan, for candid and intentional commitment to continuous improvement. Evaluators noted a sense of pride and a feeling of accomplishment among interviewees. It is worth noting here that the president was quite clear in his appreciation for those who took on extra duties in service to the College during the recent recession.

Commendation

The evaluators commend Skagit Valley College for its high level of technology support to its students and particularly the involvement and training of students through that service. The college provides comprehensive technology support to all students at all skill levels while building the skill and resume of the student workers. This has provided outstanding customer service with a student perspective and excellent career preparation for student workers. During a period of significant decreases in budgets and positions, this example and enthusiasm for student success is laudable.

Concerns and Recommendations

None