Mid-Cycle Peer-Evaluation Report

Spokane Falls Community College

Spokane, Washington

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Institutional Assessment

Part I: Assessment Process for Mission Fulfillment

SFCC Mission:

> Spokane Falls Community College meets the needs of our community by advancing student achievement through quality, accessible learning opportunities that embrace diversity, promote equity, and foster global awareness.

Core Themes

> Excellent Instruction/Learning
> Student Achievement
> Broad Access
> Diversity, Equity, and Global Awareness
> Responsiveness to Community Needs

The assessment process at Spokane Falls Community College (SFCC) involves many committees, teams, groups, administrators, faculty, and individuals who contribute to the gathering and analysis of information and data. The Executive Accreditation Committee was reorganized into the Institutional Effectiveness Team (IET) to move toward a culture of assessment as a means of continuous improvement and mission fulfillment. The focus of the objectives and indicators was shifted to emphasize learning outcomes and to be more student-centered. The evaluation team found enthusiasm, engagement, and buy-in across the campus.

SFCC has developed multiple valid and meaningful objectives and indicators to assess the five core themes. Core theme assessment is primarily done through the IET and the Core Theme Teams (CTTs). CTT chairs also serve on the IET, which meets monthly and provides a supportive environment for ongoing discussions of core theme assessment work.

CTTs receive excellent support from the IET and the Director of Planning, Institutional Effectiveness, and Research. CTT chairs share core theme reports with the IET, and the IET generates an overall Core Theme Team Status Report. This report is shared broadly with the college, the Community Colleges of Spokane Board of Trustees, and District Leadership. Meaningful discussion and progress on the assessment processes is ongoing, but it is not clear what it all means in relation to mission fulfillment or who or what determines if the mission has been fulfilled.

Focus on specific learning outcomes is shared by several teams, but it is unclear how these teams interact, and is it unclear where decisions are made. Many reports are produced, but there is no clear picture of where they go and no clear path for action.

Student Learning Assessment

Part II: Student Learning Outcomes Assessment

Faculty lead the efforts to directly assess student learning at the course, program, and general education levels. The Program Review Team conducts annual reviews for each of the 20 Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. Every year, part of each program is evaluated on a three-year cycle to determine if the programs are meeting student learning outcomes and thresholds. Evidence and data are used to guide changes to curricula and programs.

The evaluation team heard many examples from faculty and administrators where assessment activities have been used to improve student learning and the student experience.

In a random check of syllabi, most had measureable, verifiable, and appropriate student learning outcomes. However, some did not include learning outcomes, and still others contained outcomes that were not appropriate, were poorly worded, or not measureable.

Core Theme 1: Excellent Instruction/Learning

The program review process for **Career and Technical Education** is an assessment of all program learning outcomes on a three-year rotation cycle. A variety of student success data is compiled and reviewed annually for every CTE program (course success rates, retention, course scheduling, industry demand, and financial aid debt). CTE program faculty meet with the Program Review Team to discuss reports and identify actions. This review process was recently improved by including comparative data. However, the accountability part of these reviews is unclear since there are no formal recommendations. The evaluation team also could not find a process for reviewing new program proposals.

Assessment of **general education** student learning outcomes (GESLOs) underwent substantial revision after SFCC received a recommendation in the Year Seven Evaluation. The Institutional Teaching and Learning Improvement Coordinating Committee (ITALIC) is the faculty-led group that leads general education assessment efforts.

All general education courses are mapped to at least one GESLO, and assessment rubrics were developed based on the Association of American Colleges and Universities' VALUE rubrics. Faculty members develop signature assignments, norm rubric scoring, and evaluate samples of student work from across the general education curriculum. GESLOs are evaluated on a three-year cycle, and data has been compiled for the Communication and Diverse Perspectives courses.

This approach is having broad impact across general education courses, with strong faculty participation in workshops and discussions. General Education faculty members share teaching strategies among the disciplines to improve student learning. In the future, ITALIC plans to help

ensure that all transfer pathways include all GESLOs, because the current curricula cannot guarantee that graduates have met all seven GESLOs.

Future plans include assessment of related instruction courses for CTE programs; there is no related instruction assessment process at this time. ITALIC has the appropriate representation and expertise to build a successful assessment process for related instruction, given the success of the general education work thus far.

Core Theme 2: Student Achievement

The focus of Core Theme 2 is to increase student achievement through continuous improvement of student support services. Interventions developed as part of Achieving the Dream are monitored for impact on student achievement. Improvements have been made to course placement, academic advising, and interventions for students at risk of academic probation. These types of actions are monitored for impact on student completion. The district-wide conversion to ctcLink negatively impacted student services data, and staff, deans, and administrators are currently working to reestablish links to that information. While this has been a significant challenge, the work of CTT2 is strong and ongoing.

Core Theme 3: Broad Access

The work of Core Theme 3 is designed to ensure that SFCC provides open access to all students, reduces financial barriers, and helps students succeed.

Core Theme 4: Diversity, Equity, and Global Awareness

Core Theme Team 4 holds listening sessions with students, faculty, administrators, and staff to find out what is going on at the institution and what the team needs to work on. SFCC administration has made efforts to support both on-going and short-term work. CTT4 uses the Student Success Equity Index to identify student groups that succeed at lower rates and to improve student support services, counseling, and academic coaching to these groups.
The institution hired a full-time person in the Mosaic Program (The Center of Culture, Inclusion, and Community) to help move this work forward.

Core Theme 5: Responsiveness to Community Needs

This area is difficult to measure for most institutions. The CTT5 team has been counting numbers (e.g., the number of people who visit the planetarium, the number of people attending various functions, etc.), but has new ideas to assess this core theme that are both qualitative and quantitative in nature.

Evaluation Overview

Part III: Preparation for Year Seven

Spokane Falls Community College has established assessment processes. In preparation for the Year Seven Evaluation, SFCC needs to:

- Define mission fulfillment.
- Provide an overview of the assessment process at the various levels (IET, CGRC, ITALIC, Program Review Team, Core Theme Teams), showing how the different teams and committees interact, how information flows among and between them, where accountability resides, and where decisions are made.
- Continue general education assessment work to include assessment of related instruction learning outcomes for CTE programs.
- Ensure that transfer pathways include all general education areas.
- Ensure that all syllabi include measureable, verifiable, and appropriate student learning outcomes.
- Compile examples of improvements made to teaching and learning across campus.

Addendum: Bachelor of Applied Science Implementation Evaluation

Along with the mid-cycle evaluation, the evaluation team also reviewed progress of the Bachelor of Applied Management (BASM) and the Bachelor of Applied Science in Systems and Technology (BAS-IST). Each degree has been designed for students with a variety of AAS degrees to move smoothly into a bachelor of science degree.

The model for this type of degree is different and often considered upside down. A typical AA degree recipient would take more general education courses in the first two years, and then go on to a four-year institution for courses in the core discipline. Because AAS degrees are discipline heavy in the first two years—they are most often a terminal degree—they are heavy in general education courses in the last two years. This is foreign to many, but the model is working quite successfully at a number of higher educational institutions. It is a cost-effective solution for students looking to further their education; two-year institutions provide the BAS option at an optimal cost, and employees/students can gain further education and increase management and technical skills.

Both BAS degrees partnered with businesses to determine the need for the degrees as well as what curriculum should be included. Two professors from four-year institutions reviewed the degrees. Each program has an advisory committee to aid with curriculum improvements, keep them abreast of changes in the fields, assist with student recruitment, and help with student internships.

The BASM degree is in the first semester and is taught fully online. The BAS-IST degree is in the second year and is delivered in a hybrid format with the in-person portion of the classes taught at night. SFCC provides excellent help for students via telephone, e-mail, in-person, and computer resources. These resources are evaluated quarterly.

After a review and change in state requirements, SFCC sought the input of employers and then increased general education requirements for both of the BAS degrees. The evaluation team found that these changes provide additional rigor and excellent content for graduates.

There was concern that students did not receive some prerequisite curricula in math and English at the lower level to be successful in the BAS programs, but faculty have made or will make changes in AAS courses to account for those deficiencies.

Both BAS programs are clearly connected to the five core themes. The BAS-IT degree is right on target for headcount and projected graduation numbers; the BASM degree is slightly under the number of students, but it is only in its first quarter, and more students are set to begin the program in January 2017.