

Year One Peer-Evaluation Report

Salt Lake Community College

Salt Lake City, Utah

September 15 – November 2, 2011

*A confidential report of findings prepared for the
Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities*

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Introduction

In accordance with the new accreditation process of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, this Year-One Peer-Evaluation Report provides an overview and analysis of Standard 1, Mission, Core Themes, and Expectations for Salt Lake Community College. Within the scope of this report it reviews the eligibility requirements as well as mission and extent of mission fulfillment. This report also addresses the College's progress on its most recent Recommendation provided by the Commission.

Salt Lake Community College (SLCC) is an open-access comprehensive community college in its sixty-third year of operation. The College has 13 locations and serves over 60,000 credit and non-credit students annually. It confers the following: Associate of Arts (AA), Associate of Applied Science (AAS), Associate of Science (AS), Associate of Pre-Engineering (APE), Certificates, and Diplomas. The College has partnerships with over 500 local business to provide technical and skills training, professional development, and academic programs. Salt Lake Community College has faced reduced funding as a result of a weakened national and local economy while at the same time experiencing a spike in enrollment. To continue providing open-access and comprehensive offerings for students, the College has realigned itself, leveraged existing resources, and diversified funding, including grants, contracts, and in-kind contributions from business and community partners.

Assessment of the Self-Evaluation Report and Supporting Materials

The Evaluation Committee found the report to be clear, accurate, and properly organized with links to specific college sites for more information. Also, a flash drive and a catalog were provided with the report. The inclusion of these additional materials provided the evaluators with a good understanding of the College with respect to the accreditation criteria for the Year One Report. The Evaluation Committee acknowledges the inclusive process and the efforts of the faculty, staff, and administrators in addressing Standard 1, Mission, Core Themes, and Expectations. The overall report closely followed the recommended format guidelines and described the institutional process and preparation for addressing the new Commission standards.

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

Salt Lake Community College addressed progress on one recommendation from its Fall 2009 Regular Interim Evaluation Report at the request of the Commission.

Recommendation 1

Full implementation of Salt Lake Community College's (assessment) plan will be challenging, but significant work is necessary to address the Standing Recommendation regarding Standard 2.B and policy 2.2.

Standing Recommendation

Salt Lake Community College should continue to develop applications of learning outcomes assessment throughout its instructional areas, to achieve uniform rigor in outcomes statements, to develop a variety of tools for assessment, and to use data for the improvement of student learning.

It is evident that SLCC has committed significant resources and is addressing Recommendation 1. The College has hired a full-time Outcomes Assessment Coordinator, a full-time e-Portfolio Coordinator, and provided ongoing professional development for faculty to assist them with developing assessment plans that address student learning, program effectiveness, and quality improvement. In addition, the Assessment Office built a web-based center to support assessment activities across the college. The website provides a centralized location for departmental missions and plans, program level student outcomes, curriculum grids assessment results, progress tracking, training materials, and assessment activity timelines. The evaluators found evidence that the majority of programs are documenting assessment activities and objectives, and analyzing results to inform changes in their curriculum and/or program. The e-Portfolio system is seamlessly integrated into the college student information management system, which allows selective assessment of students in different programs and stages of their education.

The evaluators found that significant progress has been made in assessing student learning of the College-wide Student Learning Outcomes (CWSLO): Communication, Critical Thinking, Quantitative Reasoning, and Civic Engagement across the institution. The College has intentionally aligned General Education course criteria with the College-wide learning outcomes. All instructional departments are placed on a set schedule to ensure that programs across the College are assessing one of the College-wide learning outcomes at the same time. Rubrics are used to assess samples of student work and are collected and analyzed by the Assessment Coordinator. The evaluators found evidence that the findings of this meta-analysis are used broadly across the College and inform faculty professional development and possible curricular changes.

The General Education ePortfolio is another aspect of the assessment program and as of May 2010 is a course-level General Education requirement. The ePortfolio includes “signature assignments” and reflections. The ePortfolio Director conducts an annual review of student portfolios using a holistic assessment rubric with regard to assessing student artifacts that pertain to a specific College-wide outcome.

Salt Lake Community College has provided evidence that it has implemented an assessment plan that addresses College-wide learning outcomes assessment throughout its instructional programs. The College has developed and implemented a variety of tools for assessment and data is used for the improvement of student learning. While substantial progress has been made, continued efforts to sustain the system will be necessary.

The Evaluation Committee recognizes the College’s significant commitment of resources and support to ensure ongoing outcomes assessment in instructional programs for the improvement of teaching and learning throughout the College.

Eligibility Requirements

2. Authority – Salt Lake Community College operates under the authority of the Utah System of Higher Education Board of Regents and is classified by its policy R312 as a public, urban-serving, multi-campus comprehensive community college. Salt Lake County is the College’s defined service area in Utah.
3. Mission and Core Themes – The College’s mission and core themes are clearly defined and have been adopted by the Salt Lake Community College Board of Trustees and the Utah State Board of Regents. The institution’s mission and core themes are appropriate to a comprehensive community college and support the educational interests of its students. The principal programs lead to recognized degrees.

The Evaluation Committee finds that Salt Lake Community College meets Eligibility Requirements 2 and 3.

Section One

Standard 1.A. – Mission

1.A.1. – Mission

Salt Lake Community College’s Mission Statement is:

Salt Lake Community College is a public, open-access, comprehensive community college committed to serving the broader community. Its mission is to provide quality higher education and lifelong learning to people of diverse cultures, abilities, and ages, and to serve the needs of community and government agencies, business, industry and other employers.

The College’s current mission statement was approved by the Salt Lake Community College Board of Trustees on December 14, 2005 and by the Utah State Board of Regents on March 10, 2006. The mission statement was recently reviewed and affirmed by community partners and College personnel during Strategic Planning Day in November 2008. The mission statement is appropriate for a comprehensive community college and provides direction for the College. It is generally understood by internal and external communities as evidenced by employee, student, and community participation in the reaffirmation of the mission statement. The mission statement is widely published and visible, including publication in the College Catalog, on the College Website, on posters and fliers, as well as on public documents related to strategic planning and core themes.

1.A.2. – Mission Fulfillment

Salt Lake Community College defines mission fulfillment as providing quality higher education through the achievement of Core Theme objectives and outcomes in a climate conducive to learning, teaching, and working. The College uses a construct that includes three components to define mission fulfillment. The three components are: Overall Purpose, Core Theme Objectives and Outcomes, and Institutional Environment. The College considers meeting benchmark targets on performance indicators for these three areas an acceptable extent of mission fulfillment.

The College has three Strategic Priority Councils that align with Core Themes. These Councils are responsible for planning, coordinating, assessing, and reporting on cross-College work on Core Theme objectives and outcomes as well as advancing Strategic Priority Initiatives.

It is evident through the examination of documents related to Core Themes, Strategic Planning, and assessment provided through the Self-Evaluation Report and Appendix as well as the Salt Lake Community College website that the process for defining mission fulfillment and setting benchmark indicators was inclusive and iterative. The processes and structures are in place to provide meaningful data and performance indicators to fulfill the mission of the College.

Compliment

1. The Evaluation Committee compliments Salt Lake Community College for its considerable efforts and inclusive processes in defining mission fulfillment.

Standard 1.B – Core Themes

Salt Lake Community College developed a college-wide task force to work on defining Core Themes focusing on what the college provides as an open-access comprehensive community college. A draft of the Core Themes was distributed to the College community for review and the taskforce made changes based on input from College personnel. The Executive Cabinet ratified version one in November 2009. The initial version of SLCC's Core Themes provided the framework for articulation of outcomes and performance indicators by the College's Strategic Priority Councils. The Strategic Priority Councils have the responsibility of overseeing institutional planning and assessment of strategic and Core Theme initiatives. The Board of Trustees approved the final version of SLCC Core Themes and objectives in June 2011.

The College's Core Themes are:

1. Access and Success
2. Transfer Education
3. Workforce Education
4. Community Engagement

The evaluators found a clear connection between the Core Themes and the mission statement. Each Core Theme could be considered a manifestation of essential elements of the College mission.

Each Core Theme is articulated by objectives with outcomes, dashboard indicators, and performance indicators. The College selected direct and indirect measures to determine SLCC's performance in achieving Core Theme outcomes and provided rationales for the performance indicators.

Core Theme 1 is aligned with four objectives and seven outcomes with multiple indicators.

Core Theme 2 is aligned with three objectives and four outcomes with multiple indicators.

Core Theme 3 is aligned with three objectives and seven outcomes with multiple indicators.

Core Theme 4 is aligned with three objectives and nine outcomes with multiple indicators.

The Institutional Research office has played a key role in working with the three Strategic Priority Councils in the development of objectives and achievement indicators. The groundwork for a comprehensive system of data collection and analysis has been developed and includes a scorecard system for Core Theme objectives and indicators. A business intelligence reporting system, Cognos, has been implemented. The system has data warehousing capabilities and provides ongoing data about the status of performance indicators. Through drilldown capability, specific areas of performance outcomes can be pinpointed and addressed. At the time of this report the Access and Success scorecard had been built in Cognos. Scorecards with dashboards will be built for the other Core Themes and implemented in the coming year. An example of the scorecard and drill down report as well as an Access and Success Core Theme Data Dictionary were provided in the Appendix of the Self-Evaluation Report.

The Evaluation Committee found that the institution has established objectives for each of its Core Themes and has identified meaningful, assessable, and verifiable indicators of achievement as a basis for evaluating accomplishment of the objectives. A complex system has been developed to track and report on achievement indicators and objectives of the Core Themes. While a sophisticated data and dashboard indicator system has been developed, it has not been fully implemented with all of the Core Themes. In addition, the College states that more refinement and detailed targets will be set by Councils in the next year to provide specific criteria for achievement on performance indicators.

Compliment

1. The Evaluation Committee acknowledges the thoughtful and thorough efforts of the College toward the development of Core Theme objectives and indicators.
2. The Evaluation Committee compliments the College for the development of a sophisticated system for data collection, tracking, and analysis to determine achievement of Core Theme objectives.

SUMMARY

The Evaluation Committee finds Salt Lake Community College's mission statement and Core Themes to be clearly aligned. The Evaluation Committee acknowledges the College's community for its thoughtful and inclusive efforts in determining Core Themes and performance indicators, and for the development of a comprehensive system of Core Theme evaluation. The College provides clear rationale for performance indicators that support mission fulfillment. The evaluators also compliment the College for a thorough and reflective self-evaluation report. As indicated in this document, Eligibility Requirements 2 and 3 are met.

COMMENDATION

1. The Evaluation Committee commends Salt Lake Community College for its inclusive process in the development of Core Themes and performance indicators, and for the development of an integrated and comprehensive system for tracking and evaluating the extent of mission fulfillment.