



**Higher Learning Commission**  
A commission of the North Central Association

230 South LaSalle Street, Suite 7-500 | Chicago, IL 60604-1411  
312-263-0456 | 800-621-7440 | Fax: 312-263-7462 | [ncahlc.org](http://ncahlc.org)

March 3, 2014

Duane M. Dunn  
President  
Seward County Community College/Area Technical School  
PO Box 1137  
1801 N. Kansas  
Liberal, KS 67905-1137

Dear President Dunn:

Enclosed is a copy of Seward County Community College/Area Technical School's *Systems Appraisal Feedback Report*. It begins with a concise Executive Summary, intended for those general readers that do not require a high level of detail. Your Systems Appraisal Team provided extensive detail in the full report by identifying nine distinct groups of what they view as your institution's *strengths* and *opportunities for improvement*, one group for each of the nine AQIP Categories. We are also emailing your institution's Accreditation Liaison a copy of this report.

To receive maximum benefit from your Systems Appraisal, you and your colleagues should plan to invest substantial time in discussing it, considering the team's observations and advice, and identifying which actions will best advance your institution.

We ask that you formally acknowledge receipt of this report within the next two weeks, and provide us with any comments you wish to make about it. Your response will become part of your institution's permanent HLC file. Please email your response to [AQIP@hlcommission.org](mailto:AQIP@hlcommission.org).

Sincerely,

Mary L. Green  
AQIP Process Administrator

**Systems Appraisal Feedback Report**

in response to the *Systems Portfolio* of

SEWARD COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE / AREA TECHNICAL SCHOOL

March 3, 2014

for

**The Higher Learning Commission**

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## Elements of Seward County Community College / Area Technical School's Feedback Report

Welcome to the *Systems Appraisal Feedback Report*. This report provides AQIP's official response to an institution's *Systems Portfolio* by a team of peer reviewers (the Systems Appraisal Team). After the team independently reviews the institution's portfolio, it reaches consensus on essential elements of the institutional profile, strengths and opportunities for improvement by AQIP Category, and any significant issues related to accreditation. These are then presented in three sections of the *Systems Appraisal Feedback Report*: "Strategic Challenges Analysis," "AQIP Category Feedback," and "Accreditation Issues Analysis." These components are interrelated in defining context, evaluating institutional performance, surfacing critical issues or accreditation concerns, and assessing institutional performance. Ahead of these three areas, the team provides a "Reflective Introduction" followed closely by an "Executive Summary." The appraisal concludes with commentary on the overall quality of the report and advice on using the report. Each of these areas is overviewed below.

It is important to remember that the Systems Appraisal Team has only the institution's *Systems Portfolio* to guide its analysis of the institution's strengths and opportunities for improvement. Consequently, the team's report may omit important strengths, particularly if discussion or documentation of these areas in the *Systems Portfolio* were presented minimally. Similarly, the team may point out areas of potential improvement that are already receiving widespread institutional attention. Indeed, it is possible that some areas recommended for potential improvement have since become strengths rather than opportunities through the institution's ongoing efforts. Recall that the overarching goal of the Systems Appraisal Team is to provide an institution with the best possible advice for ongoing improvement.

The various sections of the *Systems Appraisal Feedback Report* can be described as follows:

**Reflective Introduction & Executive Summary:** In this first section of the *System's Appraisal Feedback Report*, the team provides a summative statement that reflects its broad understanding of the institution and the constituents served (Reflective Introduction), and also the team's overall judgment regarding the institution's current performance in relation to the nine AQIP Categories (Executive Summary). In the Executive Summary, the team considers such factors as: robustness of process design; utilization or deployment of processes; the existence of results, trends, and comparative data; the use of results data as feedback; and systematic processes for improvement of the activities that each AQIP

Category covers. Since institutions are complex, maturity levels may vary from one Category to another.

**Strategic Challenges Analysis:** Strategic challenges are those most closely related to an institution's ability to succeed in reaching its mission, planning, and quality improvement goals. Teams formulate judgments related to strategic challenges and accreditation issues (discussed below) through careful analysis of the Organizational Overview included in the institution's Systems Portfolio and through the team's own feedback provided for each AQIP Category. These collected findings offer a framework for future improvement of processes and systems.

**AQIP Category Feedback:** The *Systems Appraisal Feedback Report* addresses each AQIP Category by identifying and coding strengths and opportunities for improvement. An **S** or **SS** identifies strengths, with the double letter signifying important achievements or capabilities upon which to build. Opportunities are designated by **O**, with **OO** indicating areas where attention may result in more significant improvement. Through comments, which are keyed to the institution's Systems Portfolio, the team offers brief analysis of each strength and opportunity. Organized by AQIP Category, and presenting the team's findings in detail, this section is often considered the heart of the *Feedback Report*.

**Accreditation Issues Analysis:** Accreditation issues are areas where an institution may have not yet provided sufficient evidence that it meets the Commission's Criteria for Accreditation. It is also possible that the evidence provided suggests to the team that the institution may have difficulties, whether at present or in the future, in satisfying the *Criteria*. As with strategic challenges, teams formulate judgments related to accreditation issues through close analysis of the entire Systems Portfolio, with particular attention given to the evidence that the institution provides for satisfying the various core components of the *Criteria*. For purposes of consistency, AQIP instructs appraisal teams to identify any accreditation issue as a strategic challenge as well.

**Quality of Report & Its Use:** As with any institutional report, the *Systems Portfolio* should work to enhance the integrity and credibility of the institution by celebrating successes while also stating honestly those opportunities for improvement. The *Systems Portfolio* should therefore be transformational, and it should provide external peer reviewers insight as to how such transformation may occur through processes of continuous improvement. The AQIP Categories and the Criteria for Accreditation serve as the overarching measures for the institution's current state, as well as its proposed future state. As such, it is imperative

that the *Portfolio* be fully developed, that it adhere to the prescribed format, and that it be thoroughly vetted for clarity and correctness. Though decisions about specific actions rest with each institution following this review, AQIP expects every institution to use its feedback to stimulate cycles of continual improvement and to inform future AQIP processes.

## **Reflective Introduction and Executive Summary for Seward County Community College / Area Technical School**

The following consensus statement is from the System Appraisal Team's review of the institution's *Systems Portfolio Overview* and its introductions to the nine AQIP Categories. The purpose of this reflective introduction is to highlight the team's broad understanding of the institution, its mission, and the constituents that it serves.

*Seward County Community College/Area Technical School (SCCC/ATS) has established processes and is developing capacity for data-driven decision making. Now in its second Portfolio iteration, SCCC/ATS is advancing the maturity of its approach to CQI by formulating four "components" (i.e., management information, communities of practice, planning and effective meetings, and decision-making processes) to focus and guide areas for improvement. Recent improvements involved getting teams on board with program reviews, including planning, communication, and decision-making committees and oversight of administration bodies. A concerted effort is being made to infuse and deploy the AQIP framework into institutional functions, such as program review, strategic planning, and unit-level improvement initiatives, and SCCC/ATS models itself on AQIP values and processes. SCCC/ATS appears to be in the early stages of developing a strategic planning process. SCCC/ATS recognizes the challenges associated with shifting the institutional mindset (culture) from one of action projects to one of identifying strategic objectives and developing strategies to achieve them and has moved to identify performance targets and using peer comparisons. SCCC/ATS has an inclusive culture and takes pains to include students, faculty, and staff in college decision making and strategic improvements. SCCC/ATS is beginning to use high-level institutional data in decision making and the monitoring of performance; however, much lower-level data generated in and by individual units and departments appears to lack standardized elements that would make data aggregation and sharing and cross-unit and departmental learning possible. Further, the high-level institutional data, e.g., CCSSE, CAAP, SSI, does not appear to be fully segmented down to the department or unit level and/or shared freely between and*

*amongst the departments and service areas in a manner that effectively 'pushes down' accountability and helps reveal opportunities for improvement or streamlining.*

The following are summary comments on each of the AQIP Categories crafted by the Appraisal Team to highlight Seward County Community College/Area Technical School's achievements and to identify challenges yet to be met.

- SCCC/ATS serves challenging students and deploys many services and programs designed to identify and meet their needs. The sheer number of support services and points of contact for student support presents SCCC/ATS with opportunities to improve its systemic processes in this area of student support for coordinating people and committees, for sharing data, and for optimizing its investment of time and resources. Assessment processes for shared learning outcomes have been well deployed for several key outcomes, and SCCC/ATS's implementation of the TRACKDAT system promises to support the replication of these processes within academic programs. The challenge for SCCC/ATS at this juncture will be to assess all of its shared learning outcomes with equivalent rigor. SCCC/ATS has developed a number of systematic processes focused on student learning. Evidence presented shows its curriculum and assessment practices are interconnected and that SCCC/ATS monitors itself and works toward targeted improvements. Its three-year review cycle is informed by annual reviews that take into account local data and national standards. Rubrics are developed and used, performance results are evaluated, and meaningful planning occurs at the program and course level. Action projects to support, advise, and retain under-prepared students have increased student retention rates over the last three years by 15%. In addition, SCCC/ATS academic council has a formalized process for reviewing placement recommendations to ensure a positive effect on student success and it uses multiple assessment tools to place students in programs. It may be that review of data from these instruments could provide indicators for success in various programs and be used to assist student program selection.
- Processes for *Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives* are not yet folded into a systemic structure, and SCCC/ATS is still gathering data and establishing processes to drive performance-based results. Information provided in this section of the portfolio was limited in scope and did not include the substantive detail expected. SCCC/ATS stated that it is in the beginning stages of an action research project and it appears to be making efforts to improve in this category; however, a cohesive approach to detailing

and developing the elements and information that might be included in this category is needed. SCCC/ATS is encouraged to develop specific measures to assist it in determining which distinctive objectives, other than helping students learn, to focus on for improvements. Some of the institution's Distinctive Objectives are set by the state (as in the case of Adult Basic Education), others are traditional to most colleges (as in the case of athletics, the Development Foundation, and alumni affairs), or are targeted to clear stakeholder needs (as is the case with the Business and Industry department). Measures exist for gauging the productivity of Adult Basic Education and the Development Foundation; however, much capacity remains to be developed for processes that ensure the optimum productivity of all areas into which SCCC/ATS invests resources. By setting clear performance measures for employee needs, Business and Industry, athletics, and alumni affairs, SCCC/ATS can begin generating the data needed for ongoing review and refinement of its slate of Other Distinctive Objectives. As noted in the last Feedback Report, "Establishing processes that drive performances based on results could enhance the institution's continuous improvement efforts (2010)." If it does this, SCCC/ATS will gather appropriate measures of performance and can provide evidence of successful achievement of these other distinctive objectives.

- SCCC/ATS has several core groups, i.e., the Retention, Enrollment Management, and Assessment committees, for analyzing data and monitoring the degree to which student needs are met. The Retention Committee, in particular, appears to have productive processes for identifying opportunities for improvement, setting goals, and working to achieve measurable gains. Processes for monitoring and meeting the current and changing needs of other key stakeholder groups are not presently coordinated, and the many points of contact and sources of input remain to be organized in a manner that will support broad environmental scanning of the needs of non-student stakeholders. The portfolio provides a brief summation as to how stakeholder needs are solicited, who at SCCC/ATS is responsible for building and maintaining relationships with key stakeholders, and how new student and stakeholder groups are identified. However, it does not provide robust information as to the strategy that accompanies this work, how data are gathered, and how priorities are developed in conjunction with SCCC/ATS's mission. As SCCC/ATS is developing the culture and the means to select process improvements, it is positioned to move toward a more comprehensive system of data review. SCCC/ATS routinely seeks ways to identify multiple, comparative data sources

for this category so that it has the ability to compare its results with appropriate peer institutions. Additionally, lessons learned in its Retention Committee and related action projects may permit the institution to begin the work it indicated it needs and wants to do in integrating “formal processes at the institutional level to collect and analyze performance results for stakeholder satisfaction and relationships.”

- SCCC/ATS is working to improve processes that demonstrate its commitment to *Valuing People*. Initiatives include evaluation of employee satisfaction, productivity, effectiveness, recruitment, and retention. Impactful steps are being taken to inquire into and to support employee effectiveness and productivity through the effective meetings and data integrity initiatives and through a comprehensive effort to document institutional work processes in a centralized repository. SCCC/ATS has a defined “work process design” and is taking innovative steps to optimize cross-unit and division collaboration and communication by training select employees to serve as facilitators for the work process design initiatives. SCCC/ATS has action projects in place for some initiatives in this category and has made targeted improvements as a result of these projects. The work connected to systematic change appears to lack cohesiveness or actionable strategies that are derived from targeted data and that can assure positive morale and consensus building within SCCC/ATS. The College has an opportunity to document how employee recognition, reward, compensation, and benefit systems align with both its instructional and non-instructional objectives.
- SCCC/ATS has significantly improved processes for its strategic planning. However, the lack of comparative data significantly hinders SCCC/ATS’s leadership’s ability to fully set clear directions for improvement. The college would benefit from the development of a system-wide, comprehensive structure for the assessment of this category.
- SCCC/ATS is developing a method of reviewing non-instructional departments, including evaluation of the services they provide. If this review process includes common measures that allow for data to be aggregated, segmented, and analyzed by a committee or group, then the College is making progress toward developing stronger quality improvement processes under this category. National data is collected on the SCC/ATS student support services; however, how or if that data is segmented to allow for targeted understanding of where improvements need to be made is not described in this portfolio. There seems to have been little progress in this area since the last Systems Portfolio. SCCC/ATS would benefit from a more systematic approach to

gathering and utilizing data to support its decision-making process. The documentation of work processes via the new Data Integrity Action Project may assist SCCC/ATS in developing other ways of documenting support processes and may encourage knowledge sharing, innovation, and empowerment. SCCC/ATS can use processes developed to improve data integrity to advance knowledge sharing, innovation, and empowerment of its employees.

- SCCC/ATS is developing its processes for systematically identifying, collecting, analyzing, and disseminating data that measure effectiveness. The use of an institutional scorecard and data audit will help ensure that programs and departments use data effectively. The five-year program review cycle generates unit-specific performance and effectiveness data, and key performance data are made available to all administrators on a centralized secure database. The five-year cycle may be too attenuated to support data analysis and use in decision making and operations in a yearly or academic term time frame. The portfolio does not discuss how the analysis of the data results in improvement. Less clear is whether unit and department administrators are readily able to access data; whether they find the data made available useful in monitoring operations; and whether personnel have the means of performing internal comparisons by looking across all the data pertaining to specific processes, services, units, or departments.
- SCCC/ATS initiated strategic planning in 2009, and has used this high-level initiative to formalize planning processes at all levels. Other initiatives, such as the effective meetings initiative, have fed into and supported the improvement of processes under this category. Annual goal setting by the Board of Trustees has become more aligned with, and complementary to, internal processes for developing short-term strategies to meet college goals. However, it is unclear how the institution considers market and other factors that could signal emerging changes that need to be addressed, as well as strategic challenges that must be overcome, particularly when developing its short-term strategies. Renewal of the strategic planning process for the next seven-year cycle, consistent use of the scorecards, and deployment of a review process for non-instructional units will be important benchmarks for further improvements under this category. Additionally, the new administrative culture described in the portfolio's Category 8 responses has resulted in the multiple action projects that are described elsewhere in the portfolio. These processes and outcomes demonstrate the high energy

in and value of AQIP's quality improvement mission at the College. SCCC/ATS has embraced the AQIP action project format and addresses many situations that arise by initiating an action project. While this structure is certainly feasible for mid- and long-range initiatives, it may be cumbersome for shorter term or operational decisions/improvements. The array of committees and action projects currently in place requires participation by administrators, faculty, and staff. Considering its size, such a commitment to participation may put SCCC/ATS at risk of devoting a disproportionate amount of resources to participation in these endeavors. SCCC/ATS also has important opportunities to "close the loop" in fraud risk assessment, measurable goal statements and prioritizing professional development needs. SCCC/ATS's four questions integrated into formal process provide a unique opportunity to take the institution to the next level in which it will use the comparison data to ask themselves, so what do have we learned from our comparisons.

- SCCC/ATS recognizes its efforts towards learning from and building collaborative partnerships has not yet been a focus for its quality improvement efforts. SCCC/ATS has substantial opportunities in this category to build upon its efforts, such as the current collaborations with neighboring colleges to offer courses that cannot be viably supported by one institution alone. SCCC/ATS does acknowledge in this category, and in other areas, both the need and the willingness to organize these relationships in a more systematic manner, including defining performance goals and increasing its investment in these external organizations. As the process becomes more systematized, they are likely to be more aligned.

**Note: Strategic challenges and accreditation issues are discussed in detail in subsequent sections of the *Systems Appraisal Feedback Report*.**

### **Strategic Challenges for Seward County Community College / Area Technical School**

In conducting the Systems Appraisal, the Systems Appraisal Team attempted to identify the broader issues that would seem to present the greatest challenges and opportunities for the institution in the coming years. These areas are ones that the institution should address as it seeks to become the institution it wants to be. From these issues the institution may discover its immediate priorities, as well as strategies for long-term performance improvement. These items may also serve as the basis for future activities and projects that satisfy other AQIP

requirements. The team also considered whether any of these challenges put the institution at risk of not meeting the Commission's Criteria for Accreditation. That portion of the team's work is presented later in this report.

Knowing that Seward County Community College/Area Technical School will discuss these strategic challenges, give priority to those it concludes are most critical, and take action promptly, the Systems Appraisal Team identified the following:

- Under most categories in the portfolio, SCCC/ATS cites need for improvement in the areas of defining, analyzing, and using comparative and external benchmarking data to drive improvements. For example, SCCC/ATS acknowledges the need to develop comparative data for employee satisfaction, engagement, and productivity. While initiatives directed at improvement in these areas are pursued (e.g., the effective meetings and processes documentation initiatives), the use of direct, nationally normed measures of employee morale and engagement could help support and institutionalize efforts. SCCC/ATS would benefit from a campus-wide initiative to inventory, evaluate, and improve its full array of external comparisons. Further benefit could arise from a concerted focus on opportunities to learn from peer institutions and to create cohorts and partnerships that can help the College form its own sense of what it is doing, how to improve on what it is doing, how to engage its external stakeholders, and how to judge its quality improvement in relation to other institutions engaged in like journeys.
- SCCC/ATS has strongly embraced both the use of and the framework for AQIP action projects and deploys action project teams as its preferred method for addressing needs and challenges. While the action project structure is feasible for mid-range initiatives, it may be cumbersome for carrying out short-term and maintaining longer-term operational improvements. The number of committees and action projects currently in place in an institution of this size requires significant participation by administrators, faculty, and staff and may overtax personnel; however, the many action project teams and the strong set of committees that already exist are a resource. If tasked to do so, key committees and teams may be able to distill down the improvement themes each is pursuing in order to identify quality improvement foci that can be addressed via broader initiatives, thereby reducing the multiplication of discrete action projects.
- Although SCCC/ATS participates in the EduKAN online consortium and supports parity of instructional quality across all modes of delivery through uniformity of syllabi,

outcomes, and texts for similar courses, processes for ongoing review of the instructional design and course quality in online education are not described.

Responsibility for instructional quality rests at the department level, and while this quality control structure is traditionally accepted as standard practice for the oversight of face-to-face course delivery, the nature of online instruction requires clearly defined expectations and processes for oversight of instruction and evaluation from broader college levels than the department. Unified processes for the ongoing monitoring of course and program quality, the quality of instructional design, and meeting learning support needs do not appear to be fully deployed.

- Evidence presented relative to the assessment of student learning shows that curricula and assessment practices are interconnected and shared responsibility for several core learning outcomes has been achieved. SCCC/ATS's implementation of the TRACKDAT system promises to support the expansion of these processes within academic programs. The strategic challenge for SCCC/ATS at this juncture is to maintain its momentum, to ensure that all core outcomes are addressed and assessed with equivalent rigor, and that vital assessment processes are developed for all academic programs.
- Data sharing and utilization at the department and unit level appears to remain relatively reactive and departmentalized. While SCCC/ATS relies on broad nationally standardized measures of student satisfaction, engagement and meeting of student support needs (i.e., the CCSSE and Student Satisfaction Inventory), there is a lack of standard measures for service effectiveness at the unit level, as noted in previous portfolio feedback. In the case of the student input, CCSSE and SSI data do not appear to be segmented in a manner that would drive improvements in specific areas, departments, or units. In the case of measures of service effectiveness at the unit level, all service units, areas, and departments appear to monitor independently the quality of administrative support services rendered or received, and the institution's leaders do not seem to have a means of looking across all units and areas to evaluate the effectiveness of specific support services. Some processes, such as five-year program review, designed to support the sharing, comparison, and transparency of performance data may be too attenuated to support data analysis and data use in decision making and operations in a yearly or academic-term time frame. Less clear is whether unit and department administrators are readily able to access data, whether they find the

available data useful in monitoring operations, and whether personnel have the means of performing internal comparisons by looking across all the data pertaining to specific processes, services, units, or departments.

- While SCCC/ATS participates in the Kansas Board of Regents (KBOR) transfer articulation agreement for the AA degree, the Core Outcomes Project for general education, and many program-specific agreements with transfer institutions, SCCC/ATS does not have systematic processes for managing and improving relationships with entities that look to the College for employees or transfer students. SCCC/ATS recognizes the challenge of employing a systematic approach to selecting, prioritizing, and building strategic partnerships with educational entities, external agencies, consortia partners and the general community.

### **AQIP Category Feedback**

In the following section, the Systems Appraisal Team delineates institutional strengths along with opportunities for improvement within the nine AQIP Categories. As explained above, the symbols used in this section are **SS** for outstanding strength, **S** for strength, **O** for opportunity for improvement, and **OO** for outstanding opportunity for improvement. The choice of symbol for each item represents the consensus evaluation of the team members and deserves the institution's thoughtful consideration. Comments marked **SS** or **OO** may need immediate attention, either to ensure the institution preserves and maximizes the value of its greatest strengths, or to devote immediate attention to its greatest opportunities for improvement.

**AQIP Category 1: Helping Students Learn.** This category identifies the shared purpose of all higher education institutions and is accordingly the pivot of any institutional analysis. It focuses on the teaching-learning process within a formal instructional context, yet it also addresses how the entire institution contributes to helping students learn and overall student development. It examines the institution's processes and systems related to learning objectives, mission-driven student learning and development, intellectual climate, academic programs and courses, student preparation, key issues such as technology and diversity, program and course delivery, faculty and staff roles, teaching and learning effectiveness, course sequencing and scheduling, learning and co-curricular support, student assessment, measures, analysis of results, and efforts to continuously improve these areas. The Systems Appraisal Team identified various

strengths and opportunities for Seward County Community College/Area Technical School for Category 1.

*In response to previous feedback through the AQIP process, SCCC/ATS has made a strong effort to improve its processes for outcome assessment, advising, dealing with underprepared students, addressing special needs, defining expectations for effective teaching and learning, and program review. SCCC/ATS has a minutely deployed assessment structure and clearly ordered oversight for general education assessment. The processes for linking general education outcomes to the courses designed to address them supports shared responsibility for common outcomes, especially as seen in the areas of writing, oral communication, and critical thinking. Meriting further attention is the degree to which the faculty and pertinent academic departments are fully engaged in the development of program learning outcomes. A retention committee addresses the learning support needs of students, and SCCC/ATS appears to have a clear understanding of the challenges of the full range of students served and well developed programming to support the needs of at-risk, developmental, international, ELL, underprepared, and first-generation students. Notwithstanding the many student support services and units delivering them, the input arising from all these points of contact (and sources of program input, such as employer surveys, alumni surveys, and advisory board input) could be more fully leveraged in a broad or aggregated manner to assist the institution in optimizing operations and learning all that it could from experience. Much of the data and information generated by individual units and programs appears to remain at these lower levels and does not lend itself to aggregation due to lack of standardized elements or collection processes. SCCC/ATS has identified opportunities for improvement in its distance learning policies and processes and has developed an AQIP action project to address improvement of distance learning policies and processes. Institutional characteristics pertaining to Category 1 that merit attention include the lack of evidence of input from key stakeholders in determining program learning outcomes, the assessment of offerings for non-degree seeking students, more clearly defined processes for program development, and the need to better leverage the co-curriculum to advance the achievement of general education outcomes—especially outcomes 7, 8, and 9.*

**1P1, S.** There are common learning objectives in place at SCCC/ATS and a clearly identified review process through which recommendations for change can be acted upon. Attention to general education outcomes is shared across committees. The Assessment Committee at SCCC/ATS provides close comprehensive oversight for the nine common learning outcomes set for all students using locally developed faculty

teams, external accrediting body standards, and national framework recommendations to conduct an annual review process. The Academic Affairs Council provides an additional level of oversight via its three-year review cycle of the general education curriculum and philosophy.

**1P2, O.** SCCC/ATS faculty uses a variety of sources, including external accrediting and certification agency recommendations, state curriculum alignment, advisory board input, program improvement needs, and SCCC/ATS assessment initiatives to determine program outcomes. However, there appears to be a lack of input from key stakeholders (e.g., employers, students). These data would provide another important perspective to indicate whether graduates have acquired the knowledge and skills required.

**1P3, S.** New programs are developed by program coordinators or their designated representative and must be supported by environmental data (labor, support from business and industry, enrollment projections, facility and operational cost estimates). There is a structured approval process for all new program development, which includes administrative review, Academic Affairs Council Approval (which includes federal compliance with credit hour allocation), and submission to the Kansas Board of Regents.

**1P4, O.** SCCC/ATS follows a standard process for new program development but may be missing an opportunity to achieve higher level environmental scanning through the aggregation and analysis of data and input generated by program review, advisory council input, and community input. More effective aggregation of data across all programs could enable institutional leadership to supplement and perhaps enhance program- and faculty-driven processes for identifying new programs.

**1P5, O.** SCCC/ATS uses three processes to determine student preparation for courses and programs, and its placement process includes assessment tools such as ACT, COMPASS, and SAT. The Academic Affairs Council has a formalized process for reviewing placement recommendations to ensure a positive impact on student success. SCCC/ATS may want to further review and consider which assessment tools (or combination of tools) provide the best indicators of student success in specific programs and courses. These data might be used to assist students in their program selection and academic pathways planning.

**1P6, S.** SCCC/ATS publicly provides learning and development outcomes information in the college catalog, in the course syllabi, and on the college website. Student

organizations communicate outcomes information through their programming, and the “Advise to Teach” process reinforces expectations for student learning. The College has made progress in creating better coordination of its student advising efforts, and SCCC/ATS is developing a more comprehensive process to evaluate advising effectiveness.

**1P7, O.** As reflected by current efforts to study and improve advising processes, SCCC/ATS is aware of the need to better coordinate the many academic support services and points of contact through which incoming students are helped to develop a plan of study and to succeed. By advancing efforts to better align and coordinate these services, the College may be able to offer improved support to new and returning students.

**1P8, O.** Since the last review, SCCC/ATS has spent time developing an early alert process, which was developed initially in a three-year Action project. There is a significant increase in retention as a result of the ongoing process review and improvement. Specifically, attention paid to improving success rates in developmental writing, as the Action Project data show, has yielded gains in retention and student progress, and, as national benchmarks indicate, the College is aware of the need for even more focused efforts to identify and support underprepared students.

**1P9, O.** SCCC/ATS acknowledges differences among constituent groups and learning styles, and it has a centralized resource repository and processes to support students, advisees and faculty and to provide institution-wide attention to learning styles. However, it is unclear how they address this for students enrolled in online courses in relation to their preparedness for online courses and the effectiveness of online teaching, particularly when they are not assigned an advisor until they complete 12 credit hours.

**1P10, S.** Across the campus, SCCC/ATS offers support services and special needs programming. Directors and grant coordinators in these areas hold quarterly coordination sessions to align services through the identification of common student needs. These efforts reflect a maturing systems approach to supporting student sub-groups.

**1P11, S.** SCCC/ATS defines, documents, and communicates expectations for effective teaching and learning using input from a variety of sources including the Assessment Committee, Employee Development Committee, Instructional Team, Academic Affairs

Council, Human Resources, and students. This approach appears well-defined and comprehensive. Data from the IDEA end-of-course evaluation instrument, classroom visitations, and the annual review process help SCCC/ATS define teaching quality, and instructors identified as exemplary share their instructional experiences during quarterly assessment programming.

**1P12, OO.** Multiple learning modalities exist and offer students flexibility in course selections with dynamic enrollment trends. While evidence indicates student feedback is used to support future scheduling, it is not clear if students can use technology for online registration and advising. Likewise, although SCCC/ATS participates in the EduKAN online consortium and supports parity of instructional quality across all modes of deliver through uniformity of syllabi, outcomes, and texts for similar courses, processes for ongoing review of the instructional design and course quality in online education are not described. Responsibility for instructional quality rests at the department level, and while this quality control structure is traditionally accepted as standard practice for the oversight of face-to-face course delivery, the nature of online instruction requires clearly defined expectations and processes for oversight on instruction and evaluation from broader college levels than the department.

**1P13, O** SCCC/ATS spent considerable time redesigning the program review process. The Academic Program Review process uses AQIP's practice of examining processes, results, and improvements to ensure ongoing program review is in place. These data are aggregated and available to all institutional stakeholders. In the resulting process, what appears to be lacking is a clear description of the process itself, data collected, and how that data is used to inform continuous improvement. Longitudinal analyses of that data across all departments will likely provide valuable insight into the effectiveness of SCCC/ATS's program review process.

**1P14, O.** While SCCC/ATS has a process in place to identify needed changes or discontinuation of programs and courses, this process appears to occur outside of the program review process. An effective and efficient program review process would identify these needed changes and these recommendations could be advanced to the appropriate committees for review.

**1P15, O.** There is an evaluation process in place which helps to both identify and continually improve student support services. These are centrally located and accessible to students on campus, but it is unclear how they are available to their

distance learners. How SCCC/ATS determines the learning support needs beyond the Early Alert System has not been fully articulated, including how the faculty's learning support needs are identified and how the needs of distance learners are addressed. It may be beneficial to gather more systematic data on all aspects of student support and use the information to help guide planning in this area. The increased retention rates of Hispanic students, while other groups have declined, may be a sign that similar attention for all students may increase overall retention rates.

**1P16, OO.** By connecting co-curricular goals to SCCC/ATS's nine learning outcomes and through communicating the expectations of co-curricular activities to students and others, the College has the opportunity to align and integrate its offerings and expectations. SCCC/ATS's prioritizing, budgeting, planning, and instructional offerings may benefit from aligning its academic resources and co-curricular activities.

**1P17, O.** While SCCC/ATS gathers information from a variety of sources to determine that graduates meet its learning expectations, particularly in its CTE programs, these efforts are not institution-wide. Licensure passage rates, graduate and employer surveys, and program reviews are used to ensure graduates have met expectations. Connecting these kinds of unit analyses to SCCC/ATS's nine learning outcomes may help build greater student success in employment and transferability.

**1P18, S.** The assessment processes piloted for writing and two additional general education learning outcomes reinforce shared responsibility for learning and model a collaborative framework for assessment within academic programs. This institution-wide Writing Assessment Process has been recognized nationally with a National Council of Instructional Administrators Exemplary Initiatives Competition Award. SCCC/ATS uses the TRACDAT system to assist programs in collecting and aggregating data on student learning

**1R1, S.** There is a clearly defined assessment plan and a process identified for the dissemination of results to all internal stakeholders.

**1R2, O.** The initiative to present the results for learning for SCCC/ATS's shared learning and developmental outcomes in the "scorecard" format and to post these results online promises to offer a transparent framework for improvement initiatives. The practice of aligning CCSSE results to course assessment results reinforces the connection between skill acquisition and classroom practices. SCCC/ATS has established the baselines

assessment scores for its nine learning outcomes and has partly completed its setting of targets. The completion of the target setting and the regular updating of the scorecards will provide important assessment data. While identifying a common learning objective on which to focus is laudable, information pertaining to other common learning objectives would allow for a more robust picture of how the institution is performing in this category.

**1R3, O.** SCCC/ATS has focused on critical thinking at the program level and has measures in place for each program. Although results have been mixed across programs, the effort represents the institution's commitment to continuous improvement. Currently, SCCC/ATS has the opportunity to engage in assessing other core learning outcomes at the program level.

**1R4, O.** Licensure passage rates are above or in line with state averages, indicating students are adequately prepared for employment in CTE or applied programs. While the average G.P.A. for SCCC/ATS transfer students is comparable to other transfer students at those receiving institutions, the average term hours passed is below, even for those who persist at those institutions. This indicator may signal under preparedness for the SCCC/ATS transfer student. SCCC/ATS has an opportunity to also present feedback from the external stakeholders that accept graduates in transfer or hire them into employment. These data would provide another important perspective to indicate whether graduates have acquired the knowledge and skills required by these stakeholders. Identifying more specific transfer and employer measures for success for students before their completion at SCCC/ATS may help the College prioritize ways to improve the post-completer success rates.

**1R5, O.** On a yearly basis, the Retention Committee reviews data pertaining to the effectiveness of academic support services, student support services, advising, student finance, First Year Seminar, Early Alert/At-Risk intervention, and student engagement. Results from several measures demonstrate the institution's ongoing attention to improving student learning. SCCC/ATS has identified the slow progress of improving learning support processes, and it is addressing this concern through an Action project. Once developed, this project should identify specific course-level measures and, beyond the Early Alert mechanisms, may offer ways to promote services and assist students throughout the semester.

**1R6, O.** SCCC/ATS compares its results for student learning through multiple national

and state-wide tests and surveys. Results from these benchmarks reflect a need to attend to two related areas: the level of academic challenge students experience and the level of effort they put forth. Developing more local or program-specific collaborative relationships may allow the College to identify specific opportunities for addressing the level of challenge and/or student effort.

**111, SS.** Regardless of the challenges SCCC/ATS still faces in ensuring success for the students it serves, the institution provides very strong evidence that processes are in place to identify and address areas for improvement under Category 1. Two promising features of these improvements are that the College is using the AQIP process and is able to identify and demonstrate multiple successful initiatives.

**112, S.** SCCC/ATS's responses throughout *Helping Students Learn* indicate that its uses AQIP values and processes to set targets and determine improvements. While most of these efforts are recent and therefore do not offer evidence of long-term advances, the College has a blueprint for its expectations in the future. SCCC/ATS's commitment to creating an annual venue for faculty to meet, review, and act upon the full array of institutional data on student learning reflects a strong culture of continuous quality improvement. The College has sufficient baseline information and assessment data to document student performance progress in critical thinking and in college-level writing for students transitioning from developmental courses. Another key example of SCCC/ATS's recent success is the improved retention rate of students in Early Alert system to 55%, an increase of 15% over three years. The Retention Committee has led this improvement project, which is one of the core elements of the college Retention Program.

**AQIP Category 2: Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives.** This category addresses the processes that contribute to the achievement of the institution's major objectives that complement student learning and fulfill other portions of its mission. Depending on the institution's character, it examines the institution's processes and systems related to identification of other distinctive objectives, alignment of other distinctive objectives, faculty and staff roles, assessment and review of objectives, measures, analysis of results, and efforts to continuously improve these areas. The Systems Appraisal Team identified various strengths and opportunities for Seward County Community College/Area Technical School for Category 2.

*SCCC/ATS's five Other Distinctive Objectives, Adult Basic Education, athletics, the Development Foundation, Business and Industry, and Alumni Affairs are clearly defined. However, outside of SCCC/ATS's formal planning process, structures or processes are absent for the overall monitoring of effectiveness and the periodic review of the full array of initiatives. Additionally, input regarding these objectives from advisory board members, faculty, and staff appears to be informal. SCCC/ATS has articulated the stakeholders that assist SCCC/ATS in achieving its other objectives and works to engage those groups; however, strategies for collecting useful data from those groups on the extent to which SCCC/ATS achieves those objectives remains to be developed. Work on implementing the Student Information System may lead to techniques for monitoring and optimizing operations across all areas deemed Other Distinctive Objectives. As efforts continue, a greater set of data—measures and results—will help guide the college's Other Distinctive Objectives. One example of successfully using data to improve an initiative under this Category concerns the Colvin Adult Learning Center and SCCC/ATS's efforts to track "educational gain levels and develops improvement plans when targets are not met."*

**2P1, O.** SCCC/ATS's Other Distinctive Objectives are defined as Adult Basic Education, athletics, and the Development Foundation, alumni affairs, and the Business and Industry department through which the College serves non-credit students. SCCC/ATS is in the beginning stages of a Data Integrity AQIP Action Project that is testing its SIS to ascertain internal data integrity issues, redundancy, access barriers, broken systems, and processes, and staffing. Completion of the Data Integrity Action Project and full implementation of the Student Information System promises to advance efforts to align all these areas with the institution according to the model set by use of the SIS by Business and Industry.

**2P2, O.** SCCC/ATS's major non-instructional objectives for external stakeholders are determined using a wide array of input from internal and external stakeholders. SCCC/ATS has an opportunity to provide more than basic information on processes used to determine non-instructional objectives for stakeholders. In the portfolio examples provided, Adult Basic Education is set for SCCC/ATS by the state, and in two other endeavors, the Development Foundation and athletics appear to be collaborating on facility-related goals.

**2P3, O.** The portfolio did not provide details on how expectations specific to *Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives* are communicated to the internal campus

community and beyond. The institution has an opportunity to provide details on how the reviews, reports, and its communications have successfully helped targeted audiences understand what is expected of them.

**2P4, O.** SCCC/ATS outlines a series of reviews that take place related to non-instructional objectives; however, details on how strategy development and implementation are connected to planning are not provided. Based on the details presented in the portfolio, there does not appear to be a review of non-instructional objectives outside of the planning process.

**2P5, O.** The portfolio does not make explicit links between *Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives* and faculty and staff needs, aside from a reference to employee professional development. Based on information presented, there does not appear to be a deliberate, systematic attempt to identify staff and faculty needs relative to non-instructional objectives and processes. This cycle of review and adjustment will be greatly enhanced once clear performance measures are established for each area and capacity is developed in data integrity.

**2P6, O.** While SCCC/ATS indicates that employee needs are included in the assessment and reviews conducted related to its non-instructional objectives, it is not clear how the employee needs are used to readjust the institution's other distinctive objectives. Since the portfolio did not indicate how readjustment of objectives is connected to institutional mission, the cycle upon which readjustments are reviewed and made, or the process by which the College sets priorities when readjustments are required, an opportunity exists to better explain and/or develop processes related to how it is meeting its non-instructional requirements.

**2R1, O.** SCCC/ATS has defined its other distinctive objectives. The identified measures are limited in scope, and it is unclear how SCCC/ATS uses data for continuous improvements.

**2R2, O.** Few substantial results are provided in the portfolio to indicate that SCCC/ATS is engaged with its community in its other distinctive objectives. A data-driven approach to understanding how the College fits into the community of western Kansas may help build lasting and productive relationships that serve constituents and stakeholders.

**2R3, O.** SCCC/ATS offers some comparative results for participation in cultural activities and the level of non-credit student participation in offerings and is working to

identify comparative data to evaluate its effectiveness in this area; however, comparative results were limited to three measures on the NCCBP. Comparative data for athletics and alumni affairs may be obtained once performance targets for these areas are set.

**2R4, O.** Aside from the objective of Adult Basic Education, which is set by the state, the objectives of the Business and Industry department, athletics, and, to a lesser degree, the Development Foundation all merit close analysis in the context of institutional goals set by the strategic plan. Given SCCC/ATS's goals for "creating awareness" and contributing to workforce development, it is important for the College to ensure that all areas of institutional investment of time, energy, and resources contribute fully to the whole.

**2I1–2I2, O.** SCCC/ATS does not provide sufficient detail on how it selects processes to improve or sets performance targets to accomplish its distinctive objectives. Based on the evidence presented in this category, reviewers were not able to ascertain what the institution's approach is or how it is defined and supported by the culture. The institution is strongly encouraged to develop specific measures to assist it in determining which distinctive objectives, other than helping students learn, to focus on for improvements. As noted in the last Feedback Report, "Establishing processes that drive performances based on results could enhance the institution's continuous improvement efforts."

**AQIP Category 3: Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs.** This category examines how your institution works actively to understand student and other stakeholder needs. It examines your institution's processes and systems related to student and stakeholder identification; student and stakeholder requirements; analysis of student and stakeholder needs; relationship building with students and stakeholders; complaint collection, analysis, and resolution; determining satisfaction of students and stakeholders; measures; analysis of results; and efforts to continuously improve these areas. The Systems Appraisal Team identified various strengths and opportunities for Seward County Community College/Area Technical School for Category 3.

*While SCCC/ATS has multiple processes integrated and aligned with its goals for increasing student success and the utilization of and satisfaction with academic support services, the College is continuing to develop its processes for improvement across its various programs and committees. The Enrollment Management, Assessment, and Retention committees use*

*nationally normed data sets for identifying needs and improvement projects. The College has developed formal processes for analyzing and addressing student support needs through these same committees. SCCC/ATS has successfully reviewed ways to incorporate attention to student needs into its operations, as evidenced by receipt of the 2013 Noel-Levitz Retention Award. Nonetheless, the fact that retention of nonminority students has declined while retention rates for Hispanics has increased may merit attention as this may indicate that this increase was at the expense of other groups. SCCC/ATS uses secondary data sources to assess the needs of external stakeholders, e.g., success rates, retention rates, and success of transfer students at destination institutions. The College reports engagement with advisory boards, employers, and other institutions of higher education but is less clear on how data is analyzed to monitor the needs of these stakeholder groups. In regards to data used in connection with Category 3, processes for sharing and aggregating of data relative to meeting student needs and program completion appear to be under developed. The Enrollment Management, Assessment, and Retention committees all access high level data sets (e.g., CCSSE, SSI, NCCBP, and Clearinghouse data); however, how these committees collect, analyze, and share data in common to identify broader cross-campus themes or unmet needs is less clear. Similarly, SCCC/ATS has many different initiatives, events, and programs designed to establish and build relationships with students but may be less focused on evaluating the full array of activities to identify gaps (and/or students who are "over served") and optimize the investment of time, energy, and resources. Lastly, the multiple outreach efforts and activities (including those of the Development Foundation and Alumni Affairs) do not appear to coordinate data gathering or to leverage in common the opportunities for input created by their many points of contact to better understand stakeholder needs.*

**3P1, S.** Seward County Community College/ATS has developed processes to successfully improve student retention and was recognized by receiving the 2013 Noel-Levitz Retention Award. The Retention Committee has assumed a data-driven, proactive role in identifying student needs by disaggregating and analyzing early alert, retention, and course-success data to identify high-impact interventions and by setting realistic short-term progression and completion goals. Attention to student needs by the Retention Committee resulted in the At-Risk Project which has successfully focused on improving the success of Hispanic students.

**3P2, O.** SCCC/ATS cites many different initiatives, events, and programs designed to establish and build relationships with students; however, an opportunity may exist to

evaluate the full array of activities, events, and programs to determine if they represent the optimum expenditure of time, energy, and resources and to identify possible gaps in points of contact.

**3P3, O.** SCCC/ATS appears to monitor the changing needs of students through several processes and sources of input, and evidence is offered of program creation in direct response to student needs. Notwithstanding, an opportunity appears to exist to establish higher-level processes for monitoring emerging and/or changing needs through the aggregation of input provided by disparate sources, such as advisory boards, program reviews, high school surveys, etc. New degree and certificate programs and the concentrated effort to improve Hispanic student success rates are examples of processes that SCCC/ATS may use in expanding its efforts to measure its effectiveness in analyzing the changing needs of its students.

**3P4, O.** SCCC/ATS identifies its key stakeholders and has strong processes for building and maintaining relationships with higher education institutions, its Board of Trustees, and employees. Regarding the other stakeholder groups identified, i.e., employers, the Development Foundation, alumni, the community and school districts, SCCC/ATS has many points of contact, input, and relationship development with these stakeholders but may benefit from coordinating and leveraging the data-gathering potential of the many activities, initiatives, and events mentioned.

**3P5, O.** An opportunity exists for SCCC/ATS to detail how it identifies its New Student and Stakeholder Groups and to detail the trigger points mentioned in the Portfolio, particularly trigger points connected to the launch of programs, contract-training expansion, and when to move coursework from face-to-face to online formats. SCCC/ATS does not describe systematic processes for the regular high-level environmental scanning needed to monitor SCCC/ATS's effectiveness in this area.

**3P6, S.** SCCC/ATS instituted a formal complaint process in 2012 which will allow it to track the nature of complaints, identify commonalities, and take necessary corrective actions going forward.

**3R1, O.** To monitor student satisfaction, SCCC/ATS relies on data from two formal measures, the SSI and CCSSE, and input from students via the informal measures of the Board of Trustees dinner, student forums, and the attendance of Student Government Association meetings by the Dean of Students. However, SCCC/ATS does

not address how it measures the satisfaction of other key stakeholders, e.g., the community, and particularly employers. As a college with many occupational programs, employer satisfaction would seem crucial. It is also unclear how SCCC/ATS seeks feedback from prospective students or measures the success of outreach efforts.

**3R2, S.** The Retention Committee utilizes data under the Academic Services benchmark of the Student Satisfaction Inventory to monitor and improve support services, and the Assessment, Enrollment Management, and Retention committees are in the early stages of using a combination of SSI and CCSSE data to monitor the quality of support services for students.

**3R3, S.** Student satisfaction performance results have been used to create a baseline for SCCC/ATS which will allow the College to focus on improvement over time. SCCC/ATS reported and provided evidence that retention and graduation rates have remained well above peer rates for the past three reporting years. Additionally the college Retention Committee has implemented relationship-building activities with parents and students around understanding financial aid.

**3R4-5, OO.** SCCC/ATS recognizes that it does not currently have a systemic approach to collecting and analyzing performance results for stakeholder satisfaction beyond two national surveys of student engagement. The Retention Committee is currently developing its measures for student-advisor relationships. Likewise, the College teams can align their efforts to determine, collect, and analyze indicators of student and stakeholder engagement with the College. More specific and local evidence may provide more direction and support for those efforts and activities that serve to build stakeholder investment in the College.

**3R6, O.** While SCCC/ATS reports consistent results above the mean in the two national surveys it uses to gauge student satisfaction and for comparative analysis, the institution may benefit from additional analysis to determine whether the CCSSE and Noel-Levitz results truly document the impact of the many new processes it has implemented or whether it might need to use additional, more finely targeted measures. It also has the opportunity to develop measures for other key stakeholders.

**3I1, S.** SCCC/ATS has recently received the Noel-Levitz Retention Award and its data collection and analysis processes have become more robust since it has begun administering the two national surveys. Additionally, the Retention Committee of

SCCC/ATS has created a good model of utilizing data from several sources to analyze and improve SCCC/ATS's efforts to meet student needs.

**312, O.** The AQIP action projects addressing goals and action plans for committees and teams, the Effective Meetings Phase I and Phase II projects offer the opportunity to build collaboration and coordination among departments and committees. These initiatives may lead to a more integrated, comprehensive system for engaging and building student relationships across the entire SCCC/ATS culture, including its points of contact with employers and similar institutions. SCCC/ATS has the opportunity to demonstrate how these practices have impacted their efforts in this category.

**AQIP Category 4: Valuing People.** This category explores the institution's commitment to the development of its employees since the efforts of all faculty, staff, and administrators are required for institutional success. It examines the institution's processes and systems related to work and job environment; workforce needs; training initiatives; job competencies and characteristics; recruitment, hiring, and retention practices; work processes and activities; training and development; personnel evaluation; recognition, reward, compensation, and benefits; motivation factors; satisfaction, health and safety, and well-being; measures; analysis of results; and efforts to continuously improve these areas. The Systems Appraisal Team identified various strengths and opportunities for Seward County Community College/Area Technical School for Category 4.

*SCCC/ATS's processes for Valuing People are generally more systematic and mature than reactive. Since the 2009 Portfolio, SCCC/ATS has implemented the use of Compease software to coordinate its job classification, compensation, and hiring practices. Compease is yielding data that will be used to support the further development of processes under Category 4. SCCC/ATS seeks feedback from employees via annual satisfaction surveys and focus groups conducted every three years and reports improvements based on these activities. As SCCC/ATS improves its systems for designing work processes and evaluating employee satisfaction, the College also seeks ways to improve the training and orienting of personnel. The decision to align the Employee Development Committee to the Assessment Committee is a good example of steps being taken to build capacity under Category 4; however, the identification and meeting of employee development needs appears to be handled on a committee level or on an individual basis, and multiple efforts across campus do not appear to be fully coordinated or optimized. Similarly, the use of Learning Communities by faculty and*

*advisors at SCCC/ATS appears productive, but how these communities are selected, defined, formed, and leveraged as a source of new ideas and best practices that are shared campus wide is less clear. Lastly, the College lacks a means of directly inquiring into and monitoring campus climate or employee engagement. SCCC/ATS has experienced some difficulties with interdepartmental work process review and design and employs innovative techniques (including the development of a work-process WIKI) for supporting cross-unit communication and collaboration with the goal of optimizing work processes. In addition to developing trained facilitators for this process, SCCC/ATS could also model open communication for departments by documenting how assessment data are analyzed and used for improvements in the academic units.*

**4P1, S.** The Kansas Board of Regents sets credentials for faculty. Additionally, SCCC/ATS uses Compease software, which provides comparative data from businesses and other institutions within the region, to coordinate its job classification, job description, and compensation levels.

**4P2, O.** SCCC/ATS has a formal hiring process in place that begins with confirming appropriate credentials for each position. The College plans to extend performance demonstrations, which are currently required of faculty applicants, to all prospective employees. As SCCC/ATS evaluates the benefit of these performance demonstrations, an opportunity exists to explore how either the Compease system or the live demonstrations might be used to confirm that candidates possess values that the College determines to be essential for all employees. Incorporating more evidenced-based criteria into its hiring processes could support SCCC/ATS's employee retention and continuity plan.

**4P3, O.** SCCC/ATS has an opportunity to use comparative data, perhaps provided by Compease software, to support its claims of high retention, positive employment patterns, and competitiveness with other employers in the region.

**4P4, OO.** This item is not addressed in the portfolio. SCCC/ATS has an outstanding opportunity to document how employees are oriented to institutional history, mission, and values.

**4P5, O.** A new AQIP action project focuses on improving the systemic processes that SCCC/ATS uses to plan for personnel changes. The College has selected a set of specific actions and articulates a commitment to formal, results-driven analyses. The

project provides the College an opportunity to implement a formal succession planning process and to address issues associated with attracting new personnel and reducing turnover.

**4P6, O.** The portfolio illustrates that SCCC/ATS employees have designed work processes so those processes contribute to improved institutional productivity and new employee satisfaction. SCCC/ATS has an opportunity to develop guidelines around its four standards for work processes that can then be pro-actively applied to work process improvement.

**4P7, O.** The portfolio documents locally developed guidelines and policies for all employees regarding ethical practice guides; SCCC/ATS has an opportunity to describe how the College ensures compliance with those guidelines and with other, federally mandated protections.

**4P8, O.** The Employee Development Committee assists with coordination of employee development programming, although responsibility for identification and prioritization of training needs rests with various college committees. The College has an opportunity to develop systemic processes that reach across the institution to identify training needs, to align training with the institution's short- and long-term plans, and to collect and analyze data that document how training meets employee needs and strengthens the institution's programs and services.

**4P9, S.** Individual development plans are identified during the evaluation process; training or development is funded by departmental and divisional budgets. Faculty and advisors participate in year-long learning communities which consist of 8 – 12 members who explore a topic and report out to the campus. Additionally, SCCC/ATS has policies for sabbatical leaves and professional development grants for both full- and part-time employees and adjunct faculty.

**4P10, O.** Although there are numerous documents related to personnel evaluation on its website, SCCC/ATS does not clearly articulate how it designs, uses, and evaluates its current system. Further, the example given related to refining the staff evaluation does not include any rationale or data to support the need for change. Alignment of personnel evaluation with instructional and non-instructional programs and services appears to occur informally, which may hinder that alignment.

**4P11, S.** SCCC/ATS has comprehensive recognition, benefits, and compensation

programs in place; the new Employee Continuity Plan AQIP Action Project will review compensation and benefit systems in order to establish a systematic plan that ensures continuity of college operations and administration.

**4P12, O.** SCCC/ATS provides in the portfolio details on policy connected to professional development and indicates that training and development are connected to budget. However, it does not provide sufficient detail to determine if activities targeted to address employee motivation are coordinated into a systematic process. SCCC/ATS has an opportunity to identify ways to measure motivation and then segment the data by employee demographics (occupational type, tenure, and department) so that it can begin to assess and address issues involving motivation.

**4P13, O.** While SCCC/ATS has technology in place to address employee safety (Rave Alert) and programs to enhance well-being (Wellness Passport), the processes by which the institution develops these initiatives or measures and evaluates them for needed improvements is unclear. SCCC/ATS has an opportunity to develop evaluative measures specific to employee satisfaction, health and safety, and well-being and to compare its own results with those of appropriate peer groups.

**4R1, O.** Certain measures listed, including the Survey of Administrative Offices, the Data Integrity Action Project, and the KBOR requirement of collecting and reporting of dual-credit (high school concurrent) instructor credentials may be more appropriate for *Measuring Effectiveness* or *Supporting Institutional Operations* than for *Valuing People*. SCCC/ATS has an opportunity to identify instruments, such as the PACE Climate Survey or Noel-Levitz Employee Satisfaction Survey, that better align with employee motivation and satisfaction and which encourage analysis that will allow SCCC/ATS to focus on continuous improvement efforts.

**4R2, OO.** SCCC/ATS has begun to track some data in the *Valuing People* category; however, identified performance results in this category are limited in scope and it is unclear what SCCC/ATS does with the information it collects. While measuring employee learning and development is an important component in valuing people, the College does not provide results for other aspects of valuing people, such as health, safety and wellness, and overall satisfaction. There is an opportunity to be more systematic when analyzing and utilizing trend data and to determine key benchmark items that will be regularly evaluated.

**4R3, OO.** SCCC/ATS clearly values triangulation of focus group data, quantitative data and documentation, and surveys; however, the portfolio does not document a process by which the College currently integrates results from all data points. As a result, performance indicators for Valuing People are broadly provided in the portfolio. No comparative data are available to indicate strengths and opportunities in employee productivity and efficiency. SCCC/ATS has an opportunity to determine the extent to which data from its current performance results provide the necessary information to make improvements in employee satisfaction, productivity, and effectiveness.

**4R4, OO.** SCCC/ATS acknowledges the need to develop comparative data for employee satisfaction and engagement. Efforts to identify more direct measures of employee morale and engagement may result in the use of a nationally normed instrument which would supply peer comparisons.

**4I1, O.** Recent efforts to improve work processes and to develop a strategic vision for its performance in *Valuing People* have become a clear objective for leadership at SCCC/ATS. As this effort expands into implementation and development through committees and down to individuals, the College has an opportunity to align its practices and policies with more formal and systemic processes for improving employee productivity and efficiency.

**4I2, O.** The portfolio documents that employee development is one of the strategic vision elements in the strategic plan and that SCCC/ATS has three committees that are used to select specific processes for improvement in this category. The College has an opportunity to document how this committee infrastructure builds institutional culture, encourages alignment with strategic initiatives, documents institutional priorities, and evaluates value and effectiveness.

**AQIP Category 5: Leading and Communicating.** This category addresses how the institution's leadership and communication structures, networks, and processes guide planning, decision-making, seeking future opportunities, and building and sustaining a learning environment. It examines the institution's processes and systems related to leading activities, communicating activities, alignment of leadership system practices, institutional values and expectations, direction-setting, use of data, analysis of results, leadership development and sharing, succession planning, and efforts to continuously improve these areas. The Systems

Appraisal Team identified various strengths and opportunities for Seward County Community College/Area Technical School for Category 5.

*For annual planning purposes, SCCC/ATS leadership presents data regarding local trends, peer comparison of student demographics, student success, expenditures, and funding, and the Board identifies goals which are aligned with the mission, vision, and values of SCCC/ATS. Metrics have been articulated recently as performance indicators, and the College is now beginning to measure these indicators. Areas for attention include processes for prioritizing annual goals and identifying criteria to guide review of the degree to which they are accomplished. Additionally, there appears to be a lack of input from key stakeholders (employees, employers, the community, and students) in this annual goal-setting process which may depress buy-in by these stakeholders. Data sharing and utilization at the department and unit level may be relatively reactive and departmentalized. Although program review prompts a thorough data-driven inquiry into performance, it occurs once every five years, and data (especially high-level institutional data, such as the CCSSE, CAAP, SSI, etc.) does not appear to be segmented to the unit and department level and broadly available in a manner that supports transparency and shared learning. Initiatives taken to improve in this Category include succession planning and implementing principles guiding more effective meetings.*

**5P1, O.** The mission statement and College value statements are crafted with input from the Board of Trustees, Senior Management, and other College constituencies. The Board analyzes the institutional purposes, mission, and values annually. SCCC/ATS has an opportunity to provide evidence as to how external stakeholders were included in the definition of mission and values.

**5P2, O.** The annual goals and direction for SCCC/ATS is a top-down driven model originating from the Board of Trustees and supported through the planning and budgeting process. Efforts have been made to distinguish the Board's high level oversight and guidance role from the role of the executive administration in leading the College to enact its strategic plan and fulfill its mission. Clarity regarding the Board's role in defining goals for the College (as distinguished from strategic planning processes and shorter-term decisions made by college leadership) will help ensure a broad sense of buy-in and participation in decision making at the College.

**5P3, S.** The portfolio documents the inclusive nature of strategic planning for internal constituency groups, and the strategic plan provides examples of "context mapping" that

is used to set institutional plans and priorities for how it will meet the needs of its students and stakeholders.

**5P4, S.** SCCC/ATS leaders guide the College in seeking future opportunities. Action projects demonstrate a connection to the strategic plan, and the institution's annual goals are used to prioritize new opportunities.

**5P5, S.** SCCC/ATS has a traditional organizational structure comprised of leadership and committees. Two action projects were deployed to improve the effectiveness of committee work and communication processes within committees and working groups. The initiative to analyze committee agendas and articulate goals for improved meeting effectiveness is a strong example of a culture of quality improvement.

**5P6, O.** SCCC/ATS describes the first steps in using data to drive decision making in its 'decision systems.' Opportunities may exist to create additional critical data via techniques for standardizing elements of data- and input-collection methods used at the department and unit level. The ability to aggregate elements of department- and unit-level data to achieve high-level data sets from internal operations will balance and inform analysis of national or comparative data sets.

**5P7, O.** The portfolio includes a listing of those SCCC/ATS representatives who contribute to organizational communication and the methods by which communication is delivered. There does not appear to be a formal process in place to ensure that information is shared at all levels of the institution or for leaders to communicate a shared mission, vision, and values. Additionally, an opportunity may exist for ongoing assessment and monitoring of the quality of communication as perceived by campus constituents.

**5P8, O.** While SCCC/ATS has a clearly defined mission and vision, the portfolio does not communicate how these statements impact performance and drive actions determined by SCCC/ATS's leadership.

**5P9, S.** The "effective meetings" emphasis at the SCCC/ATS, from an AQIP action project through the regular unit interactions that occur at the College, has resulted in productive and immediate strengthening of meeting effectiveness throughout campus and produced multiple action projects.

**5P10, S.** Data and anecdotal evidence were provided to indicate SCCC/ATS uses its AQIP action projects as a way to build leaders and to provide opportunity across the

institution. SCCC/ATS's focus on succession planning is grounded in a realistic review of institutional needs and community capabilities. The liberal use of action projects as a means of eliciting leadership abilities in employees, professional development grants for education, and the regular meeting of all supervisors to discuss policies and management issues all contribute to SCCC/ATS's support for developing human resources that can be tapped during times of leadership transitions.

**5R1, O.** SCCC/ATS identifies three categories of measures used to evaluate Leading and Communicating. The limited measures are internal and make comparisons to a peer set of other institutions in the state. Expanding the measures to include nationally normed data sets could provide valuable information for college leadership in its decision making processes.

**5R2, O.** The institution clearly appears to be using the feedback from office evaluation and meetings in the cycle of continuous improvement, and in most areas the portfolio provides information on administrative leadership. It does not make clear what the administrative office evaluations reveal.

**5R3, OO.** SCCC/ATS acknowledges it does not have comparative results in this category.

**5I1, S.** SCCC/ATS has devoted concerted attention to improving the institutional infrastructure of leading and communication via a wide array of activities. These include: the effective meetings and work process documentation initiatives, attention to communication and collaboration between units working to document work processes, efforts to define the scope and decision-making authority of all standing committees, and the practice of all supervisors meeting several times a semester to discuss policy and management issues in small working groups.

**5I2, S.** There is an identified path and process to select future processes for improvement. The considerable effort SCCC/ATS has invested in improvements under this category promise to nurture a climate of continuous improvement in leading and communicating.

**AQIP Category 6: Supporting Institutional Operations.** This category addresses the variety of institutional support processes that help to provide an environment in which learning can thrive. It examines the institution's processes and systems related to student support,

administrative support, identification of needs, contribution to student learning and accomplishing other distinctive objectives, day-to-day operations, use of data, measures, analysis of results, and efforts to continuously improve these areas. The Systems Appraisal Team identified various strengths and opportunities for Seward County Community College/Area Technical School for Category 6.

*Various teams in the College are beginning to design documentation and performance-measuring strategies to assess administrative and student-support processes. For instance, the work underway on advising could identify improvements to other student support services. Work remains to be done, however, to provide clear explanations of the processes used. Those responsible for given processes are identified, but the elements or steps of the processes themselves are not readily discernable. All service units, areas, and departments appear to have the means of monitoring the quality of services rendered; however, they do not appear to share common tools for looking across all units or service areas to evaluate the overall effectiveness in meeting support needs. Considerable effort has been made to build capacity for data use through the Data Integrity Project. This effort has been particularly useful for managing student information in the Banner system; however, the portfolio provides less information on how the Data Integrity Project has supported other non-academic operations such as purchasing, development, etc. In response to consultative advice in its last portfolio appraisal report (2010), the College added the Rave Alert to communicate closures, emergencies, and any other urgent information that needs to be distributed quickly to all interested parties. This helps ensure the safety and well-being of employees and students. The eSupport System, where issues and needs are reported, archived, and addressed, is an important tool for facilitating the meeting of needs related to facilities, and for allowing for the tracking, notification, and monitoring work progress.*

**6P1, O.** An opportunity exists to establish the identification of support service needs as part of ongoing strategic planning. While SCCC/ATS has methods that monitor the quality of support services for students, it is unclear how inputs of all the methods are coordinated. Given the Student Satisfaction Survey results, improving methods for identifying and monitoring student support needs is a significant opportunity for the College. It does not appear that the institution actively engages stakeholders, particularly external stakeholders, to assess their support service needs. SCCC/ATS may benefit from a more systematic method of gathering and utilizing data in this area.

**6P2, O.** There are established committees and working groups who identify administrative support service needs, but identifying needs does not appear to be a formalized process. While all service units, areas, and departments appear to have the means of monitoring the quality of administrative support services, an opportunity exists to develop techniques to look across all units and areas to evaluate effectiveness of specific support areas.

**6P3, S.** In response to the 2010 *Systems Portfolio Feedback Report*, SCCC/ATS updates its Emergency Procedures Manual annually, with support from the local police, sheriff, fire, and Emergency Medical Services units. The Manual is publicly available, as are data reports that ensure federal compliance with the Clery Act. In addition, SCCC/ATS established the Rave Alert system and conducts in-service sessions so that employees are prepared for emergencies.

**6P4, S.** There is collaboration across the campus for managing the support services between the Dean of Academic Affairs and the Dean of Student Services. Areas of responsibility are clearly identified, and ongoing AQIP Action projects in this area have supported process improvement.

**6P4, O.** SCCC/ATS has an eSupport System. This tool creates an eTicket, notifies the reporting party, addresses the matter, and then closes the eTicket and notifies the reporting party of the outcome. This tool provides an opportunity to analyze issues, concerns, and requests over time. The pilot non-instructional department review process should also permit SCCC/ATS to assess the effectiveness of processes that Supporting Institutional Operations via performance measures, continuous improvement strategies, and performance targets.

**6P5, S.** Improvements to data collection have been made to SCCC/ATS's Banner student information system (SIS) with a template and step-by-step directions for *Banner Data Entry Standards and Procedures* via the college wiki. Use of standards supports consistent formatting of data entry, entry of key operational information, and AQIP action projects. Creating clear and consistent documentation standards fosters employee empowerment and the transparent sharing of information connected to daily operations.

**6R1, S.** SCCC/ATS identifies two national instruments and one internal tracking method for monitoring effectiveness under this category.

**6R2-6R3, O.** The portfolio includes performance results for student support service processes from the Noel-Levitz and CCSSE inventories, along with Banner tracking of Disability Support Service usage. SCCC/ATS provides tabled results summaries data from two national surveys, Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory and CCSSE. The decline in student satisfaction is noted in several areas. However, no analysis of the qualitative or quantitative data was provided. SCCC/ATS has an opportunity to document collection of additional data, analysis of data collected, and the use of data for targeted improvements. Future portfolios would be enhanced by describing how the SSI and CCSSE data are segmented to enable the deans to identify where specific improvements need to be made.

**6R4, O.** SCCC/ATS identifies how the process for performance results improvement should work and gives a limited example of how they apply it institutionally. One example of process was provided on how improvements are recognized. SCCC/ATS states that Noel-Levitz Academic Services and Campus Support Services declines are addressed by the Retention Committee, and performance results are provided to specific deans to determine if action is warranted. An opportunity exists to provide clarity on how results are used to effect improvements and to outline how the deans' efforts fit into the retention committee work.

**6R5, O.** SCCC/ATS has an opportunity to better explain and discuss what processes it uses in comparison of the results it collects. Collecting data is important; reviewing and making sense of it crucial. Data in 6R1-6R4 are presented, but it was unclear in this review what this data meant to the institution, and next steps connected to data presented were not provided.

**6I1-6I2, O.** The development of a non-instructional department review process and the Data Integrity Action Projects Phase I and Phase II are evidence that SCCC/ATS is making progress in assessing its performance in this category. SCCC/ATS has the opportunity to create a culture where these initiatives guide continuous improvement efforts around Supporting Institutional Operations. SCCC/ATS would benefit from the development of a system-wide, comprehensive structure for the assessment of this category.

**AQIP Category 7: Measuring Effectiveness.** This category examines how the institution collects, analyzes, and uses information to manage itself and to drive performance

improvement. It examines the institution's processes and systems related to collection, storage, management, and use of information and data both at the institutional and departmental/unit levels. It considers institutional measures of effectiveness; information and data alignment with institutional needs and directions; comparative information and data; analysis of information and data; effectiveness of information system and processes; measures; analysis of results; and efforts to continuously improve these areas. The Systems Appraisal Team identified various strengths and opportunities for Seward County Community College/Area Technical School for Category 7.

*SCCC/ATS uses nationally normed data sets to assess student engagement and achievement, and its ability to improve in its efforts for Measuring Effectiveness depend on these broad surveys and standardized student achievement tests. Moreover, SCCC/ATS benchmarks itself against peer groups and uses scorecards that are linked “to specific committee goals and action projects, institutional goals and KBOR Performance Agreement performance indicators.” Less clear is how readily administrators, chairs, and directors at all levels of the institution can get the data needed to guide daily operations or semester-level planning, or how closely aligned the data available is with the unit- and department-level goals set through the strategic planning process. Important foundational steps toward data consistency, data integrity, and the implementation of a student information system are being taken at SCCC/ATS through the Phase I and Phase II Action Projects and have resulted in aligned reporting cycles. SCCC/ATS is also moving towards a scorecard and dashboard presentation of key data with common performance measures, data definitions and process documentation. SCCC/ATS has identified a comprehensive data set for academic program review which includes five-year trends and provides at-risk indicators, demographics, and graduation and transfer trends. Comparative data from NCCBP augment the internal data used in program review. Institutional characteristics pertaining to Category 7 that may merit attention include the collection and analysis of data pertaining to external stakeholders (e.g., employers) at an institutional level. For instance, better collection and analysis of employer input would help the College identify where to invest in program improvement and development.*

**7P1, O.** SCCC/ATS identifies many points for data collection--the vast majority of these are responding to mandated data collection or are a part of national projects that identify the data to be submitted. The portfolio does document how data are used for strategic planning, KBOR Performance Agreements, committee scorecard performance indicators, and academic program performance indicators. However, how data and

performance information coming from the data sets cited are segmented, analyzed and pushed out to administrators in a manner that supports operations and decision making is less unclear.

**7P2, S.** SCCC/ATS has established a process of “context mapping” whereby the Office of Assessment and Research assists in selecting and preparing key data relevant to specific planning tasks and action projects. Context maps are used by committees, action project teams, and other planning groups to inform decision making.

**7P3, O.** While SCCC/ATS has instituted action projects to determine data needs for areas such as program reviews, it is unclear that an ongoing process is in place to review and improve the meeting of data needs. Opportunities exist to enable administrators to access and compare data across all units, especially the program-review trend data and to evaluate whether administrators find the data residing in the secure database useful, readily accessible, and well aligned with their needs.

**7P4, S.** SCCC/ATS analyzes performance data and information on a regular basis and has identified two peer comparison groups. Additionally, SCCC/ATS has developed institutional indicators scorecard and dashboard to identify performance measures and peer or national comparisons from IPEDS, KBOR, NCCBP, Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory, CCSSE, and institutional and program assessment outcomes.

**7P5, O.** SCCC/ATS has formalized its processes for using comparative data by identifying key national data sets (e.g., CCSSE, SSI, NCCBP, IPEDS data, etc.) and by establishing two groups of peer institutions to use consistently. The institution might consider using other, more targeted measurement techniques and tools that more directly measure its specific processes to supplement the national results. In this way, the data/results obtained will more closely relate to the processes being measured, and thereby enhance SCCC/ATS’s ability to identify the specific improvements needed.

**7P6, O.** SCCC/ATS recognized an opportunity to improve the process for reviewing the performance of non-instructional departments. The new process is currently in the pilot stage.

**7P7, S.** The Data Integrity Action Project set standards for data entry and identified and documented work processes to ensure data integrity and continuity when employees leave. This process is applied to internal and external data. They have also

implemented use of the “What’s Up” service to alert IT professionals of any systems problems.

**7R1, S.** An information support audit, which is used to identify gaps in information support processes and measuring effectiveness, is used as a performance and effectiveness measure. Process documentation and tracking of data by the Office of Assessment & Research also support the collection and analysis of performance measures.

**7R2, O.** SCCC/ATS presents clear evidence of the improvement in SCCC/ATS’s efforts to reduce student ID duplication. While key recent targets have been met and data analyses have been completed, indicating the efficacy of those quality improvements, and expanding these successes throughout the institution will help align and integrate the values of measuring effectiveness with SCCC/ATS’s various units.

**7R3, OO.** Results presented do not provide evidence that SCCC/ATS’s processes for measuring effectiveness meets institutional needs in accordance with its mission and goals. Additionally, SCCC/ATS has an outstanding opportunity to identify comparative measures.

**7I1, S.** SCCC/ATS has been earnest in its commitment to AQIP quality processes, the KBOR Performance Agreement, and its own leadership for serving students. Successes include the high number of AQIP Action projects that can now benefit from clearer and more reliable data, as shown by the particular result of one such action project (Data Integrity).

**7I2, S.** SCCC/ATS is building capacity for data-driven decision making by examining and improving processes for data management and effective meetings. By improving the human dimension of good knowledge management (e.g., through the effective meetings and process documentation initiatives) as well as the technical side (e.g., through the information audit and the implementation of Tableau Desktop), SCCC/ATS is advancing a culture of measuring effectiveness.

**AQIP Category 8: Planning Continuous Improvement.** This category examines the institution’s planning processes and how strategies and action plans are helping to achieve the institution’s mission and vision. It examines coordination and alignment of strategies and action plans; measures and performance projections; resource needs; faculty, staff, and administrator

capabilities; analysis of performance projections and results; and efforts to continuously improve these areas. The Systems Appraisal Team identified various strengths and opportunities for Seward County Community College/Area Technical School for Category 8.

*Since its last portfolio, SCCC/ATS has focused improvement efforts on its strategic planning and annual goal-setting processes. The College describes how moving from a task-based approach to goal setting has required a shift in culture that now includes the use of standardized data sets, peer comparisons, and other trend and environmental scanning data to create forward-looking goals in alignment with the strategic plan. Over the 2011-2013 time period, SCCC/ATS matured its annual planning processes such that leadership is now able to work with standardized data sets, peer comparisons, and other trend and environmental scanning data to create forward-looking goals in alignment with the strategic plan. The College uses a 5-stage process to evaluate itself through the following lenses: learning and exploring, finding common ground, visioning, strategizing, and reviewing of systemic growth. The AQIP Action Project framework is used as the execution framework for turning planning outcomes into institutional structures and turning processes into reality. As SCCC/ATS further develops systemic planning processes across the College, efforts to develop a scorecard/dashboard system format could be expanded to communicate results and expectations. Improved processes for analyzing and sharing data may support needed efforts to tie work done at the departmental level back into the strategic plan and to communicate expectations down to all levels and units of the College. Also, as SCCC/ATS makes progress on improving its technical infrastructure, the College may wish to consider the type of technical infrastructure that can assist with review of policies and procedures and support financial planning.*

**8P1, S.** SCCC/ATS has made significant improvements in and refinements of its strategic planning process. Strategic planning is the primary planning process relied upon over the past five years. Formal visioning, consensus building, strategizing, and execution processes are followed and based upon the nine AQIP Categories as a topical framework. Three processes guide planning. The first is an internal process in which key planning processes are informed by the seven-year strategic plan. A representative group works with context maps to identify broad strategies (Bold Steps) for long-term strategies for this plan. The second is the selection by committees and teams of annual institutional goals that reflect short-term strategies. The third key planning process, based on the Kansas Board of Regents Performance Agreement, establishes six performance indicators. Action plans are then aligned with these planning processes.

**8P2, S.** Steps have been taken over 2011-13 to refine the annual planning process to generate short-term goals derived from the long-term Vision Elements and Bold Steps of the strategic plan. These administrative leadership charges are worked into strategies and specific action steps by committees and teams from across the College.

**8P3, S.** Action plans are developed as a result of department review or as a result of being framed as an AQIP action project. To get from a goal to strategies for goal achievement and then to specific actions to take, the team or committee responsible follows the framework of AQIP action projects to ensure the integrity of action plan execution.

**8P4, O.** The Office of Assessment and Research facilitates the planning process, tracks action plans across the institution, and assists with annual reporting. The alignment of the action plans, strategic vision, and SCCC/ATS's quality improvement efforts is relatively new and dependent on top-down management and oversight. As these processes continue, integrating them throughout the institution and building collaborative partnerships with external stakeholders, local employers, peer institutions, and similar organizations will build a consistent culture of quality improvement in even more units of the institution.

**8P5, O.** Comparative data sets from NCCBP and CCSSE have allowed SCCC/ATS to formalize processes for defining objectives and selecting measures for strategies and action plans. However, the College has the opportunity to identify measures at the divisional and unit level to more directly tie its improvement efforts to its performance.

**8P6, O.** The zero-based budgeting framework used by SCCC/ATS supports close alignment of action plans to resources as each unit and department must build budgets yearly and justify funding requests by aligning action plans with College goals and priorities. There is no discussion of the process through which the College provides resources for items that may occur outside of the strategic plan.

**8P7, O.** The Board of Trustees and the Dean's Council have identified nine key operational areas for risk assessment and use trend analyses to monitor these areas. However, there is no mention of SCCC/ATS's fraud risk assessment and it is unclear who, on site, monitors each of the areas to ensure that risk is minimized and what process is used to address a potential risk should one be detected. There is an

opportunity for SCCC/ATS leadership to integrate more comprehensive risk assessment into everyday campus operations.

**8P8, O.** SCCC/ATS uses its action projects to develop faculty and staff and seems to have an effective means of evaluating professional development needs through the use of committees and working groups or teams. The portfolio does not document the process by which needs identified in action plans for developing faculty, staff, and administrators are prioritized and linked to budget planning to address funding. Nor is it clear how needs are communicated to the Employee Development Committee or how accountability for professional development is assigned and monitored.

**8R2, O.** The portfolio documents positive performance results for strategies and action plans for both internal and KBOR performance agreements. Furthermore, a scorecard for institutional goals and the KBOR Performance Agreement Results offer evidence that SCCC/ATS tracks results for achieving institutional strategies and specific action plans. However, SCCC/ATS presents goals for 2010-11, 2011-2012, and 2012-2013 that are identified only as met. The metrics used are not identified so the degree of improvement/change is clear. The College has an opportunity to improve goals by identifying measurable results and clearer metrics.

**8R3, O.** Performance targets are set by the KBOR for the goals in the Performance Agreement, but no mention is made of performance targets for College goals. SCCC/ATS has an opportunity to build on KBOR performance targets by developing institutional performance targets.

**8R4, OO.** Developing collaborative partnerships with local employers, peer institutions, and similar organizations may help SCCC/ATS plan continuous improvement efforts that help meet internal and external performance expectations for the College and its students.

**8R5, O.** SCCC/ATS gauges the effectiveness of its planning processes based on the degree to which formal processes are deployed across campus; the use of data in planning; and the shift from the generation of tasks to the articulation of broader strategies and goals. Additionally, while the College intends to use recently established processes in order to embed comparative analyses into decision making, the portfolio does not identify a formal process by which planning processes and activities are

measured and evaluated or how that approach to continuous improvement is “double-looped.”

**8I1, S.** The application of the AQIP model to department review action items and the creation of an Office of Assessment and Research, are significant recent improvements under this category. Furthermore, The KBOR Scorecard could be used as a model as SCCC/ATS works to develop other measures of performance in this category.

**8I2, S.** A culture of systematic planning at SCCC/ATS is being cultivated as a result of high-level improvements (e.g., strategic planning) and lower-level capacity building (e.g., the effective meetings initiative and process documentation). Support units that serve SCCC/ATS quality improvement efforts have been bolstered through new management processes and data-driven analytic frameworks.

**AQIP Category 9: Building Collaborative Relationships.** This category examines the institution’s relationships – current and potential – to analyze how they contribute to the institution accomplishing its mission. It examines the institution's processes and systems related to identification of key internal and external collaborative relationships; alignment of key collaborative relationships; relationship creation, prioritization, and building; needs identification; internal relationships; measures; analysis of results; and efforts to continuously improve these areas. The Systems Appraisal Team identified various strengths and opportunities for Seward County Community College/Area Technical School for Category 9.

*SCCC/ATS acknowledges that its efforts for Building Collaborative Relationships with outside stakeholders have primarily been activity-based, dependent upon personal contact, and not yet matured into the development of processes that define and improve quality. SCCC/ATS has begun to formalize some collaborative relationships (as evidenced by the work with the petroleum industry, employer support for students in Allied Health Programs, and the eduKAN online consortium) and has categorized and identified the relationships that need to be tracked and evaluated. The College has an opportunity to gather information as to how well its relationships are serving the constituency groups identified and may be able to begin improvements in this category with a few data-collection initiatives that will allow the College to begin the examination of improvement efforts.*

**9P1, O.** SCCC/ATS has prioritized its relationships with high schools in its area and has expanded into eleven different communities through its Office of Outreach. Additionally

the College has institutionalized this process and prioritized where relationships might be built in alignment with the strategic plan. However, there exists an opportunity to develop a systematic approach to continuously explore and search for additional opportunities to create relationships with entities from which the College receives its students.

**9P2, O.** SCCC/ATS has strong relations with state-wide four-year institutions that accept SCCC/ATS students, but the relationships with entities that receive its students appear limited to CTE programs. The College does not have systematic processes for managing and improving relationships with entities that look to the College for employees.

**9P3-9P4, O.** SCCC/ATS has the opportunity to more fully integrate organizations that serve the College into its quality improvement efforts by prioritizing and building relationships with these service providers. Further the College may wish to consider how the Board could develop vendor recruitment guidelines and delegate the responsibility for vendor relationship management executive leadership.

**9P5, O.** In an effort to provide better opportunities to students, SCCC/ATS has developed mutually beneficial relationships with neighboring community colleges to offer courses with traditionally low enrollment and courses in disciplines where faculty are difficult to hire. However, little evidence exists that SCCC/ATS employs a systematic approach to selecting, prioritizing, and building strategic partnerships with the educational associations, external agencies, consortia partners and the general community.

**9P6, O.** When it does engage in collaborative relationships, SCCC/ATS establishes formal written agreements with partners that create formal agreements that express intended needs and expectations for responsibilities and communication. Without establishing measures to evaluate these agreements, It is unclear how formal agreements meet the needs of stakeholders.

**9P7, S.** SCCC/ATS has an extensive committee structure linked to its strategic plan. That structure and multiple efforts to improve effective meetings and decision making at the College over the last four years illustrate SCCC/ATS's value in productive partnerships and relationships between its departments. Ongoing and annual reviews continue to align needs of the institution with committee composition.

**9R1-9R2, OO.** SCCC/ATS only has articulation agreements as measures for creating,

prioritizing and building relationships. SCCC/ATS has the opportunity to establish measures and analyze results from within its own collaborative relationships and from without by comparing its performance results with peer institutions. Forming cohorts with such peer institutions may help the College select measures and determine partnership opportunities.

**9R3, OO.** No comparative data were supplied. SCCC/ATS has an outstanding opportunity to identify comparative measures for Building Collaborative Relationships.

**9I1, O.** SCCC/ATS is in the early stages of developing processes for this category. The improved relationships that have developed from the committee work on AQIP Action projects, grant projects, and other internal efforts at SCCC/ATS provide the College with a model for effective partnerships. SCCC/ATS has not progressed as far as might be expected in its ability to build collaborative relationships. SCCC/ATS would benefit from developing a systematic and comprehensive approach that would provide metrics for results in a manner that would allow for comparison to other institutions.

**9I2, O.** Continuous improvement efforts in the planning process and departmental review are positive first steps to improvement in this category. SCCC/ATS is optimistic that a non-instructional department review can provide the model, once developed, for other departments and programs to increase the productivity and usefulness of its collaborative relationships.

**Accreditation Evidence Seward County Community College / Area Technical School**

The following section identifies any areas in the judgment of the Systems Appraisal Team where the institution either has not provided sufficient evidence that it currently meets the Commission’s Criteria for Accreditation and Core Components, or that it may face difficulty in meeting the Criteria and Core Components in the future. Identification of any such deficiencies as part of the Systems Appraisal process affords the institution the opportunity to remedy the problem prior to Reaffirmation of Accreditation.

No evidence issues noted by the team.

Criterion 1: Evidence found in the Systems Portfolio	Core Component			
	1A	1B	1C	1D
Strong, clear, and well-presented.	X	X	X	X

Adequate but could be improved.					
Unclear or incomplete.					
Criterion 2: Evidence found in the Systems Portfolio	Core Component				
	2A	2B	2C	2D	2E
Strong, clear, and well-presented.					
Adequate but could be improved.	X	X	X	X	X
Unclear or incomplete.					
Criterion 3: Evidence found in the Systems Portfolio	Core Component				
	3A	3B	3C	3D	3E
Strong, clear, and well-presented.	X	X	X	X	
Adequate but could be improved.					X
Unclear or incomplete.					
Criterion 4: Evidence found in the Systems Portfolio	Core Component				
	4A	4B	4C		
Strong, clear, and well-presented.	X	X	X		
Adequate but could be improved.					
Unclear or incomplete.					
Criterion 5: Evidence found in the Systems Portfolio	Core Component				
	5A	5B	5C	5D	
Strong, clear, and well-presented.	X	X	X		
Adequate but could be improved.				X	
Unclear or incomplete.					

**1P1 & 1P2. HLC Core Component 3.B. *The institution demonstrates that the exercise of intellectual inquiry and the acquisition, application, and integration of broad learning and skills are integral to its educational programs.***

- The College follows the Kansas Board of Regents’ credit hour requirements and sets general education expectations and specific discipline expectations within these state-wide requirements. These credit hour offerings lead students towards Associate degrees in the Arts, Science, Applied Science, and, for those not meeting the Board of Regents’ requirements by fulfilling a large set of SCCC/ATS credit hours, the General Studies. These degrees combine basic skills, humanities and sciences, and specific focuses.
- An Assessment Committee directs the selection and oversight of student learning outcomes for all degree-seeking students in coordination with the policies directed by the Kansas Board of Regents. Nine general leaning outcomes apply to all programs and course offerings, and these outcomes place a strong emphasis on “analyzing and communicating information inquiry, and adaptable skills.” Two of the nine general learning outcomes directly emphasize cultural diversity and respect for the human.

Multiple initiatives and policies within the developmental and credit programs support this commitment to intellectual acquisition.

- SCCC/ATS's Academic Affairs Council manages the college's general education philosophy, which it publishes widely, and reviews annually new/revised program and course requests for alignment with the mission and philosophy of the College.

**1P2 & 1P18. HLC Core Component *4.B. The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning.***

- SCCC/ATS has established nine (9) general student learning and development outcomes and has charged the Assessment Committee with designing and institution-wide processes for assessing achievement in these outcomes, including methods, tools (e.g., TrackDat), benchmarks, targets, and a curriculum map.
- The Assessment Committee assists individual programs as they design more specific processes for assessing their offerings. The Committee has a wide reach of involvement of faculty and administrators, and the Assessment Plan utilizes multiple tests and surveys, including many national products, in order to ensure accuracy and objectivity. The College also has an Office of Assessment and Research. A recent example of an improvement in these activities is the completion of a curriculum map and a scorecard system in 2013.
- The Assessment Plan completed in 2013 includes a scorecard system that articulates when key activities, such as broad national tests and surveys, are assessed and collected. These results have been tabulated into a baseline and benchmarks have been made for many of the key results. Targets have been set for and the College is committed to the plan annually for the next three years, at which time the targets are expected to have been met.

**1P4 & 1P10. HLC Core Component *1.C. The institution understands the relationship between its mission and the diversity of society.***

- SCCC/ATS uses two frameworks to service diverse learners through instructional methodology: Creating Significant Learning Experiences (L. Dee Fink) and Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Faculty and instructional design support staff attend to diverse learners by adapting content and instructional methodology for multiple learning modalities. Programs document their practices and design processes through the

program review process described in 1P13. Faculty learning communities provide an important element for addressing diverse learners.

- The portfolio links initiatives designed to meet the needs of student sub-groups with institutional documents that support the initiative, such as the SCCC/ATS Strategic Plan, the Kansas Board of Regents Performance Agreement, HIS-STEM grant objectives, A-OK grant objectives, TRiO performance indicators, Title V grant objectives, AQIP action projects and Academic Affairs Council goals.
- Using the institutional student learning and development outcomes as a guide, SCCC/ATS designs programs to provide a place to nurture various ways of knowing and to support different types of knowledge where students may encounter diversity and conflicting viewpoints. The program and course design processes have specific steps to assure alignment with the institutional philosophy and student learning outcomes.

**1P4 & 1P12. HLC Core Component 3.A. *The institution's degree programs are appropriate to higher education.***

- SCCC/ATS differentiates between associated degree and certificate level learning goals based on the requirements of program certification and accreditation agencies, the Kansas Board of Regents Career and Technical Education curriculum alignment process, and the Kansas Board of Regents Core Outcomes Project. According to the portfolio, levels of performance (certificate/associate) are listed in the syllabi, which the Academic Affairs Council reviews to ensure both currency and comparability with other institutions. Further, levels of learning are differentiated based upon guidelines from accrediting agencies, the Kansas Board of Regents Career and Technical Education curriculum alignment guidelines, and the Kansas Board of Regents Core Outcomes Project.
- SCCC/ATS maintains consistency across all delivery modes, including dual-credit courses, by ensuring the same syllabi and texts are used across course sections, with the same anticipated student learning outcomes and expectations for teaching.
- The Academic Affairs Council review to assure that courses and programs meet the levels of performance appropriate to the degree or certificate awarded, and the currency of courses and programs is addressed through the five-year program review process.

**1P4 & 1P13. HLC Core Component 4.A. *The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs.***

- SCCC/ATS has a recently revised academic program review process that includes peer review and runs on a five-year cycle. The review addresses core AQIP processes from Category 1, Category 3, and Category 5 within the program. By March 2014 the College expects that nearly 70% of the academic programs will have participated in the revised program review process.
- Transfer-of-credit evaluations follow Kansas Board of Regents policy and statewide articulation agreements; the registrar, in conjunction with division chairs and faculty from the respective discipline, ensures justification of the credit award and appropriate documentation.

**1P6.** HLC Core Component **2.B.** *The institution presents itself clearly and completely to its students and to the public with regard to its programs, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, control, and accreditation relationships.*

- The academic programs and the Offices of Student Services and Public Information collaborate to prepare and present vital expectations, costs, and requirements of its programs. These communications include directing new and returning students to formal advising, publicizing a course catalog and course syllabi in print and online, and promoting student supports such as Student Life and the Student Government Association. SCCC/ATS's website has a link for Future Students and Current Students that communicates key consumer information.
- Specific program guides in both web and hard-copy format illustrate the preparation required for success in the respective program, and enrollment tabloids and announcements from the Public Information office target a more general audience.
- Consumer information and compliance with the Student Right to Know and Campus Security Act can be found on SCCC/ATS website under the Future Students and Current Students tabs. Information includes programs, requirements, faculty and staff, costs, and accreditation. SCCC/ATS portrays itself with transparency to the public and to its students.

**1P7 & 1P15.** HLC Core Component **3.D.** *The institution provides support for student learning and effective teaching.*

- SCCC/ATS supports students through advising and tutoring, and this approach has been given the name "Advising as Teaching." A First Year seminar, a STEM coordinator, a TRIO program within Student Services, regional college fairs and a

Transfer Coordinator, and a college-wide effort to assess the advising program evidence a focus on providing support for student learning.

- Underway is an initiative led by the Retention Committee to evaluate the effectiveness of advising and to better coordinate the various support services and points of contact students have for matters concerning advising.

**1P11. HLC Core Component 2.D *The institution is committed to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning.***

- The SCCC/ATS Board of Trustees has published an Institutional Integrity Policy that states “Experimentation and originality are integral to the process of educational achievement; they should be more than encouraged—they should be sponsored.” Further, the mission statement cites the institution’s commitment to fostering creativity and experimentation.

**1P11 and 4P7. HLC Core Component 2.E. *The institution ensures that faculty, students, and staff acquire, discover, and apply knowledge responsibly.***

- SCCC/ATS ensures the acquisition and application of knowledge occurs among faculty and students through a commitment to ethics. Students receive training in the ethics of education and knowledge through the First-Year Seminar, faculty policy statements, and thorough a clearly defined Honor Code and Cheating Policy. The faculty supports these efforts through defined statements in each syllabus communicating guidelines and repercussions for ethical and non-ethical academic work, and the students also receive clear statements regarding their rights to due process. Staff members receive clear guidelines relating to their conduct and, if accused of violating work rules or the institution’s Integrity Policy, their rights to due process.

**1P16. HLC Core Component 3.E. *The institution fulfills the claims it makes for an enriched educational environment.***

- SCCC/ATS offers an intramural sports program, a Student Government Association, an honors organization and many student clubs.
- Efforts are planned or underway to align their student learning outcomes with the institutional outcomes, including co-curricular development goals. The process is not yet formalized, co-curricular development goals are not yet complete, and evidence regarding this Core Component could be improved.

**3P1. HLC Core Component 4.C. *The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational improvement through ongoing attention to retention, persistence, and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs.***

- SCCC/ATS has initiated five action projects focused on improving student retention, and it has recently contracted with two national college student survey organizations (CCSSE and Noel-Levitz) to better understand student's engagement and satisfaction. The results from the Action projects, the national surveys, student course success rates, and the continued progress of students--including persistence from semester-to-semester and fall-to-fall, and culminating in graduation, and certificate completion--have been analyzed with a focus on quality improvements. The steady upward progress of Hispanic student retention rates is a positive trend that illustrates SCCC/ATS's commitment to its students and its ability to target specific needs.
- As a minority-serving institution, SCCC/ATS has adapted an Equity Scorecard approach for data analysis and policy/procedure review. The Equity Scorecard identifies gaps in performance, and all data are disaggregated by race/ethnicity, full-time/part-time status, age, and gender.
- The Retention Committee guides continuous improvement of student retention and completion at SCCC/ATS by establishes short- and long-term goals each year and conducting comparative analysis with other institutions using CCSSE, the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory, the National Student Clearinghouse, and NCCBP data.

**3P3 & 3P5. HLC Core Component 1.D. *The institution's mission demonstrates commitment to the public good.***

- SCCC/ATS determines community stakeholder needs through its strategic planning process, advisory board meetings, reports from transfer institution, high school surveys, informal conversations with stakeholders, and the program review process.
- SCCC/ATS provides space for a variety of community events including performing arts and provides free admission to athletics events.
- SCCC/ATS strongly encourages employees to actively participate in community groups, such as the Joint Economic Development Council, Chambers of Commerce in outreach communities, and joint sessions of the Seward County Commission and City Council.

- The SCCC/ATS mission, philosophy, and purposes characterize public good as collaborative relationships, supporting diversity, community service, and improving the quality of life. SCCC/ATS has emphasized addressing the needs of underrepresented groups, and has focused successfully on improving the retention and completion of Hispanic students. Other initiatives that contribute to the public good include the At-Risk project, expansion of the contract training program, and the Medical Assistant Program.
- SCCC/ATS has received funding from the US DoE to establish academic programs in energy, agriculture, and natural gas. And the development of the natural gas compressor technology program involved collaboration between the College and industry leaders to design a program to meet the specific needs of the industry.

**4P2 & 4P10 HLC Core Component 3.C. *The institution has the faculty and staff needed for effective, high-quality programs and student services.***

- The Kansas Board of Regents establishes credentialing standards and SCCC/ATS adheres to those standards. Seventy-Seven (77) percent of credit hours are taught by full-time faculty. That places the College in the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile for full-time faculty teaching classes. All full-time faculty members undergo annual reviews to ensure they are current in their disciplines and meeting expectations for teaching and advising.
- Full-time faculty members and division chairs review the credentials of adjunct faculty to assure compliance with Kansas Board of Regents policy. Full-time instructors also work with adjuncts on assessment of student learning and curriculum alignment.
- On its web site, SCCC/ATS has AA/EOE statements that indicate the College is “especially interested in candidate[s] who can contribute to diversity and excellence” through teaching and/or service.

**4P7 HLC Core Component 2.A *The institution operates with integrity in its financial, academic, personnel, and auxiliary functions; it establishes and follows fair and ethical policies and processes for its governing board, administration, faculty, and staff.***

- The SCCC/ATS institutional integrity policy establishes ethical guidelines and expectations for the Board of Trustees, administration, faculty, and staff. The policy communicates to all employees that the fundamental contributions of education to society demand commitment to exemplary values and ethical character. Additionally the College has established 21 specific policies to ensure ethical practice guides decision making. Employees acting in violation of the rules, regulations, and policies of the

institution are subject to disciplinary action or termination through due process as set forth in K.S.A. 72-5439.

- Ethical use of information resources is addressed through three methodologies. First Year Seminar students participate in a training session led by library personnel, faculty provide class policies as well as examples of ethical information use and incorporate the information literacy student learning outcome rubric to communicate ethical use expectations, the college Honor Code and Cheating Policy identifies examples of unethical use of information resources.
- The SCCC/ATS personnel evaluation system is designed by a committee consisting of representatives from all areas of campus. All evaluation forms and supervisor guides are located under the Human Resources link on the college website. Supervisors and employees periodically review individual evaluation tools and associated processes. As an example, in 2012 the Supervisor Group reviewed and recommended changes to the staff evaluation criteria and descriptors.

**5P1 & 5P2. HLC Core Component *1.A The institution's mission is broadly understood within the institution and guides its operations.***

- The mission statement was developed through an inclusive process that included input from the Board of Trustees, administration, faculty, staff, students, and stakeholders. A history-and values-identification activity can be used as a kick-off to the strategic planning process. The mission is reviewed annually during the planning process.
- SCCC/ATS's enrollment profile is consistent with its service area, which is heavily Hispanic. SCCC/ATS is designated as an Hispanic-Serving institution, which is consistent with its mission.
- The associate and certificate programs listed for SCCC/ATS are consistent with its stated mission.
- SCCC/ATS has 5 academic divisions offering programs consistent with the college's mission. The academic divisions and their programs address the mission and the following institutional purposes: College/University Transfer, Career and Technical Education, General Education, Developmental Education, Continuing Education/Community Service.
- Although the portfolio uses cross-referencing between Categories 5 and 8 to address

1A3, clearer evidence could be provided to document how the institution's planning and budgeting priorities align with and support the mission.

**5P2 & 5P6. Core Component 5.C. *The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning.***

- SCCC/ATS has moved from a task-oriented approach to a more goal-oriented approach in terms of its annual planning. Planning and budgeting priorities are developed through the institutional goal and annual planning processes, and the Board reviews progress toward annual goals on a monthly basis. Additionally, the College emphasizes "context mapping" to anticipate emerging factors and incorporate those factors into planning.
- Assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning, and budgeting are linked vertically through the academic program review process, non-instructional departmental review process, and annual budgeting process. The strategic plan and the development of annual institutional goals provide horizontal linkage across the institution. As part of its zero-based budgeting process, programs and departments justify their budget requests through linkage to the strategic plan and institutional goals.
- Additional evidence could be provided as to how the institution allocates its resources in alignment with its mission and priorities. Greater detail on how data generated from academic program review, departmental review, assessment of student learning, and evaluation of operations are used for budget allocation would have been helpful.

**5P2. HLC Core Component 2.C. *The governing board of the institution is sufficiently autonomous to make decisions in the best interest of the institution and to assure its integrity.***

- SCCC/ATS board members are elected officials in the state of Kansas and are governed by state statute Chapter 75, Article 43 (conflict of interest). The Board of Trustees has an institutional integrity policy that defines Trustee conduct and serves to preserve Board autonomy.
- The President oversees day to day operations of SCCC/ATS with Administrators being responsible for employees, operations and day to day transactions.
- The presentation of evidence could be strengthened by listing the names of the Board of Trustee members, their responsibilities to the full board, and any sub-committee assignments.

**5P3 & 5P8. HLC Core Component 1.B. *The mission is articulated publicly.***

- SCCC/ATS makes its mission statement, purposes, philosophy, values, and vision available to the public through the college catalog, website, on plaques posted in college buildings, and through various print and electronic media.
- The strategic plan is available on the college website.
- The institutional goals and annual plan documents are available through the Office of Assessment and Research wiki.

**5P5 & 5P9. HLC Core Component 5.B. *The institution's governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the institution to fulfill its mission.***

- The portfolio documents the institutional structure used for decision making; it is consistent with established practices. This structure includes processes for decision making governed by state statute and local policy and procedure. Teams and work groups may work independently or may be assigned projects through standing committees. In either case, information needed for decision-making flows from the work group or advisory board to the appropriate standing committee and then to Dean's Council.
- Since its last systems portfolio and appraisal, SCCC/ATS has completed or begun 43 AQIP action projects. The teams supervising these initiatives often work independently or in committee. In particular, two projects focused on building effective leadership and supporting collaborative processes: a Phase I project developed a common set of practices for effective meetings, and a Phase II action project continued the emphasis on improved decision making, communication, and participant skill development by setting standards for meeting minutes and addressing meeting efficiency and productivity through goal identification, alignment with the strategic plan and annual goals, and annual plan development.
- SCCC/ATS uses as a guide for improving collaborative processes Garmston's and Wellman's *The Adaptive School: A Sourcebook for Developing Collaborative Groups*. The College also developed a sophisticated set of rubrics and survey questions to provide leaders feedback on meetings held and actions taken from collaborative group work. The teamwork and collaborative work processes at SCCC/ATS receive support from the Board of Trustees, has issued a clear policy statement regarding collaborative

leadership (Board Policy 302), and the Dean's Council and the Academic Affairs Council oversee faculty, staff, and administration initiatives and provide an approval process.

**7P2 & 7P4.** HLC Core Component **5.D. *The institution works systematically to improve its performance.***

- SCCC/ATS meets requirements and expectations from state and national agencies for identifying, collecting, and communicating data and performance results. A recently developed dashboard and scorecard system for presenting information, including the setting of targets, demonstrates systemic efforts for improvement are integral to SCCC/ATS's work design.
- SCCC/ATS has developed a sophisticated set of oversight checks for auditing data used throughout the institution. External formatting and insights have been incorporated from external mentors, recent AQIP action projects, regular program reviews, and various committees to ensure effectiveness and wide use. For instance, one recent action project, the student ID duplication audit, helps the College ensure accuracy and avoid redundancies.
- Some comparative data are used to describe the level of performance against a set of peer institutions, and improvements in the use of peer comparisons and external benchmarks will help improve evidence under this Core Component.

**8P6.** HLC Core Component **5.A. *The institution's resource base supports its current educational programs and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future.***

- SCCC/ATS resource allocation processes are delineated by Board of Trustees policy, approved by the Board, and implemented by administration, faculty, and staff. The administrative team manages the processes, ensuring that educational purposes have priority over other areas.
- SCCC/ATS uses a zero-based budgeting process, requiring each budget request to have a written justification, including a connection to the strategic plan.
- Monitoring of the budget by the Board of Trustees takes place on a monthly basis. Administrators, division chairs, directors, and program faculty can monitor their departmental or program expenditures and revenue availability at any time through the college finance data system.

- The primary reserve, viability, return on net assets, and net operating revenue ratios SCCC/ATS reports to the Higher Learning Commission in via the Annual Institutional Update have remained within acceptable levels during recent years.

## **Quality of Systems Portfolio for Seward County Community College / Area Technical School**

Because it stands as a reflection of the institution, the *Systems Portfolio* should be complete and coherent, and it should provide an open and honest self-analysis on the strengths and challenges facing the institution. In this section, the Systems Appraisal Team provides Seward County Community College / Area Technical School with constructive feedback on the overall quality of the portfolio, along with suggestions for improvement of future portfolio submissions.

Future portfolios would benefit from clearer explanations of the institution's processes. This holds true for the processes themselves as well as for the processes by which data and information are interpreted and applied to decision making. Those responsible for given processes are identified, but the elements or steps of the processes themselves are not readily available. The team identified several category item responses as poorly aligned with the questions asked. As a result of this frequent lack of explicitness, the team could not be certain whether the writing in the portfolio accurately reflects how things work at SCCC/ATS.

Information and details in Category 1 of the portfolio were stronger than other category sections. While focusing deliberately on one or several AQIP categories at a time appears to have served SCCC/ATS well in terms of successful improvements in key areas (such as *Helping Students Learn*), SCCC/ATS may wish to balance its presentation of its work under all nine categories to ensure that the progress being made across all areas of campus is represented.

More assiduous use of embedded links to documentation and support for assertions made in the portfolio would have helped the team confirm the presence of strong evidence for the meeting of the Criteria and Core Components.

## **Using the Feedback Report**

The AQIP Systems Appraisal process is intended to initiate action for institutional improvement. Though decisions about specific actions rest with each institution, the Commission expects

every institution to use its feedback to stimulate cycles of continual improvement and to inform future AQIP processes.

Some key questions that may arise in careful examination of this report may include: How do the team's findings challenge our assumptions about ourselves? Given our mission and goals, which issues should we focus on? How will we employ results to innovate, grow, and encourage a positive culture of improvement? How will we incorporate lessons learned from this review in our planning and operational processes? How will we revise the *Systems Portfolio* to reflect what we have learned? How an institution interprets, communicates, and uses its feedback for improvement ought to support AQIP's core values, encouraging involvement, learning, collaboration, and integrity.

The Commission's goal is to help an institution clarify the strategic issues most vital to its success, and then to support the institution as it addresses these priorities in ways that will make a difference in institutional performance.