



# Mid-Cycle Self-Evaluation Report

## **South Puget Sound Community College**

Prepared for the  
Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities  
October 28, 2021

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## **ACCREDITATION UPDATE**

South Puget Sound Community College (SPSCC) was evaluated by Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities in fall 2018 for Mission Fulfillment and Sustainability. SPSCC was granted continued accreditation in January 2019. During the evaluation visit, SPSCC received two recommendations to be addressed in an addendum in this mid-cycle self-report. The two recommendations that required improvement were:

1. Review the objectives for its core themes and develop meaningful, assessable and verifiable indicators of achievement that form the basis for evaluating mission fulfillment and that support decision-making in the planning and allocation of resources (Standards 1.B.2, 4.A.1 and 4.B 1).
2. Develop an effective, regular, and comprehensive system of evaluation for student achievement and the assessment of student learning, and utilize the results of these efforts to plan, support, and enhance future practice (Standard 4.A.3 and 4.B.2).

See Addendum A for the response to the two recommendations.

## **INSTITUTIONAL OVERVIEW**

SPSCC is a public two-year institution of higher education that provides transfer, professional-technical, pre-college, and transition studies curriculum to more than 9,800 students in 2019-20. Additionally, the college's corporate and continuing education program served more than 6,300 students in 2019-20. In fall 2020, 62% of SPSCC students were enrolled in academic transfer programs, 24% in workforce programs, and 7% in basic skills programs. The college also served 1,400 Running Start (Washington State's dual high school/college program) students. The average student age is 26, and 36% are students of color.

SPSCC is one of thirty-four Washington State community and technical colleges. The college has been a vital institution in the Olympia, Washington, community since it was founded as Olympia Vocational Technical Institute (OVTI) in 1962. OVTI subsequently merged with Centralia College in 1967, changed its name to Olympia Technical Community College in 1976, and adopted its current name of South Puget Sound Community College in 1984. The college serves students on its main Mottman Road campus and a campus located in nearby Lacey, Washington. Additionally, SPSCC has a Craft Brewing and Distilling instructional facility located in Tumwater, Washington, that is partnered with the City of Tumwater and private brewing and distilling industry partners and a center for health education near the Mottman campus.

## MISSION FULFILLMENT

### Mission, Vision, Values, and Commitment to Diversity

#### **Mission:**

SPSCC's mission is to support student success in postsecondary academic transfer and workforce education that responds to the needs of the South Puget Sound region.

#### **Vision:**

SPSCC supports student success and builds prosperity by collaborating with the community and our partners to offer innovative, accessible, and affordable learning experiences. We embrace all of our students and the diversity of their goals. We employ devoted people who mirror the diversity of our community and contribute to an inclusive and welcoming environment. By investing in the talent and creativity of our staff and faculty, we construct clear and compelling pathways that lead our students to successful outcomes. We strive to be fiscally responsible. Our strategic use of technology embedded in purposeful instruction helps students persist and achieve their academic goals.

Our graduating class reflects the community we serve, and our students successfully transition from higher learning into the leaders and innovators of tomorrow.

#### **Values:**

**Pursues excellence** – We use our resources responsibly and ethically in pursuit of excellence. We continuously improve our programs, services, and operations.

**Operates in an atmosphere of accountability and respect** – We work cooperatively in taking on challenges, making good decisions, helping each other be successful, and promoting respectful, open, and safe communication.

**Responds to and partners with the communities we serve** – We continually monitor and are responsive to the community's changing needs in an increasingly global economy. We seek opportunities for effective partnerships with community members, businesses, and organizations.

**Fosters inclusiveness at our campuses** – We honor diversity and encourage compassion for individual expression. We promote inclusiveness and equity on our campus and in the community.

**Provides student-centered education** – We facilitate student success by maximizing learning opportunities and reducing barriers. We provide resources to support students in achieving their goals.

#### **Commitment to Diversity:**

South Puget Sound Community College is a learning community that embodies social justice, equity and inclusion. SPSCC seeks to empower students, faculty and staff to fully participate in a society of increasingly diverse identities and experiences. SPSCC actively works to eliminate all forms of discrimination and provides an education that

reflects the diversity of our community and a deeper understanding of the dynamics of power and privilege that perpetuate inequity and inequality.

### **Three Core Themes: Our Framework for Continuous Improvement**

SPSCC has three core themes derived from our mission, vision, values and commitment to diversity: (1) Student Achievement; (2) Equity; and (3) Learning and Engagement. Each core theme has goals and indicators that measure achievement and progress. The Board of Trustees identifies mission fulfillment for SPSCC as 80% of core theme indicators meeting or exceeding the intended targets. In the second year of our current strategic plan cycle, 70% of our indicators meet mission fulfillment.

**Core Theme 1 – Student Achievement:** We prepare students for further education and employment.

- Goal 1: Increase student persistence.
- Goal 2: Increase certificate and degree completion in transfer and workforce programs.
- Goal 3: Increase job placement for workforce education students.

**Core Theme 2 – Equity:** Given the diversity of our changing community, we cultivate an environment that reduces barriers and removes equity gaps.

- Goal 1: Close equity gaps.
- Goal 2: Increase the ethnic diversity of faculty, staff, and administrative/exempt employees.

**Core Theme 3 – Learning and Engagement:** We create accessible and enriching student experiences.

- Goal 1: Enhance general education competency.
- Goal 2: Enhance quality student experiences and campus life activities.

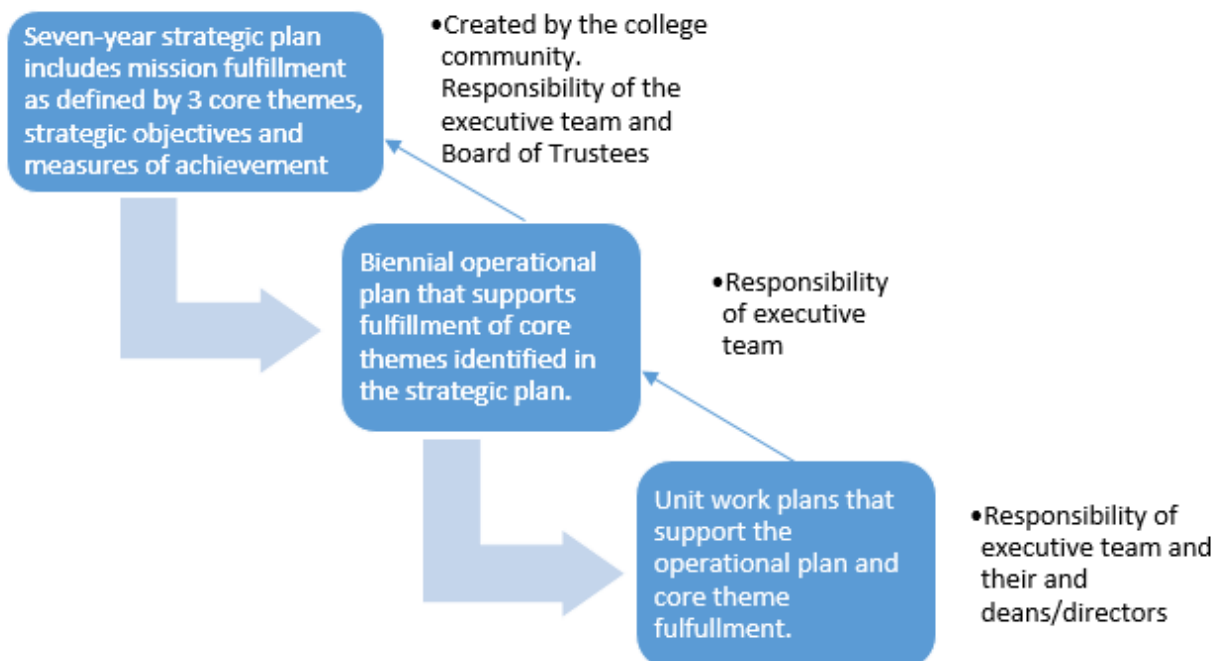
### **Strategic Plan: Institutional Assessment of our Core Themes**

SPSCC engages in inclusive ongoing and meaningful processes with the college community in planning, assessing, and improving our strategies to advance our three core themes, their goals and measures of achievement. Every seven years the college conducts a comprehensive strategic planning process which includes mission, vision, values, and commitment to diversity review, core theme development and revision, identification of strategic goals to support the core themes, and measurable achievement indicators to define mission fulfillment for each theme. Over the seven-year life of the plan, college faculty, staff, administrators, and Board of Trustees engage in ongoing review to advance mission fulfillment. The planning and ongoing assessment processes are:

- The college's [strategic plan](#) that consists of core themes, related strategic goals, and measurable achievement indicators are produced through a facilitated process involving the entire college community. This process was conducted in winter and spring of 2019. The facilitated process was led by a consultant and

included a Strategic Planning Committee that was comprised of executive leadership, President's Advisory Group members, Institutional Effectiveness Committee members and student government representatives. The Strategic Planning Committee drafted core themes and goals. The core themes and goals were shared with the college community for feedback and input through twenty-three "engagement sessions." Measures of achievement were drafted by the Institutional Effectiveness Committee. The Board of Trustees reviewed and provided feedback to the new draft strategic plan and our mission, vision, values and commitment to diversity statements. The final strategic plan was adopted by SPSCC's Board of Trustees in spring 2019.

- [Biennial operational plan](#) is the mechanism for implementing strategies that impact our three core themes, goals, and measures of achievement. The biennial operational plan, including prioritization of proposed strategies and allocation of resources to achieve mission fulfillment, are developed in the first year of the two-year cycle and adopted by the Board of Trustees. The strategy development process takes place in open college forums hosted by the President's Advisory Group. The Institutional Effectiveness Committee collects, reviews, and prioritizes all ideas before recommending operational plan strategies to the executive team, in the first year of the two-year plan. Each biennial operational plan strategy is reviewed and allocated appropriate resources and assigned to an executive team member who coordinates its implementation. The operational plan is reviewed quarterly by the executive team, annually by the Board of Trustees, and annually by the college community.
- [Annual unit work plans](#), are developed by the college's major work units under the supervision of executive team members and support operational plan strategies. Unit plans are reviewed by unit members several times a year. The alignment of planning processes is illustrated below.



## STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

SPSCC's strategic plan contains three core themes, seven goals, and twenty measures of achievement assessing student achievement and success. SPSCC uses student achievement data to evaluate the rates of retention, persistence, completions, post-college achievement, achievement gaps among student groups, student learning, and student life. The core themes, goals, indicators and measures of achievement are also available within the [strategic plan dashboard](#).

Benchmark comparisons are [publicly available](#) on the college's Institutional Research web page and are disaggregated by demographics specific to SPSCC strategic goals. Benchmark comparisons are new to the college and were introduced spring 2021 during the planning forums. The college participates in the Voluntary Framework of Accountability and publishes a [national comparison](#) of student achievement outcomes.

SPSCC takes advantage of student achievement outcome data available from Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) that align with our strategic plan Core Theme 1 measures for a [regional comparison](#). Regional benchmarks are compared with five sister colleges within the Washington State CTC system. The five selected institutions were chosen using fall 2019 enrollment data. Twenty-nine colleges were evaluated, excluding four technical colleges, based upon headcount, percent of full time students, percent of part time students, percent of students of color, percent of transfer, percent of professional/technical, percent of running start students, and the regional proximity to SPSCC. The five colleges that were selected as representing the best comparison to SPSCC are below.

College	Headcount	Regional	% FT	% PT	% SC	%Transfer	% Prof. Tech	% RS
SPSCC	6156		52%	48%	32%	47%	30%	22%
Olympic	6976	Maybe	55%	45%	34%	45%	46%	16%
Tacoma	7429	Yes	54%	46%	35%	56%	24%	14%
Shoreline	6472	No	51%	49%	39%	45%	42%	7%
Whatcom	6348	No	39%	61%	26%	46%	23%	16%
Centralia	3986	Yes	44%	56%	26%	22%	34%	11%

## PROGRAMMATIC ASSESSMENT

SPSCC uses a comprehensive approach to creating and assessing student learning. Our institutional level assessment of student learning occurs through our Student Learning Assessment Committee (SLAC) process. SLAC is a sub-committee of SPSCC's Instructional Council and is responsible for creating, implementing, reviewing and improving the student learning assessment process. There are two components of student learning outcome assessment at SPSCC: (1) Assessment of the College Wide Abilities (CWAs) and (2) Assessment of disaggregated degree and course level student completion data. Faculty use a [data collection form](#) to gather, analyze and create plans for change for these two areas of assessment.

**Ongoing monitoring and improving processes:** The Student Learning Assessment Committee (SLAC) is a committee that is majority faculty and includes staff from the Center for Teaching and Online Learning, Institutional Research, and academic deans. This committee is responsible for the following functions:

- Develop rubrics and assessment processes for CWAs.
- Support faculty in evaluating course and degree level student assessment data and artifacts through training and workshops.
- Work with each academic program to ensure they are assessing CWA and disaggregated course and degree data and implementing actions to improve student learning based on these assessments.
- Work with Institutional Research and the Center for Teaching and Online Learning to collect and analyze assessment data including outcome assessments and student artifact collection.
- Review and make recommendations to the Vice President of Instruction and the Instructional Council regarding student learning outcomes and assessment processes, procedures and protocols.
- Create and submit a summary of the full student learning assessment [findings](#) (CWAs and degree and course-level data) to IC.

**College Wide Abilities Assessment:** Student attainment of the CWAs is part of SPSCC's strategic plan measures under core theme three. These measures are reviewed and monitored annually by the executive team, Board of Trustees and college community. [Analysis](#) of each ability by student demographic was shared with the college community during the operational planning presentation Spring 2021. Faculty are engaged in a more robust review and analysis of the CWAs through the SLAC process which results in changes to teaching and learning.

CWA definition and [assessment rubrics](#) are adopted by the faculty and monitored by SLAC for improvement of teaching and learning across disciplines and programs. There are five CWAs: communicate effectively (communicate), think logically and critically (critical thinking), evaluate and process quantitative and symbolic data (computation), understand themselves in relation to others in a multicultural world (multicultural awareness), and understand ethical responsibilities and consequences (ethics).

CWAs are incorporated into the college curriculum at two levels: in each course and in each degree. The CWAs are contextualized in professional and technical degree programs to provide alignment between the CWAs and program learning outcomes developed with industry partners. Faculty collect and analyze CWA findings using the data collection form. Findings inform faculty professional development goals and identify needed curriculum changes.

SPSCC faculty are able to analyze CWAs by individual ability, degree track, discipline/program, and student demographic. The CWA measures of achievement are available on the CWA [dashboard](#) for continuous analysis.



**The College Wide Ability review, analysis and improvement process.** Every year faculty collect data for the purposes of assessing student learning of our five CWAs. This process starts by faculty identifying the CWAs associated with their course learning outcomes. The selection of CWAs associated with courses is documented in the [course outline](#), which is reviewed by the Course Review Committee for alignment with program level outcomes and approved by the Instruction Council. Every quarter, faculty identify one or more summative assignments that assesses competence (as determined by the CWA rubric) for CWAs taught in the course.

Full-time and adjunct faculty attach the outcome rubrics to assessments within their courses. Faculty complete the accompanying rubric for each student to indicate whether the student met competence, didn't meet competence, or didn't attempt the relevant assignment associated with each CWA. Workshops are provided quarterly to assist faculty with the process, helping to design and implement summative assessments as well as to support the technical aspect of adding rubrics within the Canvas LMS.

The goal of our CWA assessment process is to have discipline/ program faculty groups compile their CWA course assessment results and conduct a trends analysis to determine gaps in students learning associated with the CWAs. Faculty's trend analysis and plan for improvement are put into the data collection form. The annual student learning assessment plan for improvement is also aligned with individual faculty members' professional development plan.

Progress to Date: During the launch and learning year in 2018-19, faculty collected three sets of artifacts pertaining to each CWA in their course: one artifact example from a student who met the CWA; one artifact example from a student who did not meet the CWA; and one artifact example from a student that was in the middle. Faculty met in spring of 2019 in cross-discipline groups to review examples of artifacts and discuss how they were assessing a designated CWA: critical thinking. This first annual review informed the need to improve the process at the course and college levels. It became apparent that some courses were including too many of the CWAs to be assessed effectively, which led to updated courses that more appropriately aligned CWAs with course outcomes. Additionally, faculty were able to develop shared understanding across disciplines, but also within programs and disciplines, about course assessment design and implementation of CWAs.

During the 2019-20 academic year, we learned that a data dashboard related to CWAs, much like our student completion data dashboard, would greatly enhance CWA analysis. We also trained all faculty and adjuncts in the collection of CWA evidence and artifacts in Canvas. Work began on a new data dashboard. Our process was interrupted and not able to fully occur because of the response to COVID.

This past academic year, 2020-21, we conducted our first comprehensive review and analysis of CWAs by discipline or degree. The new CWA dashboard is user friendly and provided quality data for review and analysis.

**Assessment of disaggregated degree and course level student completion:**  
Faculty have easily adapted to the review of their course and discipline student

retention and completion data. Each year, faculty from disciplines and programs meet to review student success (course, discipline and degree completion) and equity gap data related to disaggregate student demographics. The data collection form includes disaggregated demographic enrollment information, course success data, and program completion data. Faculty develop action plans based on program or discipline area level data. Faculty use the goals developed in these action plans to inform their individual professional development goals and to identify needed curriculum changes.

We have selected two programs to provide an example of our assessment processes of CWAs and disaggregated student completion: English as a Second Language program and Math as a discipline. These two examples are presented below.

### **Program Assessment Example 1: English as a Second Language (ESL)**

Students enter English as a Second Language (ESL) courses with the intention of growing their skills to find employment and/or transition to college to pursue a degree or certificate. ESL instructors work to support student goals and develop a system for assessing readiness for students to move to each level within the ESL program structure. The most current program assessment of CWAs and disaggregated data can be found in our [2020-21 data analysis](#).

College Wide Abilities Assessments: In 2018-19, only 65 student artifacts were reviewed and the review prompted faculty to change course outlines to make the CWAs more accurately reflect the outcomes of those courses and program assessment and priorities. CWA artifacts were reviewed from the collection in Canvas.

The Student Learning Assessment process was not conducted in spring 2019-20 due to an immediate college response to the onset of the COVID pandemic.

In the 2020-2021 assessment of CWAs, faculty were able to use the new data dashboard that had CWA information from previous years. The faculty found that in 2018-19, the ESL program had a 90% met rate but only 65 student artifacts were reviewed. In 2019-20, 1,129 artifacts were reviewed with an 84% met rate for all CWAs. The increase in artifacts was due to adjuncts participating in the process. To increase the number of students who meet the CWA, the department decided to make sure all ESL instructors are familiar with high impact practices such as TILT, Trauma Informed Teaching, Universal Design Strategies, and Digital literacy. In addition, the department needs to conduct CWA assessment norming so that all faculty share the same understanding of assessing a CWA at a basic skills level. The faculty, full-time and adjunct, have begun work to norm assessments as a department to ensure that all faculty have a shared understanding of the CWAs and how they are being assessed.

Disaggregated Data Assessments: The [2018-19 data analysis](#) of disaggregated student course and program completion revealed the following areas needing improvement: digital literacy, course success rates, and course completion rates. Program level changes to address findings included:

- The addition of a zero-week orientation.
- A specially developed digital literacy support course.

- Expanded pathways to account for the more varied abilities.
- Increased embedded tutoring.
- Increased professional development for adjuncts, particularly around issues of equity.
- Differentiated their grading system to provide a baseline for future data analysis and better alignment with the ESL course design—using a system of P (progress but not completion) and S (completion of an ESL level).

The Student Learning Assessment process was not conducted in spring 2019-20 due to an immediate college response to the onset of the COVID pandemic.

In the 2020-21 assessment of disaggregated data, the ESL program showed improvement with an 81% success rate which is an increase from the previous two years. Institutional research created a specific ESL data dashboard for tracking student success based upon the new progress monitoring system. Areas for improvement in this year's analysis include attention to success rates for hybrid/online courses due to the swift move to remote instruction that was caused by the COVID pandemic.

### **Program Assessment Example 2: Math**

For many students at SPSCC, math has been a barrier to on-time graduation. Like other community colleges, many of our students place into pre-college math when a college-level math course is required for degree completion. The most recent assessment of CWAs and disaggregated data can be found in the [math 2020-21 data analysis](#).

College Wide Abilities Assessments: As mentioned above, in 2018-2019 CWA assessment years, the faculty were collecting artifacts and attempting to understand how the assessment of the data could lead to improvements in courses. One of the gaps in our process is highlighted by the math example. Not all CWAs are embedded in math courses. The math courses are strongest in CWAs (1) think logically and critically and (2) evaluate and process quantitative and symbolic data. Therefore, review of CWAs as a whole is limited for this department. We did not conduct an assessment in 2019-20 due to the COVID pandemic. However, during the 2020-21 CWA assessment using the CWA dashboard, faculty found CWA met rates high with consistent improvement among all student groups. They are waiting until they have at least two complete years of data before drawing specific conclusions. They are, however, working to format assignments used to assess CWAs using TILT to make sure that students are able to fully understand assignment directions and expectations. When the faculty determine which courses have consistently lower met rates, they will meet as a department to develop an assessment tool that can be used by multiple instructors.

Disaggregated Data Assessments: During 2018-19 the math faculty reviewed disaggregated student completion and achievement gap data for STEM and non-STEM math courses. The result of that [initial data analysis](#) led to the following changes:

- Shortened pre-college sequence with co-requisite and accelerated courses;
- Added IBEST (the national Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training model);
- Embedded tutoring;

- Developing Open Educational Resource (OER) materials to reduce instructional resource costs for students; and
- Modified assignment design using the research-based TILT method, while contextualizing assignments to increase student engagement.

In 2020-21 assessment of disaggregated data, the Math department showed student success improvement. Enrollment in pre-college courses decreased and enrollment in college-level courses significantly increased. The faculty noted a decrease in the equity gap and increase in math success for African American students, whose success rates increased 14.3% between the years of 2016-19.

## **MOVING FORWARD**

### **Institutional Assessment Plan, Mission Fulfillment and Student Achievement**

SPSCC is mature in its strategic planning process. The process is thorough and involves the entire college community. The strategic plan approved in 2019 by the Board of Trustees is providing critical guidance and useful and meaningful indicators that measure outcomes to determine resources, strategies, and actions necessary to improve student success and close equity gaps.

SPSCC has established peer comparison college data for our student achievement core theme measures of achievement. We look forward to determining its usefulness in guiding our efforts to improve student success and meet or exceed mission fulfillment.

### **Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes**

SPSCC's assessment of student learning through our SLAC process continues to be refined based on faculty input and data analysis. Our efforts to have a comprehensive assessment of CWAs continues to improve but is not yet as meaningful as we would like. COVID limited our ability to have meaningful discourse about our CWA student learning assessment and process, as well as postponed the development of new rubrics.

Our analysis of disaggregated student course, discipline, and program data has proven to be valuable in identifying areas needing improvement and plans for action. Our Student Learning Assessment Committee is working on refining the process with the following issues identified and needing to be addressed:

- The CWAs rubrics need to have scaffolded levels to identify areas of strength and weakness. Additionally, the faculty will need to conduct some degree of "norming" related to the different levels within the rubric for assessment.
- The professional and technical programs need to be able to use current program accreditation assessments to conduct their CWA and disaggregated student completion data analysis. At this time, they conduct separate processes-one to meet program accreditation and one to meet the college Student Learning Assessment requirements.

- We need to continue training and mentoring faculty on the process of data review and analysis so that the Student Learning Assessment process is meaningful and results in consequential change in teaching and learning.

SPSCC's faculty, staff and administration strive to be data-driven in our quest for continued growth and improvement of student success. We look forward to using the new NWCCU standards to guide our improvement efforts.

## ADDENDUM A

### Response to NWCCU Recommendations

SPSCC received two recommendations in the NWCCU seven year visit to be address in an addendum in this mid-cycle self-report.

***Recommendation 1: Review the objectives for its core themes and develop meaningful, assessable and verifiable indicators of achievement that form the basis for evaluating mission fulfillment and that support decision-making in the planning and allocation of resources (Standards 1.B.2, 4.A.1 and 4.B 1).***

Prior to SPSCC's current strategic plan and during the NWCCU seven year visit in fall of 2018, SPSCC had five core themes and 26 measures. The core themes were:

- Core theme 1: Expand Student Retention and Completion
- Core theme 2: Inspire Teaching and Learning Excellence
- Core theme 3: Advance Equity and Embrace Diversity
- Core theme 4: Champion Innovation
- Core theme 5: Build Community

SPSCC established quantitative indicators for measuring each core theme. However, over the course of the 7-year strategic plan, it became clear that the indicators for measuring core themes 2, 4 and 5 were weak and not as meaningful in our college efforts as desired.

Beginning in 2019, SPSCC used a college-wide effort to create a new strategic plan. It is comprised of three core themes and measures of achievement as outlined in this report. The current core themes and their measures are proving to be valuable in efforts to stay focused on student success and close opportunity gaps.

***Recommendation 2: Develop an effective, regular, and comprehensive system of evaluation for student achievement and the assessment of student learning, and utilize the results of these efforts to plan, support, and enhance future practice (Standards 4.A.3 and 4.B.2).***

At the time of the NWCCU seven year visit in 2018, SPSCC had only one year of pilot data related to our newly implemented Student Learning Assessment Committee process for assessing student learning at the college, program, and discipline levels. At the time of this writing our Student Learning Assessment process engages faculty in quarterly activities related to student success and learning. The quarterly collection of student achievement of CWAs culminate in a one-day spring in-service where faculty analyze data and create plans for improvement. We continue to undergo modifications of the SLAC process to facilitate how faculty assess student learning at different levels. A full description of our work to-date and our future improvement is in the body of the document under "Programmatic Assessment".