

## 4 - Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

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The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

### 4.A - Core Component 4.A

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The institution ensures the quality of its educational offerings.

1. The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews and acts upon the findings.
2. The institution evaluates all the credit that it transcripts, including what it awards for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning, or relies on the evaluation of responsible third parties.
3. The institution has policies that ensure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer.
4. The institution maintains and exercises authority over the prerequisites for courses, rigor of courses, expectations for student learning, access to learning resources, and faculty qualifications for all its programs, including dual credit programs. It ensures that its dual credit courses or programs for high school students are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement to its higher education curriculum.
5. The institution maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes.
6. The institution evaluates the success of its graduates. The institution ensures that the credentials it represents as preparation for advanced study or employment accomplish these purposes. For all programs, the institution looks to indicators it deems appropriate to its mission.

### Argument

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#### 4.A.1.

SCC utilizes both internal and external processes for regular program review. Every [five years](#), the College uses an internal curriculum review process known as [DACUM \(Developing a Curriculum\)](#) to help ensure that curricula include current, relevant knowledge and skill development. In each workshop, a [panel of professionals](#) who work in the field under review meet with trained facilitators to [discuss and review their duties and job responsibilities](#). The DACUM process helps programs answer the [fundamental question](#), “Are we teaching what should be taught?” [DACUM workshops](#) have spurred [program changes](#) (e.g., adding courses to the program sequence; restructuring a focus area; creating an AAS degree from what had been a focus area), curriculum changes (e.g., adding additional content to courses), and budget changes (e.g., requesting \$8,000 for software upgrades).

For 30 years, SCC has participated in an external [program review process](#) as required by [Nebraska’s Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education](#) (CCPE). CCPE reviews existing programs on a [seven-year cycle](#) to monitor the [faculty resources and number of graduates](#) as indicators of quality offerings. All Nebraska community colleges use the CCPE’s [Program Review Template](#) to determine

if a program meets [two required thresholds](#):

- Number of graduates (the five-year average must be ten or more)
- Ratio of student credit hours to faculty FTE (the five-year average must be 275 semester hours per faculty FTE or more)

SCC faculty and instructional administrators annually monitor program review data through the [Program Dashboard](#). SCC's internal standards include a 12-to-1 ratio of Student FTE/Faculty FTE, as well as CCPE's threshold of ten graduates annually. The Instructional Handbook outlines the [categories and processes](#) for programs that do not meet internal standards.

Each year, the Vice President for Instruction [reports program review results](#) to the [Board of Governors for action](#). During the last three years, the results of 19 program reviews were reported with 14 programs meeting all thresholds. Three programs that did not meet the thresholds (Auto Collision Repair Technology, General Motors Automotive Services Educational Program, and Precision Machining and Automation Technology) were continued with monitoring. Two programs (Diversified Manufacturing and MOPAR College Automotive Program) were discontinued as a result of low enrollment or decreased industry demand. As a result of other internal review processes including analysis of SCC's [Low Enrollment Report](#), two programs were discontinued (Fire Protection Technology and Fire Emergency Services Management).

### **Expanding the Program Review Process**

In close consultation with SCC's HLC Liaison, the College recently developed a [new program review policy and procedure](#) that expands upon DACUM and CCPE. Although programs were being reviewed and evaluated in other ways via institutional research data, these additional evaluation processes varied across departments. In Spring 2022, the Office of Institutional Research (IR) launched a powerful tool ([Program Dashboard](#)) that provides program-level data and enhances the ability to develop data-informed plans for improvement. This dashboard was made possible through the development and implementation of a comprehensive [data warehouse solution](#) and associated support structures developed over a four-year period by IR. [Some of the metrics available](#) to programs include trends in program enrollment, course enrollment, course success rate, number of faculty, and number of graduates. To date, more than 60 academic administrators and faculty program chairs have been [trained to use this tool for program improvement](#). A plan to strengthen the College's program review process by leveraging this interactive program review dashboard is being developed and will be implemented in 2023-2024 in alignment with policy and procedure.

#### **4.A.2.**

The College follows a specific [policy and procedure](#) for evaluating and awarding [transfer credit](#) from institutionally accredited institutions. A degree-seeking student sends official transcripts to SCC, and registration staff ensure that the student earned a 'C' or better in each course. The registrar oversees the [evaluation process](#) to determine course equivalencies. Program chairs determine equivalency by evaluating a transfer course based on course description, syllabus, and institutional accreditation status. Students may appeal credit transfer decisions to the program chair. Any significant changes made to the process are approved by the registrar and instructional administrators and published in the [College Catalog](#) and on the [public website](#).

SCC's credit for [prior learning policies and procedures](#) are available on the public website. For experiential and other forms of prior learning, the College offers students the opportunity to obtain

[credit by waiver, examination, or CLEP testing](#). A full description of the policies and practices is available in the [College Catalog](#) and on the [public website](#). Per College Policy, credit granted by waiver or examination cannot exceed two-thirds of the total credits required for a credential.

To serve the College's veteran students, the registrar uses methods outlined in the prior learning assessment policy and procedure to evaluate military coursework for credit, including credit by waiver and credit by exam. Both the [Electronic Systems Technology](#) and [Paramedic](#) programs allow advanced placement based on previous military experience.

#### **4.A.3.**

Institutional policies for transfer of credit are specified in the College Catalog and on the public website. As described in 4.A.2, SCC scrutinizes transfer credit from institutionally accredited institutions to ensure quality. [Transfer equivalences](#) are based on course description, syllabus, grade level, course grade, instructor qualifications, and the date the course was completed.

Since 1995, SCC has participated with all other Nebraska community colleges in the [Nebraska Transfer Initiative](#), commonly referred to as Transfer Nebraska, to ensure that 100- and 200-level general education statewide courses are comparable in scope, quality, and intellectual rigor. Over the years, the community colleges have increased the number of common statewide courses approved for transfer. Transfer Nebraska utilizes a [standard process](#) for updating and assuring students that transfer information is current and accurate. Registration staff and program chairs implement this process using Transfer Nebraska, college websites, and course syllabi to determine equivalencies.

Consistent with [College Policy](#), SCC maintains [articulation agreements](#) that enable students to further their education through transfer to a baccalaureate institution. The College provides multiple avenues for transfer credits, including through [associate-to-bachelor's agreements](#), [course-by-course agreements](#), and [transfer guides](#). The course learning outcomes must be equivalent in order for transfer credit and the articulation agreement to be approved.

The College's [2015-2019](#) and [2020-2024 Strategic Plans](#) demonstrate commitment to enhancing the current level of articulation to four-year institutions. As part of the quarter-to-semester calendar conversion, articulation agreements were reviewed and updated with public and private four-year [colleges and universities in Nebraska](#) and a [number of out-of-state institutions](#). The [SCC transfer website](#) and [College advisors](#) inform students of transfer options, and representatives from four-year schools are available to students through [on-campus office hours](#) and transfer fairs.

Between 2014 and 2021, [21% of students](#) in the first-time, full-time IPEDS cohorts transferred to another institution. [In 2021](#), approximately 77% of Academic Transfer graduates and 13% of career/technical graduates continued their education at another institution.

#### **4.A.4.**

##### **Prerequisites**

By using a curriculum review process, [DACUM](#), and the assessment of student learning processes, the College ensures that prerequisite courses are in line with SCC's required learning outcomes. Over the past three years, the College has invested in curriculum management software solutions ([Acalog and Curriculumlog](#)) that have facilitated improvements to maintaining prerequisites and updating courses and program curriculum.

At a minimum, all course syllabi are reviewed on a [three-year cycle](#) during which all sections of the syllabus are scrutinized by program faculty and the Instructional Dean. When changes to prerequisites are needed, the program chair will submit a request through the Curriculog software. The prerequisite changes are [reviewed by](#) the respective division dean, student services personnel, the Vice President for Instruction, the Curriculum Committee, and the Accreditation Liaison Officer. The updated course syllabus is added to the College Catalog. In 2019-2020, SCC shifted its [Catalog to an electronic option](#), which has enabled [syllabi to be linked](#) and [made available](#) to current and prospective students, allowing them to view prerequisites, learning objectives, and course expectations.

### **Rigor of Courses and Expectations for Student Learning**

The College establishes and maintains course rigor with the assistance of the [Curriculum Committee](#) and Workforce Leadership Teams for [curriculum review processes](#). A standing committee that includes faculty members and instructional administration, the Curriculum Committee [evaluates and approves courses and programs](#) that lead to lifelong learning, employability, and transferability. The College's Curriculum Committee reviews program and course changes prior to the Catalog revision process.

[Workforce Leadership Teams](#) (WLTs) are comprised of representatives from business, industry, and educational institutions within the 15-county area. Their objectives are to help SCC understand trends and needs within industry, business, and education and to inform curriculum development or revision.

The College uses standardized [course syllabi templates](#) and [course information documents](#) to assist in maintaining curriculum quality. Both documents require the inclusion of student learning outcomes, course learning objectives, course policies and procedures, and textbook and supply needs. SCC uses [standardized textbooks](#) to ensure similar scope and rigor across sections of the same course. The Vice President for Instruction, in collaboration with instructional deans and program chairs, oversees this process.

SCC uses a [credit hour computation chart](#) to determine course rigor and grants credit based on the ratio of hours spent in class, lab, clinical settings, practicum hours, and internships.

### **Access to Learning Resources**

SCC provides learning resources through the [Library Resource Center/Media Center](#) and [Tutoring & Transitions Center](#). Students can access online tutoring services through Smarthinking and the Library Resource Center through Canvas and The Hub.

### **Faculty Qualifications**

The College ensures appropriate faculty qualifications by implementing HLC standards by program; ensuring alignment with Nebraska community college peers; identifying and complying with state and local statute requirements for health programs; and working with local trade organizations to identify faculty qualifications for technical programs. SCC's [employee qualifications policy and procedure](#) outlines the expectations and process.

Standards are equally applied to all instructors — face-to-face, online, and dual-credit.

### **Dual Credit/High School Programs Equivalency to Higher Education Curriculum**

The College offers three unique opportunities for high school students to take dual credit courses: [The Career Academy](#) (TCA), [Southeast Nebraska Career Academy Partnership](#) (SENCAP), and [Dual Credit Advantage](#) (DCA). The College follows a [standard process](#) to ensure that all dual credit courses have approved, qualified instructors, follow the College's [course and grading policies](#), and use course syllabi with the [same student learning outcomes](#) as non-dual credit courses.

SCC utilizes qualified full-time and adjunct faculty to teach [dual credit courses](#) to high school students at [various locations](#). Each dual credit instructor must meet HLC standards and have a current Nebraska Department of Education teaching credential or postsecondary permit. The College received an extension for dual credit faculty qualifications, and as of 2022-2023, all dual credit instructors are fully qualified. Dual credit instructors attend trainings with their respective department chairs and are provided a [handbook](#) to ensure alignment with College expectations and policies. In 2021-2022, SCC employed [108 dual credit instructors](#).

The College has common syllabi, learning outcomes, and course expectations for all courses, regardless of modality. During the past five years, dual credit students have shown a [consistently high success rate, even as enrollment has increased](#). This finding is expected given the lower course loads for dual credit students, as well as the requirement among high schools that students must meet certain academic performance levels to be eligible to enroll in dual credit courses.

In 2019, SCC restructured its organizational oversight of dual credit programming with the creation of a new position, [Dean of Extended Learning](#). This reorganization has allowed for additional administrative oversight and stronger collaboration between TCA, SENCAP, and DCA.

#### **4.A.5.**

SCC has [18 programs](#) that maintain specialized, professional accreditation with a third-party accrediting body recognized by the United States Department of Education or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation. Program Chairs lead the accreditation process for their respective programs; this process is described in the [Instructional Handbook](#).

Two examples of the accrediting bodies include [Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing](#) and [Accreditation Council for Business Schools & Programs](#). All 18 programs that have applied for external accreditation have achieved accredited status over the past 10 years and are currently [in good standing](#). In several health programs, graduates are eligible to sit for professional licensure exams. Other programs, such as Business, maintain accreditation to ensure high-quality standards for the program and to help their graduates be more competitive in the job market.

A few programs maintain [associations with industry-specific organizations](#) that enable graduates to become certified in their fields. For example, graduates of the Automotive Technology program have one year of work experience satisfied after completing the accredited training program; two years of experience are required for becoming ASE certified.

#### **4.A.6.**

Southeast Community College has a longstanding history of providing strong career and technical programs, as well as robust transfer options, to the 15-county service area in southeast Nebraska. The success rate of SCC's graduates (the percentage who are either employed or continuing their education) [has ranged between 93-98% since 2015](#) when SCC started tracking this metric. Strategic Plan Progress Reports are [presented to the Board](#) annually to provide information about [quantitative](#)

[and qualitative metrics](#). The list of metrics includes several related to graduate success, including [course success rates](#), [CCSSE benchmarks](#), [degrees awarded](#), [graduate and transfer rates](#), and [participation in co-curricular opportunities](#).

SCC uses the [annual Graduate Report](#) and the annual [Strategic Plan Progress Report](#) to evaluate the success of its graduates through employment and transfer rates.

SCC systematically [gathers information from graduates](#) through a process administered by the [Career Services Office](#). Graduates complete an [information sheet](#) with information about employment status and/or future education plans. Information provided by graduates is aggregated and summarized by the Office of Institutional Research (IR) in the annual [Employment & Transfer Statistics Graduate Report](#). The Graduate Report has consistently high response rates. In 2021, [84.7% of the 1,305 graduates](#) provided employment or transfer data. As part of the [recently established](#) Nebraska Statewide Workforce and Educational Reporting System ([NSWERS](#)), the College will have access to details about in-state employment of its graduates to further evaluate their career paths and success over time.

The College is piloting a [graduate survey](#) with plans to expand it Collegewide in 2023-2024. The Business program has administered the survey for [three terms](#) and has used the results to further [modify survey questions](#) associated with Business Law learning outcomes. The program also [has added](#) the graduate survey questions to an introductory course to [gather “pre-test” data](#). The surveys are important tools in ensuring graduates are prepared for their careers.

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## 4.B - Core Component 4.B

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The institution engages in ongoing assessment of student learning as part of its commitment to the educational outcomes of its students.

1. The institution has effective processes for assessment of student learning and for achievement of learning goals in academic and cocurricular offerings.
2. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.
3. The institution's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty, instructional and other relevant staff members.

### Argument

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#### 4.B.1.

The College's [assessment of student learning processes](#) is driven by its [Institutional Learning Outcomes \(ILOs\)](#), established in 2019. The purpose of the ILOs is threefold:

- To guide consistent communication to internal and external constituencies about SCC's aspirations for its graduates.
- To align assessment efforts at the College to one set of common student learning outcomes.
- To connect and inform institutional, co-curricular, general education, program, department, and course assessment. The respective assessment processes are outlined in SCC's Board [Policy on Assessment](#) and Administrative [Procedure on Assessment](#).

The Mission-driven ILOs were developed by a [taskforce](#) with broad-based membership from the Instructional, Student Success, and Student Enrollment Divisions. The ILOs were [adopted](#) by the College's Administrative Team and have been communicated to [employees](#), [students](#), and the [public](#).

#### Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILO) Assessment

The Institutional Learning Outcomes [assessment process](#) guides all other aspects of assessment and is coordinated by the [Administrative Assessment Council](#). The ILOs are [assessed annually](#) through a [multi-method approach](#) using aggregated [instructional/program assessment data](#) and [co-curricular assessment data](#), [CCSSE results](#), and [graduate survey data](#). The ILO results are shared with SCC's [Administrative Team](#), [Instructional administrators](#), the [ILO/Co-curricular Team](#), and [budget officers](#) (approximately 150 employees in leadership roles, including approximately 70 faculty program chairs). The results are used during budget deliberations and inform planning and budget priorities for the upcoming year.

#### General Education Learning Outcomes (GELO) Assessment

SCC's [General Education Learning Outcomes](#) (GELOs) are closely connected to the ILOs, but they include outcomes specific to SCC's general education programming. The [General Education Committee](#) oversees both the SCC Core course makeup and the assessment of the GELOs utilizing standardized [proposal](#) and [review processes](#). Assessment of the GELOs occurs in all courses included

in the SCC [Core curriculum](#). Faculty who teach Core courses use common rubrics developed by the General Education Team and department faculty. Faculty submit [course learning outcome data](#) through SCC's learning management system. The College's [GELO benchmark is 80%](#) attainment for all learning outcomes. Fall 2022 marked the [third term](#) for collecting general education assessment data. GELO assessment results have been used to improve the [overall assessment process](#), [common rubrics](#), [faculty training](#), and [courses](#).

### **Program Learning Outcomes (PLO) Assessment**

SCC's Program Learning Outcome (PLO) assessment is the College's longest standing assessment process. All degrees, diplomas, and certificates have [learning outcomes identified and assessed](#) by program faculty. Each program identifies [measures of student learning and benchmarks](#) that align with industry standards, transfer school expectations, and internal program goals. [PLOs](#) are mapped to the Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs) via the Nuventive software.

In 2021-2022, more than 300 PLOs were assessed in support of the ILOs. [PLO assessment plans and progress reports](#), completed annually by the faculty program chairs or designees, detail this information. The College's goal is for 80% of students to meet their respective program benchmarks, as aggregated at the [Institutional Learning Outcome level](#).

In accordance with College [assessment policy and procedure](#), the Instructional Division's faculty-driven [Assessment Team](#) and Instructional administration review the plans and reports and provide [feedback](#) to each program. For the last nine years, program assessment results (e.g., [2022](#), [2021](#), [2020](#), [2019](#), [2018](#)) have been used to inform improvements at the department level. With the shift to Nuventive in 2019-2020, the College's ability to [aggregate and compare data across programs](#) has significantly improved. Instructional administration [discusses](#) and aggregates PLO data to share with the College's [Administrative Team](#) to inform [planning and budgeting priorities](#).

### **Co-curricular Learning Outcomes Assessment**

SCC's [definition of co-curricular learning](#) is "purposeful and assessable learning that complements (but occurs outside of) the formal curriculum, and which contributes to students' achievement of SCC's Institutional Learning Outcomes."

Prior to 2021, co-curricular programming was assessed informally per activity or department. In 2021, SCC's faculty and the Student Success-driven [ILO/Co-curricular Assessment Team](#) developed the working definition, established the [co-curricular learning outcomes](#) that expanded on the ILOs, and identified [co-curricular programming](#) that aligned with the outcomes.

In 2021-2022 and 2022-2023, the following co-curricular programs were assessed:

- [New Student Enrollment](#)
- [TRiO/Student Support Services](#)
- [Federal Work Study](#)
- [Student Senate](#)
- [Annual Speech Contest](#)
- [International Education Week](#)
- [SkillsUSA](#)
- [Student Organizations](#)

[Co-curricular assessment results](#) have been utilized across the Student Success, Enrollment Services, and Instructional Divisions to inform programming focused on the ILOs. In 2021-2022, at least one co-curricular activity was [assessed for each of the ILOs](#). The co-curricular assessment results for each activity were analyzed by relevant faculty and staff, and the aggregated results were [reviewed](#) by the ILO/Co-curricular Assessment Team.

## **Curriculum Mapping**

The General Education Team completed a [curriculum mapping exercise](#), which resulted in the full alignment of General Education Core Courses with General Education Learning Outcomes (GELOs). Programs have mapped [Program Learning Outcomes to the Institutional Learning Outcomes](#). In addition, programs develop a curriculum map as part of the five-year DACUM curriculum review process to ensure [alignment of industry standards with Program Learning Outcomes](#).

### **4.B.2.**

SCC's [Strategic Plan](#) objectives direct the College's priorities around assessment (2.3, 9.4, and 9.5). These strategic objectives informed the development of the College's assessment of student learning [policy and procedure](#), which serves as the guiding framework for how the College uses assessment information to [inform plans for improvement](#) for the [Institutional Learning Outcomes](#).

The assessment of student learning procedure outlines how the data is used to inform improvements at the program, department, division, or institutional level. The College's [annual Institutional Assessment Report](#) describes in depth what progress has been made in each area of assessment.

In 2021-2022, programs identified [48 curriculum changes and 72 operational](#) or other types of changes based on assessment of Program Learning Outcome data (e.g., [Agriculture Management and Production](#), [Automotive Technology](#), [Business](#), [Graphic Design/Media Arts](#), [Manufacturing Engineering Technology](#), [Plumbing Technology](#), and [Practical Nursing](#)).

Results of SCC's assessment of student learning processes have informed changes to assessment processes, curriculum, pedagogy, student support, and modification of learning outcomes and assessment tools.

## **Assessment Processes**

Institutional Learning Outcomes assessment led to [strengthening processes](#) to obtain [valid and reliable assessment data](#), [broadening involvement](#) and [use of data](#), [expanding training](#) and [communication](#), and identifying [additional institutional resources](#) needed. Aggregated General Education Learning Outcome (GELO) results have been used to [inform assessment process changes](#), including the integration of the learning management system (Canvas) with the planning and assessment software (Nuventive) for advanced data visualizations. Co-curricular learning assessment results [informed substantial modification to student organizations' reporting](#), which expanded awareness of co-curricular learning outcomes and strengthened alignment of student organization activities to the ILOs.

## **Curriculum and Pedagogy**

[Computer Information Technology](#) (CIT) students did not meet the benchmark for the learning outcome associated with computer hardware and operating systems. Faculty modified the curriculum to increase engaged learning with specific hardware. They also evaluated and created a revised exam

that covered the same information with fewer questions. This revised exam was used, which resulted in students meeting the benchmark.

[GELO 1 \(Speech Communication\) faculty](#) noted that learning outcomes related to use and citation of sources had the highest percentage of students failing to demonstrate proficiency. Faculty expanded training and conducted norming sessions on the assessment rubrics to ensure that rubrics were being applied consistently. They also adopted a new textbook which covered the use and citation of sources in greater depth.

The [Livestock Management & Production program](#) did not meet the benchmark for their program's oral communication learning outcome. Faculty increased course content associated with presentation skills and added presentation projects to other courses to further reinforce professional presentation skills.

[Culinary/Hospitality faculty](#) attended professional development training to standardize teaching strategies for chicken fabrication and conducted a capstone class [analysis](#) when students missed the desired benchmark.

The [Design and Drafting program](#) assessment results revealed students struggling with industry-specific technical research. Faculty added course content from a Machinist handbook to supplement course materials and included in-class discussions about industry research.

### **Student Support and Co-curricular Learning**

The [Surgical Technology program](#) recognized the challenge students had in finding time outside of clinicals to study instruments in person rather than online. [Faculty](#) decided to release students two hours early from one clinical, which allowed for additional hands-on lab time with the instruments.

CCSSE survey questions were mapped to each ILO, and multiple constituencies ([Instructional deans](#), [Student Success/Enrollment deans and directors](#), and the [Co-curricular/ILO Assessment Team](#)) were asked to review the results and discuss areas for improvement. Student Success deans identified areas for improvement related to enhancing feedback on student activities, promoting DEI-focused dialogue in student organizations, and incorporating critical thinking into the remediation process for housing and conduct violations.

Focus groups were held with each of the three campus Student Senates. In response to [questions](#), members articulated multiple learning outcomes they had attained through their participation in Student Senate and how those learning experiences would help them with future goals. The Student Success staff, who served as Student Senate advisors, had been struggling to recruit enough students to serve on the Senates and were able to use this [focus group data](#) to recruit students for the following year.

### **Modification of Assessment Tools and Learning Outcomes**

The [Early Childhood Education program](#) modified a large project into seven scaffolded assignments to enhance opportunities for feedback throughout the term. [Faculty](#) also added an additional assignment that encouraged students to review and incorporate faculty feedback on assignments throughout the term.

[Office Professional](#) students' mail-merge skills were assessed as part of a course exam, but students did not meet the benchmark. Faculty created a stand-alone mail-merge assignment and embedded

this assignment in multiple courses, which allowed for learning outcome attainment comparison across the curriculum.

The [Powersports Technology program](#) identified the need to revise program outcomes to include a broader representation beyond course-specific topics, resulting in the ability of faculty to embed similar Program Learning Outcomes across courses.

[GELO 4 \(Global Awareness and Citizenship\) faculty](#) noted successful student attainment of the outcome related to students' ability to discuss issues from a global perspective. Faculty have recommended changing the outcome to a higher level on Bloom's taxonomy to increase learning expectations associated with this outcome.

#### **4.B.3.**

Following the 2016-2017 Assurance Review, the College conducted an [external scan](#) of assessment trends in literature and [among its peers](#).

To support the educational outcomes of its students, the College has made financial and human resource investments in strengthening the assessment infrastructure. Steps taken include:

- Identifying three strategic objectives in the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan ([2.3](#), [9.4](#), [9.5](#)).
- Adding a full-time employee with dedicated [assessment responsibilities](#).
- Reorganizing assessment oversight for better integration with institutional planning processes and establishing an [Administrative Assessment Council](#) to coordinate assessment efforts.
- [Purchasing](#) and [implementing](#) a planning and assessment software solution, Nuventive, which allows the College to aggregate data to compare across departments and helps coordinate assessment and planning processes.
- Increasing the frequency of faculty [assessment training](#).
- Emphasizing assessment by [regularly sharing and discussing assessment results](#).
- [Dedicating meeting](#) and [work time](#) for the assessment process and an [integrated planning, budgeting, and assessment calendar](#).
- Creating an [assessment resource site](#) for faculty in Canvas and providing [assessment training materials](#) and [support in Nuventive](#).

Each year since 2018-2019, the College, with its HLC Liaison, has [reported its assessment progress](#) as part of the Action Agreement. The most recent [2022 Action Agreement](#) noted the significant milestones the College has attained over the last four years.

The College recognized that it takes several cycles to obtain assessment data that are valid and reliable enough to use to inform institutional improvements beyond the course and program levels. In support of [Goal 9.6](#) of the Strategic Plan and in an effort to improve assessment processes and methodologies, the College partnered with Sam Houston State University to administer the [Survey of Assessment Culture](#). SCC first administered this validated survey in Fall 2019.

SCC's Office of Institutional Research conducted additional analyses, which provided baseline data used to inform [communication strategies and training](#). The Survey of Assessment Culture was re-administered in Spring 2022. The analyses revealed a number of [statistically significant changes](#). Surveys were sent to [all faculty](#) (n=592; response rate 32%), [administrators](#) (n=47; response rate 66%), and [Student Success and Student Enrollment staff](#) (n=88; response rate 58%).

Between 2019 and 2022, there was a statistically significant level of change in the Faculty Perception Scale with faculty showing more [positive sentiment toward assessment](#). The College also saw statistically significant improvement in positive sentiments associated with its culture of assessment, including agreement with the following:

- [Assessment is emphasized as part of the organizational culture.](#)
- [Assessment is an organized, coherent effort at my institution.](#)
- [The majority of administrators/faculty/Student Affairs staff genuinely believe assessment supports student learning at my institution.](#)

The College's discussions of survey results with [administrators](#) have identified key areas of improvement to continue strengthening SCC's culture of assessment. Some of these areas include [faculty perceptions of sharing data](#), the [use of data](#), and [compliance or fear motivators](#) for assessment participation.

### **Expanding Current Assessment Practices**

The Survey of Assessment Culture findings are closely aligned with the College's [assessment priorities](#) and Strategic Plan for the coming years. Assessment of student learning and co-curricular assessment were two key parts of SCC's [Action Plan Agreement](#) with the Higher Learning Commission. As part of this proactive partnership, SCC's HLC Liaison conducted [four annual visits](#) and has been an active part in supporting the College's improvements in assessment processes. The College has made progress in its assessment of student learning processes, and seeks to strengthen and refine its processes related to the use of data for improvement of student learning. Plans include:

- Analyzing assessment results for longitudinal data trends, like the College's strategic metrics and Key Performance Indicators.
- Expanding existing curriculum mapping processes to map Program Learning Outcomes to Course Learning Outcomes.
- Evaluating student learning across modalities and demographics through connection of Canvas, data warehouse, and planning/assessment software.

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## 4.C - Core Component 4.C

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The institution pursues educational improvement through goals and strategies that improve retention, persistence and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs.

1. The institution has defined goals for student retention, persistence and completion that are ambitious, attainable and appropriate to its mission, student populations and educational offerings.
2. The institution collects and analyzes information on student retention, persistence and completion of its programs.
3. The institution uses information on student retention, persistence and completion of programs to make improvements as warranted by the data.
4. The institution's processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing information on student retention, persistence and completion of programs reflect good practice. (Institutions are not required to use IPEDS definitions in their determination of persistence or completion rates. Institutions are encouraged to choose measures that are suitable to their student populations, but institutions are accountable for the validity of their measures.)

### Argument

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#### 4.C.1.

The College's [Mission, Vision, and Strategic Plan goals and objectives](#) serve as the pathway for educational improvement associated with student success. SCC's [Strategic Goal 2](#), Student Success, identifies such targeted objectives as:

- Enhancing emotional intelligence and resiliency skills (2.2)
- Strengthening advising processes (2.5)
- Improving programs and services meant to promote students' physical and psychological health (2.10)

Indirectly, other Strategic Plan goals and objectives also address processes, programming, and training associated with student success, including [Goal 1](#), [Goal 4](#), [Goal 5](#), [Goal 6](#), [Goal 7](#), and [Goal 9](#).

The College's goals and objectives are operationalized at the institutional, division, and department levels. Each academic year, as part of the [Mission Action Planning \(MAP\) process](#), each of SCC's approximately 100 departments, offices, and programs develop and implement three to five annual MAP goals. Each of these MAP goals is associated with one of the Strategic Plan goals. Since 2020, more than [300 MAP goals](#) associated with Goal 2 have been implemented, including the incorporation of engaged learning strategies, the strengthening of partnerships with local community support agencies, and the expansion of student mental health support.

The [College's budgeting processes build upon the MAP cycle](#), which has resulted in substantial investment of expanded capital, personnel, and technology infrastructure. In addition to the departmental strategies, the College has implemented a number of institutional initiatives, including:

- [Significant expansion of advising services](#)
- [Investments in advising and student enrollment technology](#)
- Addition of new residence halls in [Beatrice](#) and [Milford](#) and the [Student Academic Support Center](#) in Lincoln
- Implementation and evaluation of [the College's Quality Initiative](#)

SCC's first [Institutional Strategic Plan](#) included defined goals and objectives related to student retention, persistence, and completion, along with associated strategic metrics. As its planning process matured and data-infrastructure expanded, the College built upon its strategic metrics to identify [Key Performance Indicators](#) (KPIs) and [performance targets](#) for measuring institutional progress over the course of the plan (2020-2024). Using historical trend data, knowledge of divisional and strategic initiatives, and recognition of external environmental factors, the College's Administrative Team [developed quantitative goals](#) associated with 17 KPIs, including overall success rate, Fall-to-Fall retention, graduation and transfer rate, and workforce placement rate of career and technical education (CTE) graduates.

The KPIs are [reported annually](#) and shared with the [Board of Governors](#), [Administrative Team](#), and [administrative and faculty leads](#); KPI reports are also published on the [College's website](#).

For 2024, the targets associated with the [student success metrics](#) are:

- Increase Fall-to-Fall retention rate by three percentage points (to 67%).
- Increase overall course success rate by three percentage points (to 78%).
- Increase graduation/transfer rate by three percentage points (to 60%).
- Increase workforce placement rate for CTE graduates by three percentage points (to 83%).

#### **4.C.2.**

In 2017, the [Assurance Review Team noted](#) that SCC's "increase in IR staff has greatly increased the College's ability to collect and analyze data that is improving retention, completion, and persistence." Collection methodologies for reporting include [Voluntary Framework for Accountability \(VFA\)](#), a collection tool specifically designed for two-year colleges, and the [Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System \(IPEDS\)](#). These data and other institutional data are stored in a data warehouse, analyzed, and developed into reports as needed. Since full implementation in June 2016, the [ZogoTech data warehouse](#) has been used as a primary source for data analysis, data visualizations, and the creation of many standardized reports, including [grade distribution reports](#), [course utilization](#), and [ad hoc reports](#) (discussed in 4.C.3). An [interactive Fact Book](#), [annual profile summaries](#), and [other reports are available on the College's public website](#).

The [Community College Survey of Student Engagement \(CCSSE\) instrument](#), which SCC has administered biennially since 2011, provides actionable information on programming and services. For example, the College has analyzed trend data focusing on student learning and persistence. The re-administration of the [CCSSE](#) in 2021 yielded a [summary report](#) comparing SCC to other institutions using five benchmarks of effective educational practice in community colleges. In 2021-2022, [administrative](#) and [faculty groups](#) discussed CCSSE results as part of [Institutional Learning Outcome \(ILO\) presentations](#).

The use of various collection methodologies (IPEDS, VFA, CCSSE, and institution-specific resources) enhances the College's ability to analyze and compare data. IPEDS collects data that are comparable to both four-year and two-year institutions, focusing on first-time, full-time students.

VFA gives greater insight into the full range of student outcomes in two-year institutions.

[IPEDS retention rates](#) for first-time students who began their studies in Fall 2019 and returned in Fall 2020 were 64% for full-time students and 45% for part-time students. In Fall 2021, [64% of SCC's undergraduate students were seeking a degree or certificate](#); of these degree-seeking students, 10% started as transfer students. In addition, [65% were attending on a part-time basis](#). Two-year VFA persistence/attainment outcomes for students entering SCC for the first time in Fall 2019 [show that two years later](#) (Fall 2021), 45% of students were still enrolled, 16% had completed a certificate or degree, and 7% had transferred to other institutions.

Graduation rates provided in the IPEDS report are calculated only for first-time, full-time degree/certificate-seeking students. For IPEDS reporting year 2021, this protocol applied to 49% of incoming SCC students. Out of this sub-group, the [three-year graduation rate was 31%, and the transfer-out rate was 26%](#).

The College uses IPEDS to compare its [graduation and transfer-out rates](#) to [peer institutions](#). In the [2021 IPEDS Data Feedback](#) report, SCC was comparable to or above national trends among peer institutions.

Any employee at the College may submit [data requests](#) to the Office of Institutional Research (IR) in regard to enrollment patterns, student outcomes, and demographics. IR has conducted full studies related to [advising](#) and [patterns of failing grades](#) among students. IR also has used data-driven processes for the [development of new programs](#) and the [review of existing programs](#) through the program dashboard.

#### **4.C.3.**

For the past eight years, the President has presented retention, persistence, and completion data to the Board of Governors to support its ability to make informed budgetary decisions related to the College's Strategic Plan goals (e.g., [2015](#), [2016](#), [2022](#), [2023](#)). The [budgetary decisions](#) are reflected in the institutional improvements identified in 4.C.3.

As discussed in 4.C.1, the [metrics used to track progress toward Goal 2](#) of the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan include: Fall-to-Fall retention rate, overall success rate, course withdrawal rate, and graduation and transfer rate. The College has implemented a number of strategies in response to trends in these metrics. These strategies include targeted work through the Quality Initiative to address strategic objectives, enhancement of student onboarding processes, and data-informed improvements to Instructional and Student Enrollment/Success programming and policies.

#### **Quality Initiative – Instruction and Student Enrollment/Success Divisions**

The purpose of SCC's [Quality Initiative \(QI\)](#) was to improve retention and completion rates by assisting new students in acquiring and enhancing academic resiliency skills. In 2017-2018, IR conducted a comprehensive [five-year cohort analysis of course-level data](#), revealing that more than 50% of students received a failing grade while attending SCC. More than half of these students received a failing grade during their first term. These students had much lower retention and completion rates with less than 5% completing a certificate or degree during the five-year period.

Following HLC approval in 2018, SCC developed, implemented, and evaluated its QI to address [student success-focused goals](#) related to improving student retention, completion, and course success

rates.

To address these goals, two primary strategies were developed, implemented, and evaluated between 2019 and 2022.

**Strategy 1:** Conduct comprehensive professional development training on academic resiliency for faculty, advisors, and staff who have significant and frequent interactions with new students.

**Strategy 2:** Embed engaged learning activities into gateway courses that have the highest number of failing grades. Faculty teaching these courses will integrate activities that encourage students to apply academic resiliency skills to facilitate learning of course content.

In spite of implementing these strategies during the College's conversion from a quarter to a semester calendar (while maintaining full operations during the pandemic), SCC made significant and transformative progress on a number of related strategic initiatives.

- The College completed [three comprehensive analyses](#) of grade patterns, success rates, retention rates, and completion rates.
- The College redesigned its [Success@SCC course \(ACFS1015\)](#) to focus on resiliency, emotional intelligence, and growth mindset. The [first-year success course](#) included content designed to create a sense of belonging; it also provided research-based strategies for learning challenging material and taught students how to activate resiliency skills.
- Advisors, faculty, and staff utilized their [Emotional Intelligence \(EI\)](#) training to promote resiliency among more than 7,500 new students who enrolled at SCC during the implementation of the College's QI.
- The College observed a notable [decrease in failure rates](#) in classes taught by faculty members after they embedded opportunities to apply EI and resiliency skills in their classes.
- The College launched a [\\$30 million renovation](#) on its Lincoln Campus that used resiliency and EI-driven designs for student-centric spaces, including a student activities area, study spaces, the Library Resource Center, Advising Center, and other student gathering areas.

### **New Student Enrollment Processes and First-Year Student Success Course**

Building upon substantial progress made between 2015 and 2019, in 2020, the Student Enrollment and Student Success Divisions began evaluating the process of engaging and onboarding new students. This evaluation and research into other institutions' processes led to the [development of Project SOAR \(Student Onboarding, Advising, and Registration\)](#), which re-imagined the processes of new student onboarding, advising, admissions, and registration.

The Project SOAR Team identified four integrated stages to continuously engage new students from post-admission through completion of New Student Orientation and to improve onboarding, advising, and retention processes. These strategies included:

- A robust, online [New Student Enrollment](#) experience paired with [individually tailored advising](#).
- An intentional [communication plan](#) to move students from accepted to enrolled status.
- [New Student Welcome events](#) that were responsive to students' individual needs.
- Scaffolded [New Student Orientation programming](#) designed to deliver information at appropriate points in the early weeks of each term.

Student Success, Student Enrollment, and Instructional Division staff and faculty [collaborated to design a New Student Orientation Success Course](#) to help students acclimate to the College, gain information necessary for success, and persist to graduation. The [Success@SCC](#) course (ACFS1015) has been [fully adopted](#) by the College [as of 2022-2023](#) and is a part of all diploma and associate degree curriculum.

## **Technology**

SCC has invested significant resources into services from Ellucian, a higher education technology company, to help faculty, staff, and students gain access to technological tools that support institutional tracking of student progress and achievement. Specifically, the College has improved the [degree audit process](#) and started using the [Student Planning modules](#) while phasing in other self-service modules. Advisors have increased communication with advisees via [Cadence](#) (texting), [chat features](#), and [CRM Advise](#). SCC has also [contracted with EAB](#), a consulting firm specializing in education institutions, to [conduct web audits](#) and [develop student personas](#) that will make resources and Student Success/Enrollment programming more accessible for current and prospective students.

## **Advising Reorganization**

In 2018, after [intensive study and discussion](#), a cross-sectional team of College employees recommended that the College shift to an [advising model](#) that assigns every student both a College advisor and a faculty advisor. Following these recommendations, the College added a new position to lead the transformation. In 2019, the [Director of Advising](#) planned a small-scale pilot of the new model and collaborated with IR to create an evaluation plan.

The IR team implemented a multi-faceted evaluation that included [tracking of institutional outcomes across two semesters](#) of both a pilot and comparison group of students, a [student survey](#), an [advisor survey](#), [evaluation of contact logs from the advisors](#), and a [series of focus groups with advisors](#).

The comprehensive evaluation of the new advising model [yielded promising results](#). The quantitative and qualitative data provided useful feedback during the pilot to modify elements before introducing the advising model to the full cohort in Fall 2020.

As part of the [new model](#), new students complete an online [Advising Inventory](#) as the final task of New Student Enrollment. The [results of this inventory](#) are shared with the student's College Advisor, who uses it for academic advising and to identify areas in which the student may need support.

SCC added substantial [human and technology resources](#) to support the advising transformation. Additional staff are still needed to reduce the student-advisor ratio. The College also needs to secure permanent funding sources for advisors, who were initially hired through grant funds.

## **Enrollment Services**

In collaboration with the Instructional Division, the Associate Vice President for Enrollment Services studies [enrollment](#) and [registration trends](#) in order to eliminate barriers to program and course enrollment. This has led to better [course utilization and availability of courses at times, places, and modalities](#) that meet student needs. The following registration changes represent the data-driven, retention-orientated decisions implemented as a result of collaboration between the Associate Vice President of Enrollment Services, IR, Administrative Services, and the Instructional Division. The College:

- Developed and implemented a [payment plan option](#) for students.
- Changed the [add and drop period](#) from [two days to seven](#) to allow more flexibility students.
- Shifted the [withdrawal date](#) to later in the term to allow students more time to be successful.

#### **4.C.4.**

[IR staff](#) are trained in data collection methodologies and software to provide internal and external stakeholders with meaningful data for understanding student outcomes and making decisions that increase retention, completion, and persistence. IR staff lead the College's processes and methodologies for internal and external data sources. All data functions are coordinated through the IR Office to ensure consistency in data reporting and the use of data for improvement.

#### **Internal Data Sources**

SCC's primary data collection instrument is its own integrated student information system, Colleague, which is the system of record for student demographics, enrollment, grades, and courses. The data from Colleague is used by other information systems, including [Informer](#) (to generate reports), [ZogoTech data warehouse](#) (as a data source to streamline reporting and a reporting system), and [Tableau software](#) (to create data visualizations and interactive dashboards). Since its adoption in 2016, the College has expanded the data warehouse to allow for more in-depth student success analysis.

#### **External Data Sources**

SCC uses IPEDS data as a primary data source for reporting purposes. Additionally, the College utilizes the [Voluntary Framework of Accountability](#) (VFA) for defining and measuring student outcomes (including adult education and workforce outcomes) in the community college environment. By using both IPEDS and VFA data, the College is able to provide [performance comparisons](#) that are useful to different audiences for different purposes.

The [National Student Clearinghouse](#) (NSC) supplements IPEDS and VFA data by offering additional context on term-to-term retention, graduation, and transfer outcomes. SCC data submitted to the NSC can be requested as reports, imported into the ZogoTech data warehouse, and used to identify and analyze the [transfer-in, transfer-out, and cyclical nature](#) of SCC students to better inform the College's [transfer articulation efforts](#).

In 2020, [Nebraska Legislative Bill 1160: The Nebraska Statewide Workforce and Educational Reporting System \(NSWERS\) Act was adopted](#). NSWERS's statutory charge is to lead a collaboration among the University of Nebraska, the Nebraska Department of Education, the Nebraska State College System, the six Nebraska community colleges, and colleagues at the Nebraska Department of Labor. This collaboration enables a seamless integration of data across educational and workforce systems, provides data literacy education, and promotes the use of data to strengthen evidence-based policy and practices across Nebraska's educational systems. SCC's President serves on the [NSWERS Executive Council](#) and has been a pivotal partner in this initiative. In 2022, IR submitted 10 years of student and course data, which will enable the state to evaluate the efficacy of Nebraska's education and workforce training systems.

The College is in the process of developing a [data governance plan](#), which will include scope, priorities, and committee structure, as well as a policies and procedures manual that documents [best practices in data collection and visualization](#).

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## **4.S - Criterion 4 - Summary**

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The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

### **Summary**

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The assessment processes for SCC's Institutional Learning Outcomes and General Education Learning Outcomes provide a cohesive framework for improving student learning. The College's data infrastructure serves as a foundation for all instructional and student success initiatives. SCC continues to strengthen its program review and assessment processes.

### **Sources**

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*There are no sources.*