

## SECTION III

### SCC 2005-2006 Planning Assumptions

#### Education and Training

- Education and training will continue to be important, especially with rapidly advancing changes in technology and the increasing incorporation of technology in the workplace.
- Partnerships with other educational institutions/entities will be critical for maximizing use and potential pooling of resources. Access to resources will be a need, especially with state economic situation (less revenue, etc.), increased accountability mandates, and initial cost of technology and upgrades/maintenance of technology, and competitive salaries for faculty/staff.
- There will be increased competition among all education/training providers and the one with the pertinent offerings, at convenient times/places, completed in the shortest time and providing evidence of skill acquisition (credentials/certifications) will be successful.
- College must be flexible in the delivery of training and educational offerings in non-traditional places, times and methods.
- Articulation agreements and the rising costs of four-year colleges will result in more individuals attending community colleges the first two years and then transferring to four-year institutions to complete their bachelor's degree.
- Increasing emphasis by business and industry on certification (particularly in technology-related fields).
- Education and training, as related to an available skilled workforce, will remain for at least the next decade the most important economic development incentive for a community, county, region or state.
- Curricula will become increasingly more interdependent and interrelated allowing for greater transferability of academic and application skills.
- Increased instructional emphasis will be placed on the productive application of knowledge outside the classroom in real-world settings.
- Greater emphasis will be placed on accelerated learning models (e.g., immersion, simulation) as related to skill-specific applications. This demand will be driven by employment needs of major corporations.
- The teaching of responsibility, values, etc. will become a higher curricula priority at both the secondary and postsecondary levels.
- Increase in home schooling in the college service area.

- Increase in private schools in the college service area.
- Education and training will increasingly incorporate multinational learning experiences and options that will include international internships as well as technologically-mediated joint projects.
- Factual information associated with the general education skills (e.g. reading, writing, computation) will increasingly be taught through mediated instructional formats specifically designed to maximize information acquisition.
- The classroom will increasingly take on more of a laboratory orientation in that students will be assigned projects and activities designed to teach application, synthesis, evaluation and analysis skills as well as the social skills of teamwork, negotiation, interaction, etc.
- Some level of state funding dependence on performance measures for higher education institutions will continue through most of the first decade of 21st Century. Their greater importance in terms of funding might be in their use in securing grants (federal and state).
- The traditional classroom will not disappear as a result of electronic education.
- The process of education will change in that books will not remain in a published format but will be downloaded and printed as needed.
- Alternative delivery methods such as fast-track, weekend and distance learning (telecourse, on-line, etc.). Will be highly desirable to the traditional model.
- The traditional model will need to examine how to deal with the issue of credentials, especially in the area of IT. Locally- issue of competing with private providers.
- More females attending college than males.
- Percent of high school graduates in the service area who attend college will continue to be higher than the state average.
- The need to upgrade equipment and the associated cost of doing so, will be an increasingly critical issue for colleges in the state.
- The college must refine plan/strategy for utilizing bond monies.
- Training needs for new college employees.
- Funding level for Occupational programs will continue to be an issue.
- New SACS criteria (especially in regard to faculty credentials and articulation agreements).

- Increase in mandated training by a variety of agencies in a wide range of fields (law enforcement, automotive-related, cosmetology, etc.).
- Biotechnology will continue to be a trendy topic, but the extent to which this field will impact the college service area or the state in general, is still unclear.
- Need to explore night and weekend offerings/potential at the college.
- Increasing trend to reverse matriculation.

## **Economic**

- There will be an increase in the number of entrepreneurs starting their own business.
- Manufacturing (as we traditionally know it) will be mostly in urban areas; large plants will be converted to alternate uses; no more need for “spec buildings” in rural areas.
- There will be an increase in workers who will telecommute to work.
- Importation of labor will become increasingly necessary in the college service area.
- There will still be a need for workers who “work with their hands”..... construction, masonry, craft production, etc.
- College must assist the service area in making the transition from an economy based on low-wage, low-skill workers to one based on a highly skilled workforce.
- Micro electronics will continue to revolutionize the way we work and the way we live. Things/devices will continue to get smaller, faster, cheaper, lighter, more connected and more pervasive.
- International trade, especially access to the China market, will drive economic development in the United States for at least the next decade, allowing for greater manufacturing and exportation of goods, resulting in an improved trade balance.
- The Internet will continue to have an almost revolutionary impact on how business is conducted especially as related to the marketing and sale of goods and services to customers. These changes will directly impact public agencies that will be expected to offer similar services to their constituents.
- The computer/television/radio/telephone will be available through a single provider who will sell, lease, or rent the necessary equipment as well as the access charges. You will still be able to secure your services through buying components from different vendors.
- State debt will continue to be an important issue.

- The funding level for colleges will not increase as rapidly as in the past from state sources, but will be made up from grant funds.
- Employment and population shifts will migrate to Macon County as Macon continues to grow and attract businesses.
- The issue of a state lottery and its impact on revenue generation will be debated.
- Housing costs in the college service area will remain significantly higher than the statewide average.
- Wage rates in the college service area will continue to trail both state and national averages.
- Quicker and cheaper Internet access will soon be a reality in the college service area and will likely spur the development of small businesses in the information technology field.
- The economy of the counties west of Asheville will be primarily driven by the growth in the north Georgia area (and to a lesser extent, growth in northern South Carolina and eastern Tennessee).
- The senior market will also be a key factor in driving the economy of the western North Carolina.
- There will be a resurgence in the demand for employees in many healthcare fields.
- Some of the exclusive development which has been primarily limited to the Cashiers-Highlands market will begin spreading into other communities in the college service area.
- Nationally, the present economy (2005) is still in a recovery mode.
- In North Carolina (2005), the recovery of the economy will lag behind that experienced in other parts of the country.
- In Southwestern North Carolina (2005) the recovery of the economy may proceed at a faster pace than other parts of the state given the earlier decline of the manufacturing sector in the mid-1990's.
- Economic diversification is essential to future economic stability and quality of life.
- Tourism, service jobs and government employment helped Jackson, Macon and Swain counties (including the Qualla Boundary) minimize the financial impact of the national economic decline.
- The economic and operational impact of the Internet will continue as to its level of importance.

- Technology deployment, workforce development and resource attainment will remain a top priority for SCC.
- Public funding for public education at all levels will decline in 2004-05 as compared to the funding increases experienced in previous years.
- Public education will be challenged to find alternative funding sources for additional and value-added services.
- Southwestern North Carolina will continue to experience population growth causing increased concern and discussion over housing, land management, social services and jobs.
- Healthcare fields will see a resurgence in demand along with more specialized services being offered to persons in rural areas.
- Several new upscale, resort-type communities are either under development or are proposed within the college service area. There are both negative and positive aspects to these types of developments. **Positive aspects** include an increase to the local tax base, the creation of some additional jobs, and an overall enhancement to the quality of construction/development in the area. **Negative aspects** include the likely increase in the cost of land/housing in the college service area, and most of the jobs created will be low-wage and may be largely filled by immigrants.
- High land/housing costs may limit the ability of the service area to attract new businesses/entrepreneurs. High housing costs is one of the major challenges facing the western North Carolina region.
- Rising fuel costs may hamper any national economic recovery.
- Costs associated with the occupation in Iraq (and costs to stabilize/rebuild that nation) could also have a negative impact on the national economy.
- Continued development in the Cherokee area will solidify that area as one of the major economic engines driving the economy of the college service area.
- Travel and tourism in the college service area may benefit from Americans who change their travel plans due to fear of international travel as a result of war/terrorism concerns.
- Continued growth in shopping by Internet will likely contribute to reduced sales tax collections by N.C. Dept. of Revenue.
- The economy will have an impact not only on enrollment, but also on the ability of colleges to secure part-time instructors.
- The National Heritage designation will give greater emphasis on tourism.

- The opening of a new hotel at Harrah's (in Cherokee) will have an impact (training, jobs, etc.).
- New exclusive developments in Jackson County such as the Balsam Preserve and Bear Lake projects will increase the county tax base, but could also impact home/property costs and the ability of the college to attract new faculty/staff.
- There will be a continued emphasis on entrepreneurship.
- The completion of the BalsamWest fiber optic project will have an impact on the region's economy.
- The growing national awareness of the importance of community colleges could have a positive impact on future funding.
- Migrant labor will become an increasingly important part of the region's labor force.
- Infrastructure issues (availability of water/sewer, inadequate road systems such as Hwy. 107, etc.) will continue to be challenges for the region, especially for Jackson Co.
- Quality of local leadership (including county & municipal governments) will be an issue.
- Future directions of the Jackson County Economic Development Commission (EDC) and the Jackson County Airport will be key issues facing Jackson County over the next year.
- Continued population growth will continue to be a driving force of the economy in many western North Carolina communities.

## **Demographic**

- There will continue to be an influx of "seniors" in our service area who want to be part of the community and they will want courses for enrichment as well as for another career.
- The projected increase in numbers of college students will affect enrollments, program offerings, staffing, facilities, etc. The traditional college age group (18-24 year olds) is projected to increase by 8.7 percent in the college service area from 2005 to 2015. Growth of all age groups is projected to be 15.5 percent.
- There will be an increase in the number of non-English speaking people (particularly Hispanic) in the area and among the students at SCC. However, this group will remain a small segment of the overall population.
- The natural aging of the population (particularly the baby boom generation) combined with the influx of retirees will result in a service area population which is increasingly dominated by the older segment of the population.
- Population growth in Macon County will significantly exceed what has been projected.

This growth will be fueled by the population explosion in the northern counties surrounding Atlanta. Further fueling the growth will be the opportunity to telecommute to the city and yet live in the country. Finally, Macon County has buildable home sites.

- Population growth in Jackson County will also exceed what is projected. This growth will largely be predicated on the forecast expansion of WCU, resulting in more faculty, staff and students.
- Student populations will migrate to the Macon campus as the population shifts within our service area.
- The college service area will experience a more diverse population/customer mix (for example, the influx of Hispanics and other minority cultures into the region).
- The college service area will grow- positive population growth.
- Increase in young families, especially in Macon County.
- The college needs to raise the awareness of the elderly residents of the area concerning the extensive healthcare and public safety programs offered by the college. This will help make this group more supportive of the college given their interest in these services.
- The trend of working longer and delaying retirement will continue.

## **Political**

- Increased regional collaboration, including the seven westernmost counties, could result in improved regional development. The emergence of Cherokee County, both politically and economically is likely to have a very positive impact on the region.
- Land-use planning will become an increasingly important subject, resulting in some form of planning.
- The influx of persons from outside the region will help reshape some of the provincial and social political views and positions on issues such as land-use planning.
- SCC will continue to receive strong support from all three service area counties and the Qualla Boundary.
- The Eastern Band of Cherokees will play a more active role in the region (due in part to the tribe's increasingly strong resource base).
- More planning/increase in regulations is possible.
- Issue of paying for public education- vouchers, charter schools and home schooling will receive increased attention.

- The state budget problem will last beyond the 2005-06 year, resulting in a tight state budget for several years.
- The proactive role of the college with the BalsamWest project could have both positive and negative political implications.
- The legislature is debating the merits of a state lottery, which would serve as a future source of funding for educational programs in the state.
- Counties in the college service area, particularly Jackson and Macon have significant financial reserves which could provide them with the resources to increase funding to the college and/or college initiatives.
- Possibilities exist for more infrastructure sharing with county governments.
- Some educational programs at the federal level have been targeted for cuts.
- Increased opportunities for law enforcement and emergency services training as a result of Sept. 11 attack.
- There is likely to be increased competition between SCC and Western Carolina University (and other community colleges) in relationships with local, state and to some extent, federal government officials.
- Congressman Taylor's powerful positions on various committees in the U.S. House of Representatives could have significant implications for the region.
- The proposed North Shore Road, commonly referred to as the "Road to Nowhere" in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park will continue to be major issue in 2005-06, and will be a polarizing issue between supporters and opponents. A cash settlement in lieu of the road would result in a significant financial award for Swain County.
- Increased focus on planning activities by counties in the service area will provide the college opportunities to work with counties in this regard.
- More opportunities for the college to partner with the Eastern Band of Cherokees may emerge as a result of the BalsamWest project.
- The Eastern Band of Cherokees have new leaders in tribal administrative positions, with different management styles than prior leaders.
- The controversy concerning the proposed Southern Loop Road in Jackson County will continue.
- Efforts to find a solution to the Jackson County Public Library issue will affect college plans for a new library.

- Development of a new Macon Campus will bring a new emphasis to SCC (marketing, working with county officials, etc.).
- There will likely be new homeland security related opportunities for the college.
- A variety of local races will be determined in the November 2005 election.
- Both the Town of Sylva and the Town of Webster are reviewing annexation moves, which will increase the municipal boundaries of both entities. The Town of Webster has annexed additional college property at the Jackson Campus.
- The future of the Jackson County Airport and the Jackson County Economic Development Commission (EDC) will be key issues for the county in the coming year.

## **Social**

- Students will continue to need child care, transportation, and financial assistance to attend college.
- We will see an increase in the number of students who make SCC their first college choice; and there will still be a large number who will see SCC as a viable second choice when university does not work out.
- As we do a good job with students who have disabilities, we will have more of them to enroll and we all need to be better prepared to deal with them effectively.
- There will still be a need to balance high tech and high touch.
- Stewardship of the environment will continue to be an issue.
- A growing segment of the population (particularly retirees) may not be supportive of increases in public funding for public schools or higher education.
- Public debate in the service area over land-use planning is likely to increase.
- Debate in the region between those supportive of economic development and those opposed to further development is likely to intensify.
- The rapid increase in the number of elderly residents will place greater demands on healthcare providers, nursing homes and families in order to provide care for this segment of the population.
- Increased demand for social services will occur, along with a need for improved health care services.

- Citizen demand for improved public services will increase, particularly for those services provided by county governments.
- More recreational opportunities will be demanded, especially by older citizens who will desire wellness and exercise facilities.
- Students may desire improved and increased opportunities for recreation and avocational opportunities.
- A more diverse population (other cultures) may change the course offerings in some curriculums.
- Increased accountability.
- The community college could become more involved in the social community as we construct recreational facilities on the main campus and possibly in outlying areas (Cashiers, etc.).
- The “family unit” will continue to evolve- children will stay longer, parents return or identify alternative housing options.
- Healthcare will become an increasingly critical issue.
- Air quality (and to a lesser extent water quality) issues will become one of the primary issues in western North Carolina.
- The college needs to assess its services for students with disabilities (Louisburg College was identified as having a model program).
- Increased testing is being mandated by the state.
- Improvements in the diagnosis of learning disabilities will assist the college in meeting the educational needs of its students.
- Need to address citizenship/character/responsibility issues with students of the college.
- How to increase the appreciation for diversity at the college given we have a very homogeneous student/faculty/staff population (Speaker’s Bureau).
- How to maintain the culture of the college given the recent surge in new employees and the potential for a large number of retirements by long-term college employees over the next five years.
- The divestiture of state mental health services could have an impact on some SCC students.

## **Technology**

- The rate of change of technology improvements, enhancements, new ideas, will continue to be very fast.
- Technology will permeate more and more of everyone's life and SCC can be a leader in technology change in education in the region.
- Affordability and access will be issues until demand is aggregated and costs come down.
- SCC faculty and staff will be continually called upon to keep current with technology and improve their skills for teaching technology applications and using them in daily jobs.
- The college will still incur substantial costs for implementation of new technologies and upgrading existing networks and systems, as well as training for tech support staff. This will be an especially critical issue for 2005-06.
- The college must be prepared for an influx of a younger generation of students who are much more technologically proficient than students in the past.
- The college has gained recognition as a leading player in the effort to upgrade technology infrastructure in the service area.
- Enhancements in distance learning technology has the potential to be both an opportunity and a threat to the college: it enables the college to deliver educational programs to a new segment of students (from both within and beyond the college service area), while at the same time service area residents will have increasing opportunities to access educational offerings from educational providers outside the region via distance learning technology.
- Advancing technologies will change the classroom: while it does not do away with the classroom, video and transmitting capabilities will continue to change and improve.
- The continued integration and convergence of technology will require the college to maintain constant vigilance as to what direction(s) new technologies may take. This is necessary in order that SCC does not make a wrong technological turn and end up in a dead-end.
- The maintenance and support of various hardware, software and telecommunication networks will require a knowledgeable, energized, responsive and adequately staffed technology support staff. In order to do their jobs, these persons will need to be educated, trained, and, where appropriate, licensed or certified.
- Since individual and institutional productivity is directly correlated with education and training in the use of various applications, it is imperative that the college develop and implement a professional/technical development program for key employees most directly involved with various software applications.

- Life cycles of technology will continue to decrease while its usage will increase.
- Education must learn how to use technology to increase the quality and quantity of learning.
- Faculty and staff must learn to effectively use the technology to get full benefit- staff development.
- Efforts will continue to obtain high-speed broadband connectivity at a speed/cost comparable to urban areas of the state.
- College needs to stay on cutting edge with technology in spite of limited equipment funding.

### **Facilities/Property Acquisition**

- Cost of property acquisition for future expansion and growth will continue to rise dramatically.
- Additional sites, facilities, and properties will place a strain on existing maintenance resources. Additional local funding will be required to maintain facilities. The college now staffs seven sites, excluding staff at the two Job Corps locations.
- Some consolidation of Macon County SCC sites may occur when the new Macon Campus is constructed.
- The new campus in Macon County will offer SCC the opportunity to develop an image and position as THE college in Macon County, whereas WCU will always be THE college in Jackson County.
- The size and scope of the bond projects will require a greater devotion of staff time and resources than any other building project in SCC history.
- The Cherokee Center may be relocated to a center for higher education if one is built on the boundary.
- The age of SCC facilities will require increased maintenance in the near future.
- Safety and security concerns at the college will require additional expenditures.
- There may be a need to increase security surveillance at the college.
- Keyless entry offers a number of advantages and may be worth exploring at the college.
- Explore the possibility of hosting a branch of the public library at the Swain Center.

- Construction costs are escalating due to the higher price of steel and other material. This will impact the costs of planned construction projects at the Jackson Campus and the new Macon Campus.
- Closure of Southwestern Child Commission Day Care Center on the Jackson Campus would make additional classroom space available.
- Acquisition of Nichols property will offer new opportunities to serve the Cashiers area.

### **Internal Strengths**

- Experienced leadership.
- Committed, competent faculty and staff.
- Strong support from the Board of Trustees.
- Excellent technology resources for educational delivery and instructional support.
- Excellent track record in acquiring external funding.
- Collaborative efforts with other local/regional organizations.
- Strong tradition of support from county commissions in the college service area.
- Solid financial management of college budget.
- A generally high level of student satisfaction with programs and services at the college.
- Strong efforts by the college to assess its programs and services.
- Ability to respond quickly to educational and training needs in the college service area.
- Improving press coverage in the local media.

### **Internal Weaknesses (Challenges)**

- Potential for loss of experienced leadership over the next couple of years due to retirements.
- Too much diversification of activity (may result in a loss of focus).
- Need to acknowledge increasingly frenzied pace and its impact on college employees.

- This pace will likely accelerate when the college begins to implement the Information System of the Future over the next couple of years.
- Lack of cultural diversity among SCC employees.
- The continuing state budget crisis, including the potential for increased internal competition for dollars due to the tight budget situation.
- Reduced internal budget flexibility and control due to the state budget crisis.
- The state budget crisis may impact the ability of the college to achieve some of the priorities identified for 2005-06.
- The formal process of reaffirmation of the college's accreditation by the Southern Association began in January, 2005 and will continue through Fall, 2007. This process could be complicated by the potential loss of key college leadership during this period as a result of retirements.
- Need to increase appreciation/respect/understanding among various categories of employees at the college.
- Salary limitations (as well as the increasing costs of family health insurance coverage) due to the state budget situation could impact the ability of the college to attract/retain employees.
- Ability to meet the increasing demand by students for distance learning courses.
- Strategies for increasing overall pride in the college by students/faculty/staff.

### **Internal Opportunities**

- Community colleges are increasingly seen as an affordable first step to a four-year degree.
- Opportunities to pursue/obtain private grant money.
- Increased local press coverage.
- Increased opportunities in the Cashiers area with the move to the Nichols property.
- Increased opportunities in Macon County with the development of the new Macon Campus.
- Growth and expansion along Hwy. 107 and Hwy. 116. The new Lowes store may result in a number of events such as relocation of the Jackson County School Bus Garage.

- New and unique fiber infrastructure provides a wealth of advantages for the college.
- Increased opportunities in Swain County if the library opens a branch at the Swain Center.

### **Internal Threats**

- Increasing tuition and costs of attending college.
- Lack of consensus on the future directions of Jackson and also Swain counties. Both counties are divided into factions.
- Various costs associated with the conversion to the Information System of the Future.
- Competitive and uncooperative nature of some neighboring colleges/universities.
- In migration of retirees who tend to be unsupportive of educational bonds/initiatives.
- High cost of housing in the area can limit the college's ability to attract/retain employees.
- Negative aspects of rapid growth in the area- traffic congestion, increased crime (such as Meth), conflicts between immigrants and natives of the area.
- State and regulatory issues limiting locally based operating functions- trend toward centralization.

Gateway, Guiding Force, Creative Partner are still viable and express who we are.