



**Commission on Colleges  
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools**

**REPORT OF THE REAFFIRMATION COMMITTEE**

**Statement Regarding the Report**

*The Commission on Colleges is responsible for making the final determination on reaffirmation of accreditation based on the findings contained in this committee report, the institution's response to issues contained in the report, other assessments relevant to the review, and application of the Commission's policies and procedures. Final interpretation of the Principles of Accreditation and on the accreditation status of the institution rest with the Commission on Colleges.*

**Name of the Institution:** Southwestern Community College

**Date of the Review:** May 17-18, 2006 (Off-Site)

**COC Staff Member:** Dr. Michael Johnson

**Chair of the Committee** Dr. Phil A. Sutphin (Off-Site)  
President  
East Central Community College  
Decatur, MS

<b>Part I. Overview and Introduction to the Institution</b>
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*To be completed by the On-site Review Committee.*

<b>Part II. Assessment of Compliance</b>
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*Sections A thru E to be completed by the Off-Site Review Committee and the On-Site Review Committee.*

**A. Assessment of Compliance with Section 1**

**Institutional Integrity**

The Committee finds no evidence of non-compliance.

**Adherence to Commission Policy**

The Committee finds no evidence of non-compliance.

**Substantive Change**

The Committee finds no evidence of non-compliance.

**Representation of Accredited Status**

The Committee finds no evidence of non-compliance.

**B. Assessment of Compliance with the Core Requirements**

- 2.1 The institution has degree-granting authority from the appropriate government agency or agencies. **(Degree-granting Authority)**

**Compliance**

**Comment:** The North Carolina General Statutes (N.C.G.S.), Chapter 115D-1, authorizes the establishment of Southwestern Community College (SCC). The North Carolina Administrative Code (N.C.A.C.), Title 23 gives the College the authority to issue degrees, diplomas, and certificates to individuals who satisfactorily complete course and program requirements.

- 2.2 The institution has a governing board of at least five members that is the legal body with specific authority over the institution. The board is an active policy-making body for the institution and is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the financial resources of the institution are adequate to provide a sound educational program. The board is not controlled by a minority of board members or by organizations or interests separate from it. Neither the presiding officer of the board nor the majority of other voting members of the board have contractual, employment, or personal or familial financial interest in the institution.

A military institution authorized and operated by the federal government to award degrees has a public board in which neither the presiding officer nor a majority of the other members are civilian employees of the military or active/retired military. The board has broad and significant influence upon the institution's programs and operations, plays an active role in policy-making, and ensures that the financial resources of the institution are used to provide a sound educational program. The board is not controlled by a minority of board members or by organizations or interests separate from the board except as specified by the authorizing legislation. Neither the presiding officer of the board nor the majority of other voting board members have contractual, employment, or personal or familial financial interest in the institution. **(Governing Board)**

**Compliance**

**Comment:** Southwestern Community College has a governing board of 14 members, appointed according to N.C.G.S. 115D-12, that is the legal body with specific authority over the institution. The institution provided bylaws and descriptions of the responsibilities of the governing board. Documentation is provided of the board's policy-making activities. Members of the governing board are subject to the conflict of interest provisions found in N.C.G.S. Chapter 14-234. In addition, the bylaws of the governing board require adherence to SCC Conflict of Interest Policy 4.26. Adherence to these policies requires that none of the board members have contractual, employment, or personal financial interest in the institution.

- 2.3 The institution has a chief executive officer whose primary responsibility is to the institution and who is not the presiding officer of the board. **(Chief Executive Officer)**

**Compliance**

**Comment:** The President is the chief executive officer of the College and has primary responsibility to the college. He does not serve as the presiding officer of the governing board. Documentation consists of the president's job description and NCGS Chapter 115d-20.

- 2.4 The institution has a clearly defined and published mission statement specific to the institution and appropriate to an institution of higher education, addressing teaching and learning and, where applicable, research and public service. **(Institutional Mission)**

**Compliance**

**Comment:** Southwestern Community College has a clearly defined and published mission statement. The mission is appropriate to a community college and addresses teaching and learning.

- 2.5 The institution engages in ongoing, integrated, and institution-wide research-based planning and evaluation processes that incorporate a systematic review of programs and services that (a) results in continuing improvement, and (b) demonstrates that the institution is effectively accomplishing its mission. **(Institutional Effectiveness)**

**Non-Compliance**

**Comment:** The College engages in a mature planning and evaluation process that is ongoing, integrated, and institutional-wide. Planning and evaluation are conducted on two levels – the institutional level and the individual programmatic/departmental level. These levels are linked by the process that the North Carolina General Assembly passed as legislation in 1989. The North Carolina Community College Researchers and Planners Organization (CCPRO) has developed a peer review process to evaluate the planning and research process at 58 member institutions within the North Carolina system. The College also indicates that it engages in continuing improvement by way of the involvement of all sectors of the institution in the entire process. However the committee was unable to determine the improvements that resulted from the process. The college's mission is clearly stated in several documents (catalog, and other documents), and there is evidence that it is followed.

- 2.6 The institution is in operation and has students enrolled in degree programs. **(Continuous Operation)**

**Compliance**

**Comment:** Southwestern Community College has been in continuous operation for over forty years. Documentation of student enrollment in degree programs is provided in the SWCC Fact Book.

- 2.7.1 The institution offers one or more degree programs based on at least 60 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the associate level; at least 120 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the baccalaureate level; or at least 30 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the post-baccalaureate, graduate, or professional level. The institution provides a written justification and rationale for program equivalency. **(Program Length)**

**Compliance**

**Comment:** The Committee's review of the Southwestern Community College Catalog confirmed that the institution offers Associate in Arts and Associate in Applied Science degree programs requiring a minimum of 60 semester hours for completion.

- 2.7.2 The institution offers degree programs that embody a coherent course of study that is compatible with its stated purpose and is based upon fields of study appropriate to higher education. **(Program Content)**

**Compliance**

**Comment:** The associate degree programs offered by Southwestern Community College are structured using criteria established by the North Carolina State Board of Community Colleges and utilize a statewide catalog of courses. The college's Curriculum and Instruction Committee is charged with the responsibility of ensuring that new and existing programs are in compliance with appropriate curricular standards.

- 2.7.3** The institution requires in each undergraduate degree program the successful completion of a general education component at the collegiate level that is (1) a substantial component of each undergraduate degree, (2) ensures breadth of knowledge, and (3) is based on a coherent rationale. For degree completion in associate programs, the component constitutes a minimum of 15 semester hours or the equivalent; for baccalaureate programs, a minimum of 30 semester hours or the equivalent. These credit hours are to be drawn from and include at least one course from each of the following areas: humanities/fine arts; social/behavioral sciences; and natural science/mathematics. The courses do not narrowly focus on those skills, techniques, and procedures specific to a particular occupation or profession. The institution provides a written justification and rationale for course equivalency. **(General Education)**

**\_x\_ Compliance**

**Comment:** The Committee confirmed that Southwestern Community College's Associate in Arts and Associate in Applied Science programs contain a general education core of at least 15 semester hours consisting of courses in English, speech, humanities/fine arts, social/behavioral science, and math/science as published in the catalog.

- 2.7.4** The institution provides instruction for all course work required for at least one degree program at each level at which it awards degrees. If the institution makes arrangements for some instruction to be provided by other accredited institutions or entities through contracts or consortia, or uses some other alternative approach to meeting this requirement, the alternative approach must be approved by the Commission on Colleges. In all cases, the institution demonstrates that it controls all aspects of its educational program. **(Contractual Agreements for Instruction)**

**\_x\_ Compliance**

**Comment:** The Committee's review verified that the college provides the instruction for all course work in each of the institution's degree programs, with the exception of its associate degree nursing program. For that curriculum, Southwestern participates in a consorcial agreement with two other accredited institutions for the sharing of staff and facilities. The program offered through this consortium has been approved by the state Board of Nursing and is evaluated annually by Southwestern Community College through a program review process.

- 2.8** The number of full-time faculty members is adequate to support the mission of the institution. The institution has adequate faculty resources to ensure the quality and integrity of its academic programs. In addition, upon application for candidacy, an applicant institution demonstrates that it meets the comprehensive standard for faculty qualifications. **(Faculty)**

**\_x\_ Compliance**

**Comment:** The number of full-time faculty members at the institution is adequate to meet its mission and goals. The institution provides programs and courses taught by qualified, experienced faculty members with program lead responsibilities under the directions of properly credentialed, experienced faculty members who serve as department chairs and/or program lead. Over sixty percent of credit hours at the institution are taught by full-time faculty members. Further evidence of compliance is demonstrated by the average class sizes over a period of six semesters ranging from 10.75 to 12.23 students.

- 2.9** The institution, through ownership or formal arrangements or agreements, provides and supports student and faculty access and user privileges to adequate library collections as well as to other learning/information resources consistent with the degrees offered. These collections and resources are sufficient to support all its educational, research, and public service programs. **(Learning Resources and Services)**

**\_x\_ Compliance**

**Comment:** The institution provides student and faculty access to appropriate library materials consistent with degrees offered. This is done through the College's own collection and through agreements. There are two agreements in evidence. The first is CCLINC (Community Colleges of North Carolina) This consortium allows students to request materials from any member of CCLINC. The second is a standard membership in the OCLC /Interlibrary loan program.

- 2.10** The institution provides student support programs, services, and activities consistent with its mission that promote student learning and enhance the development of its students. **(Student Support Services)**

**\_x\_ Compliance**

**Comment:** The institution offers a collection of student support programs, services and activities that are in alignment with its mission of creating an environment for promoting academic achievement and fostering the social development of its students. The institution subscribes to a philosophy of service excellence, one that places an emphasis on student-centeredness, as demonstrated by an organizational consolidation of operational units that delivers functional services in a uniform and seamless manner, while providing options for one-on-one assistance. It is this student-centeredness that has also led to several improvement initiatives, including a redesign of the new student orientation and the student handbook. Of particular note is the institution's emphasis on advisement, with individual guidance provided in the areas of career counseling, academic advising, financial aid, disabilities services and academic tutorial services.

- 2.11** The institution has a sound financial base and demonstrated financial stability, and adequate physical resources to support the mission of the institution and the scope of its programs and services.

The member institution provides the following financial statements: (a) an institutional audit (or *Standard Review Report issued in accordance with Statements on Standards for Accounting and Review Services issued by the AICPA for those institutions audited as part of a systemwide or statewide audit*) and written institutional management letter for the most recent fiscal year prepared by an independent certified public accountant and/or an appropriate governmental auditing agency employing the appropriate audit (or *Standard Review Report*) guide; (b) a statement of financial position of unrestricted net assets, exclusive of plant assets and plant-related debt, which represents the change in unrestricted net assets attributable to operations for the most recent year; and, (c) an annual budget that is preceded by sound planning, is subject to sound fiscal procedures, and is approved by the governing board.

Audit requirements for applicant institutions may be found in the Commission policy entitled "Accreditation Procedures for Applicant Institutions. **(Resources)**

**\_x\_ Non-Compliance**

**Comment:** The committee found that the financial statements and management letter for the period ending June 30, 2005 demonstrate the college has sufficient resources to support its mission. However the committee could not find a Statement of Net Assets, exclusive of plant assets and plant related debt, for review. The physical resources of the college appear to be adequate to meet the needs to the campus community. A review of survey information and the college web site suggest the college is continuing to expand and provide the appropriate resources for a learning environment. Survey information also indicates the college community is a part of the budget planning process and is given the opportunity to present ideas for inclusion. The Board of Trustees approves both a county budget and a state budget for the institution.

- 2.12** The institution has developed an acceptable Quality Enhancement Plan and demonstrates that the plan is part of an ongoing planning and evaluation process.

- \_\_\_ Compliance
- \_\_\_ Non-Compliance

**Note:** *If a recommendation(s) is warranted, include only the number and the recommendation under 2.12. Narrative, rationale, and evidence supporting the recommendation, as well as any other comments regarding the committee's assessment of this Core Requirement, should be included in Part III of this report. Delete this note prior to printing the final report.)*

## **C. Assessment of Compliance with the Comprehensive Standards**

- 3.1.1** The institution has a clear and comprehensive mission statement that guides it; is approved by the governing board; is periodically reviewed by the board; and is communicated to the institution's constituencies.

**x   Compliance**

**Comment:** Southwestern Community College has a mission statement that provides the foundation for college activities. Evidence is provided of review and approval by the governing board. The mission statement appears in college publications, including college catalog, student handbook, policies and procedures manual, and on the College web site.

- 3.2.1** The governing board of the institution is responsible for the selection and the evaluation of the chief executive officer.

**x   Compliance**

**Comment:** North Carolina General Statute 115D-20 authorizes the local board to select a president subject to approval of the State Board of Community Colleges. In addition the Constitution and Bylaws of the Southwestern Community College Board of Trustees specifies that the board is responsible for the selection of the president. The Board of Trustees evaluates the president annually as required by the North Carolina Administrative Code.

- 3.2.2** The legal authority and operating control of the institution are clearly defined for the following areas within the institution's governance structure:

- 3.2.2.1 the institution's mission;
- 3.2.2.2 the fiscal stability of the institution;
- 3.2.2.3 institutional policy, including policies concerning related and affiliated corporate entities and all auxiliary services;
- 3.2.2.4 related foundations (athletic, research, etc.) and other corporate entities whose primary purpose is to support the institution and/or its programs.

### **CS 3.2.2.1 Compliance**

**Comment:** The institution's mission is clearly defined in North Carolina General Statute Chapter 115D-20, North Carolina Administrative Code Title 23 Chapter 028.0104, and SCC Policies and Procedures Manual.

### **CS 3.2.2.2 Compliance**

**Comment:** The institution's fiscal stability is clearly defined in North Carolina General Statute in various sections of Chapter 115-D. Article VIII, Section 4 of the Board of

Trustees Constitution and Bylaws cites power and duty of the Board to review all financial activities of the College.

**CS 3.2.2.3 Compliance**

**Comment:** Institutional policies concerning related and affiliated corporate entities and all auxiliary services of Southwestern Community College is clearly defined in North Carolina General Statute Chapter 115-D-20. SCC Policies and Procedures Manual, Statement 2.1, Board of Trustees Constitution and Bylaws, Article IX, Section 1 further reinforces the Board's legal control over all institutional policy.

**CS 3.2.2.4 Compliance**

**Comment:** The institution's legal authority and operating control for related foundations and other corporate entities whose primary purpose is to support the Southwestern Community College and/or its programs is clearly defined in North Carolina General Statute Chapter 115D-7. The Operating Agreement with the SCC Foundation and the SCC Foundation bylaws are provided.

**3.2.3** The board has a policy addressing conflict of interest for its members.

**Compliance**

**Comment:** The Southwestern Community College Board is subject to North Carolina General Statute 115D-26 regarding conflict of interest. In addition, the Board of Trustees' state in their bylaws that in order to avoid conflict of interest or the appearance of conflict of interest, Board members shall adhere to the SCC conflict of interest policy found in the SCC Policies and Procedures Manual.

**3.2.4** The governing board is free from undue influence from political, religious, or other external bodies, and protects the institution from such influence.

**Compliance**

**Comment:** Members of the Southwestern Community College Board of Trustees are appointed by the county commissioners, board of education, or the governor. All board members are subject to the SCC policy regarding conflict of interest. Gubernatorial appointees to the board are required to follow Governor's Executive Order One that requires public officials to serve and exercise authority for the good of the public and not use such power for narrow interest. Various other policies protect the rights of employees to exercise political and religious beliefs as citizens.

**3.2.5** Members of the governing board can be dismissed only for cause and by due process.

**Compliance**

**Comment:** Trustees can only be removed for cause and by due process. North Carolina General Statute 115D-10 provides the mechanism for due process.

**3.2.6** There is a clear and appropriate distinction, in writing and practice, between the policy-making functions of the governing board and the responsibility of the administration and faculty to administer and implement policy.

**Compliance**

**Comment:** The Board of Trustees is responsible for setting policy as stated in North Carolina General Statute Chapter 115D and outlined in the Board of Trustees Constitution and Bylaws. The authority for operation of SCC according to the policies of the Board is stated in Board of Trustees Constitution and Bylaws, Article IX, Sections 1

and 2 as supported by review of the Board minutes. All faculty and staff positions at SCC have a position description outlining responsibilities.

- 3.2.7** The institution has a clearly defined and published organizational structure that delineates responsibility for the administration of policies.

**Compliance**

**Comment:** Southwestern Community College provided an organizational chart that shows a clearly defined organizational structure. This chart is available in the SCC Policies and Procedures Manual, Statement 1.4.1.

- 3.2.8** The institution has qualified administrative and academic officers with the experience, competence, and capacity to lead the institution.

**Compliance**

**Comment:** Southwestern Community College provides evidence by way of resumes, transcripts, and evaluations that administrative and academic officers have the experience, competence, and capacity to lead the College.

- 3.2.9** The institution defines and publishes policies regarding appointment and employment of faculty and staff.

**Compliance**

**Comment:** Southwestern Community College has policies regarding appointment and employment of faculty and staff. These include policies on quality of personnel, appointment, resignation, and non-renewal, employment policy and procedures, and equal employment opportunity. All policies are published in the SCC Policies and Procedures Manual.

- 3.2.10** The institution evaluates the effectiveness of its administrators, including the chief executive officer, on a periodic basis.

**Compliance**

**Comment:** Evidence is provided that Southwestern Community College evaluates the effectiveness of its administrators, including the chief executive officer, on a periodic basis. This evidence includes copies of recent evaluations and copies of the policies and procedures governing the evaluation process.

- 3.2.11** The institution's chief executive officer has ultimate responsibility for, and exercises appropriate administrative and fiscal control over, the institution's intercollegiate athletics program.

**Not-Applicable**

**Comment:** Southwestern Community College does not have an intercollegiate athletics program.

- 3.2.12** The institution's chief executive officer has ultimate control of the institution's fund-raising activities.

**Compliance**

**Comment:** Evidence is provided that Southwestern Community College's chief executive officer (president) has ultimate control over SCC's fund-raising activities. This evidence includes the president's job description and SCC's resource development program guidelines as found in the SCC Policies and Procedures Manual.

- 3.2.13** Any institution-related foundation not controlled by the institution has a contractual or other formal agreement that (a) accurately describes the relationship between the institution and the foundation, and (b) describes any liability associated with that relationship. In all cases, the institution ensures that the relationship is consistent with its mission.

**Compliance**

**Comment:** Southwestern Community College has a Foundation that is organized as a 501c (3) corporation with its own board, by-laws, and articles of incorporation (all of which are provided as documentation). A copy of the formal agreement between the Foundation and SCC clearly describes the relationship between the two entities and addresses the liability associated with the relationship. The Foundation's purpose as described in its mission statement is consistent with the mission of the College.

- 3.2.14** The institution's policies are clear concerning ownership of materials, compensation, copyright issues, and the use of revenue derived from the creation and production of all intellectual property. This applies to students, faculty and staff.

**Compliance**

**Comment:** The committee finds the college adequately addresses the issue of intellectual property through policies published in the Southwestern Community College Policy and Procedures manual.

- 3.3.1** The institution identifies expected outcomes for its educational programs and its administrative and educational support services; assesses whether it achieves these outcomes; and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of those results.

**Non-Compliance**

**Comment:** This institution has a well established planning and institutional effectiveness process that requires the development of measurable outcomes for all academic programs and administrative/educational support services units. The college's Institutional Effectiveness Manual outlines institutional effectiveness at the college and serves as a guide for individual programs and departments. Two versions of the manual are produced annually, one for administrative and Continuing Education departments and one for the curriculum programs. The North Carolina Community College System (NCCS) adopted twelve performance measures and standards in 1999 to assess accountability at the institutional level for its 58 member institutions. Some of these measures have direct links to programs and departments and are used to assess outcomes at the unit level. However, the committee could not find evidence of improvement as a result of the process.

- 3.4.1** The institution demonstrates that each educational program for which academic credit is awarded (a) is approved by the faculty and the administration, and (b) establishes and evaluates program and learning outcomes.

**Non-Compliance**

**Comment:** The Committee addressed the program outcomes at CS 3.3.1. These comments will address learning outcomes. Learning outcomes have been developed for

all curriculum programs at the college and are evaluated annually as a part of the annual planning/outcomes process. However, the committee could not find evidence of improvement as a result of the process.

- 3.4.2** The institution's continuing education, outreach, and service programs are consistent with the institution's mission.

**x   Compliance**

**Comment:** The Continuing Education Department carries out Southwestern Community College's mission through a variety of programs that extend the College's educational services to non-curriculum students in the service area. Proof of these services is located in the college catalog and the class schedule. The leader in Continuing Education is the Vice President for Extension Education and Economic Development, and several of the components of the job description for this position relate directly to economic development. The Continuing Education Department at Southwestern Community College is committed to the College's mission.

- 3.4.3** The institution publishes admissions policies consistent with its mission.

**x   Compliance**

**Comment:** The College's admissions policies provide access to citizens who need and value "high quality" innovative instruction and support" in an environment that "promotes student achievement and academic excellence" which are in a direct relationship to its mission. The institution has established and published admission policies that define access to curriculum programs including all associate degrees, diplomas, and certificates.

- 3.4.4** The institution has a defined and published policy for evaluating, awarding, and accepting credit for transfer, experiential learning, advanced placement, and professional certificates that is consistent with its mission and ensures that course work and learning outcomes are at the collegiate level and comparable to the institution's own degree programs. The institution assumes responsibility for the academic quality of any course work or credit recorded on the institution's transcript.

**x   Compliance**

**Comment:** Policies for evaluating, awarding, and accepting credit for transfer, experiential learning, advanced placement, and professional certification are well defined and published in the Student Catalog and the institution's website. Additionally, the institution has clearly defined and published agreements in consortial relationships. Academic quality is assured by performance of students in licensure exams and employer satisfaction surveys in addition to graduate surveys.

- 3.4.5** The institution publishes academic policies that adhere to principles of good educational practice. These are disseminated to students, faculty, and other interested parties through publications that accurately represent the programs and services of the institution.

**x   Compliance**

**Comment:** Academic policies are reviewed and approved by the College's Curriculum and Instruction Committee to ensure good educational practice. Faculty, administrators, and student services personnel bring policy and procedure information to the committee.

The Board of Trustees determines general academic policy statements deemed consistent with good educational practice. The academic policies and procedures are published in the Student Handbook, Faculty Handbook, College Catalog, and Policies and Procedures Manual and on the college's website.

- 3.4.6** The institution employs sound and acceptable practices for determining the amount and level of credit awarded for courses, regardless of format or mode of delivery.

**Compliance**

**Comment:** Southwestern Community College follows North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) regulations for determining the amount and level of credit awarded for courses, regardless of format or mode of delivery.

- 3.4.7** The institution ensures the quality of educational programs/courses offered through consortia relationships or contractual agreements, ensures ongoing compliance with the comprehensive requirements, and evaluates the consortial relationship and/or agreement against the purpose of the institution.

**Compliance**

**Comment:** Southwestern Community College offers several programs, courses of study, through consortia relationships, articulation and contractual agreements and memoranda/letters of agreement. These agreements are reviewed periodically to ensure compliance and agreement with the purpose of the institution. Contractual Agreements are governed by the North Carolina Administrative Code which ensure the quality of educational programs of study and accomplishes this through periodic review of all agreements.

- 3.4.8** The institution awards academic credit for course work taken on a noncredit basis only when there is documentation that the noncredit course work is equivalent to a designated credit experience.

**Compliance**

**Comment:** In addition to its regular curriculum, Southwestern Community College allows students to earn academic credit by course-specific examination; licensure and certification; and completion of advanced placement classes and CLEP examinations. In its Compliance Certification, the college describes its policies of awarding credit in such situations, and the competencies that must be demonstrated for credit to be awarded.

- 3.4.9** The institution provides appropriate academic support services.

**Compliance**

**Comment:** Southwestern Community College provides a number of academic support services to assist its students, including instructional, tutoring, counseling, advising, and testing services. Title IV funding has provided ongoing support for targeted students with specific needs.

- 3.4.10** The institution defines and publishes general education requirements for its undergraduate programs and major program requirements for all its programs. These requirements conform to commonly accepted standards and practices for degree programs.

**Compliance**

**Comment:** The Committee's review confirmed that the college specifies in its catalog the total number of credits, number and distribution of general education credits, and the number of electives required for each academic program. The sequence of courses leading to each degree, diploma, and certificate are appropriate and utilize a statewide course numbering system.

- 3.4.11** The institution protects the security, confidentiality, and integrity of its student academic records and maintains special security measures to protect and back up data.

**Compliance**

**Comment:** The College protects the security, confidentiality, and integrity of its student academic records in accordance with existing state laws, College policy, and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA). The College's Policies and Procedures Manual includes policies addressing security and confidentiality of records. The College's Information Technology division complies with the guidelines, policies, and requirements mandated in the "North Carolina Guidelines for Managing Public Records Produced by Information Technology Systems" policy published by the NC Department of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and History.

- 3.4.12** The institution places primary responsibility for the content, quality, and effectiveness of its curriculum with its faculty.

**Compliance**

**Comment:** The primary responsibility for content, quality, and effectiveness of the institution's curriculum is placed with its faculty pursuant to published policies (5.1, 5.8, 5.9, and 5.11) in the Policies and Procedures Manual. Additionally, effectiveness is assessed through various surveys and instruments such as the Annual Graduate/Employer Survey, Performance Measures and Standard, Annual Student Climate survey. The results of these instruments are used to establish faculty professional development and annual planning at the institution.

- 3.4.13** For each major in a degree program, the institution assigns responsibility for program coordination, as well as for curriculum development and review, to persons academically qualified in the field. In those degree programs for which the institution does not identify a major, this requirement applies to a curricular area or concentration.

**Compliance**

**Comment:** For each major a faculty member has been assigned the responsibility of coordinating curriculum development and review. Each person identified is properly credentialed. The institution has in place job descriptions and faculty profile rosters to verify program coordination responsibilities. The institution has a clearly defined planning process required by the State and identified as the Annual Program Review. The process outlines processes and procedures for curriculum review and evaluation. Additionally, the role of the chairperson clearly communicates that each has the responsibility to review and recommend curriculum changes through the institution's Curriculum and Instruction Committee.

- 3.4.14** The institution's use of technology enhances student learning, is appropriate for meeting the objectives of its programs, and ensures that students have access to and training in the use of technology.

**Compliance**

**Comment:** The institution has many computers and file servers that are used to enhance student learning as well as instruction. The College also uses technology to provide innovative learning opportunities by employing courseware such as Blackboard to support online instruction and learning as well as hybrid variations. Several online tutorials are available to students to enhance learning. Further, a number of degree programs include a requirement for computer literacy or an elective option for computer literacy. The use of technology to enhance the learning process is reflected in the integration of current, discipline appropriate technology in programs.

- 3.5.1 The institution identifies college-level competencies within the general education core and provides evidence that graduates have attained those competencies.

**Non-Compliance**

**Comment:** The institution does identify college-level competencies within the general core. Documentation indicates that individual competencies are embedded in course outlines. A rubric for assessing those competencies is also documented. Further, the institution provides *Outcomes for General Education, Assessment Mechanisms, Guiding Principles*, and a timeline. However, the committee could not find evidence that graduates have attained the general education competencies.

- 3.5.2 The institution awards degrees only to those students who have earned at least 25 percent of the credit hours required for the degree through instruction offered by that institution.

**Compliance**

**Comment:** Southwestern Community College awards Associates Degrees to students who (1) have earned a minimum of 25 % of their total course work at the College, (2) have earned a minimum of 25% of required major courses in the degree program. Academic advisors and the Registrar's office verify that potential graduates meet credit-in-residence requirements.

- 3.6.1 The institution's post-baccalaureate professional degree programs, and its master's and doctoral degree programs, are progressively more advanced in academic content than undergraduate programs.

**Not-Applicable**

- 3.6.2 The institution ensures that its graduate instruction and resources foster independent learning, enabling the graduate to contribute to a profession or field of study.

**Not-Applicable**

- 3.6.3 The majority of credits toward a graduate or a post-baccalaureate professional degree are earned through the institution awarding the degree. In the case of graduate and post-baccalaureate professional degree programs offered through joint, cooperative, or consortia arrangements, the student earns a majority of credits from the participating institutions.

**Not-Applicable**

- 3.7.1 The institution employs competent faculty members qualified to accomplish the mission and goals of the institution. When determining acceptable qualifications of its faculty, an institution gives primary consideration to the highest earned degree in the discipline in accordance with the guidelines listed below. The institution also considers competence, effectiveness, and capacity, including, as appropriate, undergraduate and graduate

degrees, related work experiences in the field, professional licensure and certifications, honors and awards, continuous documented excellence in teaching, or other demonstrated competencies and achievements that contribute to effective teaching and student learning outcomes. For all cases, the institution is responsible for justifying and documenting the qualifications of its faculty.

**Non-Compliance**

**Comment:** The vast majority of faculty members are well qualified. However, after an examination of faculty members' qualifications, the Committee determined that the statements of justification and documentation for six faculty members were not acceptable. (See list attached).

- 3.7.2 The institution regularly evaluates the effectiveness of each faculty member in accord with published criteria, regardless of contractual or tenured status.

**Compliance**

**Comment:** The institution has published policies which require regular evaluation of all faculty members regardless of probationary or non-probationary status. These policies are published in the institution's Policies and Procedures Manual (for example, Policies 4.5 and 4.6.1). Contractually, the institution requires each faculty to be evaluated annually through course surveys by students and performance evaluation conducted by the supervisor. Those faculty members instructing distance learning courses are evaluated through the Distance Learning Course Evaluation form that is completed by students in addition to the Student Opinion Surveys.

- 3.7.3 The institution provides evidence of ongoing professional development of faculty as teachers, scholars, and practitioners.

**Compliance**

**Comment:** The institution strongly supports faculty professional development. The institution's commitment to professional development for faculty members is demonstrated in its institutional goal of attracting and retaining quality employees and providing for their intellectual and personal growth. Additionally, that commitment is demonstrated through a number of professional development opportunities presented on Professional Development Day, Faculty work Day, Teaching and Learning Connects, Teaching Our Peers, and orientation and development programs. All faculty members are required to participate in professional development activities and proof must be presented at a specified period within the academic year. Additionally, there is evidence of budgetary considerations by the institution in providing necessary financial resources for professional development activities of faculty members. Provisions are in place to maximize the number of faculty members benefiting from professional development activities through teleconferences and small group settings.

- 3.7.4 The institution ensures adequate procedures for safeguarding and protecting academic freedom.

**Compliance**

**Comment:** The institution has procedures for safe guarding and protecting academic freedom which are validated through policy development and administrative support. Through policy and actively engaging in academic dialogue, faculty members are free to pursue scholarly works without restrictions. The institution has put forth great effort to

communicate academic freedom through publishing the policy in its Policies and Procedures Manual. Additionally, policies are established to address procedures for grievances regarding academic freedom.

- 3.7.5 The institution publishes policies on the responsibility and authority of faculty in academic and governance matters.

**Compliance**

**Comment:** The responsibility and authority of faculty in academic and governance matters are published in the institution's *Policies and Procedures Manual*. These policies (5.1, 5.8, 5.9, and 5.11) outline the general and specific duties and responsibilities of all faculty members.

- 3.8.1 The institution provides facilities, services, and learning/information resources that are appropriate to support its teaching, research, and service mission.

**Compliance**

**Comment:** Current needs are met and a broad range of services are offered including tutoring. Survey results evidence general satisfaction with the library as an overall service provider.

- 3.8.2 The institution ensures that users have access to regular and timely instruction in the use of the library and other learning/information resources.

**Compliance**

**Comment:** Bibliographic instruction is provided when and where it is required by experienced personnel. The existence of mandatory library orientation for all incoming students speaks volumes regarding the importance of bibliographic instruction on the campus. The Library Director's membership on the President's Council further evidences the importance of the library to the Southwestern Community College organization.

- 3.8.3 The institution provides a sufficient number of qualified staff—with appropriate education or experiences in library and/or other learning/information resources—to accomplish the mission of the institution.

**Compliance**

**Comment:** A review of the institution's Compliance Certification indicates that the institution has a sufficient, qualified staff. The student body rates library services highly, according to the 2005 surveys in the documentation.

- 3.9.1 The institution publishes a clear and appropriate statement of student rights and responsibilities and disseminates the statement to the campus community.

**Compliance**

**Comment:** The institution provides and disseminates a clear and appropriate statement of student rights, privileges and expectations in its Student Handbook and Planner, as well as on its website and in its 2005-2006 College Catalog. The institution's Student Handbook and Planner and its College Catalog are published and distributed to students, faculty and staff on an annual basis, and are also introduced during new student orientations. Of particular note is the redesign of the 2005-2006 Student Handbook and Planner, an initiative undertaken to increase student focus on information and resources

that foster a better understanding of the roles and expectations of campus community members in supporting attainment of student educational goals.

**3.9.2** The institution protects the security, confidentiality, and integrity of its student records.

**x   Compliance**

**Comment:** The institution possesses well-designed procedures and an elaborate technical infrastructure for protecting the security, confidentiality and integrity of its student records, all of which appear to be in full compliance with FERPA regulations and institutional guidelines. Employees are trained on institutional security policies and governmental compliance requirements through new employee orientations involving the institution's chief information officer and dean of student services, and through college-wide presentations and online training events. Databases maintaining student information and financial records are fully secured and are backed up on a daily basis to ensure the safety and protection of records, while physical records are kept in secure, fire-proof cabinets. Student privacy rights and procedures for accessing, reviewing and disposing of student records are provided in the institution's Student Handbook and Planner, the College Catalog and in the college's policies and procedures manual, available in print and online on the institution's website.

**3.9.3** The institution provides services supporting its mission with qualified personnel to ensure the quality and effectiveness of its student affairs programs.

**x   Compliance**

**Comment:** The personnel for the institution's student affairs departments are credentialed and qualified to effectively manage the programs and activities that support student services and uphold its mission. The senior administrators overseeing student services respectively possess over 20 years experience in student affairs administration, and are backed by highly qualified managerial teams who are well-credentialed in their respective fields of service. Additionally, staff members routinely attend nationally and regionally sponsored professional conferences and workshops designed to foster awareness and promote implementation of student affairs best practices. The institution also measures the effectiveness of its student affairs personnel through a series of student climate and satisfaction surveys, as well as through annual "job coaching" appraisals designed to evaluate performance competencies and encourage professional growth.

**3.10.1** The institution's recent financial history demonstrates financial stability.

**x   Compliance**

**Comment:** The committee review of financial statements and enrollment data suggests Southwestern Community College is adequately funded to meet the needs of its constituencies. The college is funded primarily through state and county appropriations both of which have increased over the past four years.

**3.10.2** The institution provides financial statements and related documents, including multiple measures for determining financial health as requested by the Commission, which accurately and appropriately represent the total operation of the institution.

**x   Compliance**

**Comment:** The committee verified that the college has provided documents, as requested, to the Commission.

**3.10.3** The institution audits financial aid programs as required by federal and state regulations.

**Compliance**

**Comment:** The college audits for the preceding four years have not contained any recommendations for improvement. In addition, the committee was provided with a copy of the approved Application for Approval to Participate in Federal Student Financial Aid Programs.

**3.10.4** The institution exercises appropriate control over all its financial and physical resources.

**Non-Compliance**

**Comment:** The committee was provided with procedures governing the daily control of financial and physical resources. The committee was unable to locate documentation to indicate the procedures were being implemented.

**3.10.5** The institution maintains financial control over externally funded or sponsored research and programs.

**Compliance**

**Comment:** The committee finds the college has clear policies as to responsibility for acceptance and control over externally funded programs. The college has been successful in obtaining funding to enhance its operations, recently obtaining a six million dollar renewal of the Gear Up grant. No financial concerns were noted in external audits and the college has adequate accounting systems in place to monitor grant expenditures.

**3.10.6** The institution takes reasonable steps to provide a healthy, safe, and secure environment for all members of the campus community.

**Compliance**

**Comment:** The committee was provided with copies of the various policies and procedure manuals delineating the appropriate response to campus emergencies. The committee was also provided with relevant policies for blood borne pathogens, hazard communication, confined space and other relevant concerns. Reviews by external organizations indicate the college is complying with its procedures as no major concerns were noted.

**3.10.7** The institution operates and maintains physical facilities, both on and off campus, that are adequate to serve the needs of the institution's educational programs, support services, and other mission-related activities.

**Compliance**

**Comment:** The committee was provided with information concerning past and projected improvements to the college facilities as well as the funding requests to the counties to support needed improvements and maintenance of the facilities. The college also completes deferred maintenance requests which indicate a complete assessment of the physical resources of the college. Surveys of the campus community reflect a level of satisfaction with the various campus and center components that make up Southwestern Community College.

## D. Assessment of Compliance with Federal Requirements

- 4.1 When evaluating success with respect to student achievement in relation to the institution's mission, the institution includes, as appropriate, consideration of course completion, state licensing examinations, and job placement rates.

**Compliance**

**Comment:** The College evaluates the success of student achievement by reporting the percentage of course completion (graduation rate) from the spring 2005 IPEDS report, licensure exam passage rates, and employment percentages. Retention and graduation, licensure exam pass rates, and job placement are all designated in twelve performance measures and standards implemented by the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS).

- 4.2 The institution maintains a curriculum that is directly related and appropriate to the purpose and goals of the institution and the diplomas, certificates or degrees awarded.

**Compliance**

**Comment:** The mission of the College is supported by the pursuit of institutional goals which include seeking excellence in learning and teaching for transfer, vocational and technical education; maintaining a nurturing learning environment; and proactively identifying, acquiring and maintaining College resources in support of its mission and vision. Curricula for diploma, certificate, and degree programs are examined at the system, institution, and program level to assure a direct and appropriate relationship to their purpose and goals.

- 4.3 The institution makes available to students and the public current academic calendars, grading policies, and refund policies.

**Compliance**

**Comment:** The institution's academic calendars, grading policies and refund policies are made available to students and the public through its annual College Catalog, Student Handbook and Planner, and on its website. The calendar and policies are readily accessible through these print and electronic formats, and are stated in comprehensible language to provide students with a clear understanding of their content.

- 4.4 The institution demonstrates that program length is appropriate for each of the degrees.

**Compliance**

**Comment:** The College does demonstrate appropriate educational program length based on standards set by The State of North Carolina Community College System. This interaction between the College and the state office ensures that the College's programs are comparable to programs at other institutions and in compliance with state guidelines and the North Carolina Administrative Code, which specifies the minimum program length for Associate Degrees. The college also provides further documentation in the college's catalog.

- 4.5 The institution has adequate procedures for addressing written student complaints and is responsible for demonstrating that it follows those procedures when resolving student complaints.

**Compliance**

**Comment:** The institution's procedures for addressing written student complaints are adequate and clearly exhibit mechanisms for administering fair and equitable resolution. Grievance and appeal procedures for both academic and non-academic related complaints and decisions are clearly defined and detailed in the institution's Student Handbook and Planner, providing the appropriate forums and levels of participation for redress and ensuring the adequate provision of due process at each stage.

- 4.6 Recruitment materials and presentations accurately represent the institution's practices and policies.

**Compliance**

**Comment:** The institution prepares and distributes recruitment materials and presentations which accurately represent its practices and policies as reflected in its 2005-2006 College Catalog and in its Student Handbook and Planner.

- 4.7 The institution publishes the name of its primary accreditor and its address and phone number. (The publication of this information is presented so that it is clear that inquiries to the Commission should relate only to the accreditation status of the institution, and not to general admission information.)

**Compliance**

**Comment:** The institution publishes the name, address and telephone number of its primary accreditor, the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, on the inside cover of its 2005-2006 College Catalog, as well as on its college website.

- 4.8 The institution is in compliance with its program responsibilities under Title IV of the *1998 Higher Education Amendments*

**Compliance**

**Comment:** The committee was provided with copies of the Eligibility and Certification Approval Report and the Program Participation Agreement dated May 2001 which support compliance with program responsibilities under Title IV of the 1998 Higher Education Amendments.

- E. **Additional Observations regarding strengths and weaknesses of the institution. (optional).**

<b>Part III.      Assessment of the Quality Enhancement Plan</b>
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*To be completed by the On-Site Review Committee.*

**A.      Brief description of the institution's Quality Enhancement Plan**

**B.      Analysis of the Acceptability of the Quality Enhancement Plan**

1.      **Focus of the Plan.** *The institution identifies a significant issue(s) related to student learning and justifies its use for the QEP.*
2.      **Institutional Capability for the Initiation and Continuation of the Plan.** *The institution provides evidence that it has sufficient resources to implement, sustain, and complete the QEP.*
3.      **Assessment of the Plan.** *The institution demonstrates that it has the means for determining the success of its QEP.*
4.      **Broad Based Involvement of the Community.** *The institution demonstrates that all aspects of its community were involved in the development of the Plan.*

**C.      Analysis and Comments for Strengthening the QEP**

## APPENDIX A

### Roster of the On-Site Review Committee

RY FINDINGS

## APPENDIX B

### Off-Campus Sites or Distance Learning Programs Evaluated as Part of the On-Site Review

IRY FINDINGS

## APPENDIX C

### List of Recommendations Cited in the Report of the Reaffirmation Committee

ARY FINDINGS