



April 12, 2012

NCA/Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Update: We have been notified that we will have the opportunity to participate in HLC's new process for institutional accreditation renewal known as Open Pathways. This new process consists of two main activities. The first activity is the creation and filing of an assurance document which uses electronically collected evidence to demonstrate our compliance with HLC's criteria. The second part is the development and implementation of a quality initiative. The College will identify an area for improvement that will have a cross-curricular impact and will use the project as part of our accreditation compliance in lieu of the Standard Pathway of self-study. The overall goal of the Open Pathways is to not only renew the College's accreditation but also make that renewal process valuable to the Institution as a vehicle for positive change. Dr. Cantu, Dr. Tully-Dartez, Jim Roomsburg and I attended the NCA/HLC Conference last week and brought back many ideas and best practices from the "pioneer" colleges that have tested this new process. I will be appointing a task force to help determine our Open Pathways project within the next week, as our proposal must be developed and submitted by September, 2012.

Higher Education Funding: Once again, the good and bad news is that funding for higher education in Arkansas will remain approximately the same as last year. We will not see an increase or cut, at this time; however, we have been advised by ADHE to be prepared for a potential small cut in the budget. In addition, at this time the Governor has not approved any raises. Thankfully, our enrollment has remained stable and our student credit hours have actually increased slightly. You all have prudently used the resources we have available.

Fiscal Affairs: Our Fiscal Affairs Office is finalizing the budget for next year in preparation for the May Board of Trustees meeting. We plan to hold a budget review for faculty and staff in May (date and time to be determined). We have had a number of requests for increased funds for travel, student workers, supplies, and other resources. While the rationale for many of these requests may be justified, we will have to see what the AY 2012-2013 budget holds for us at the state level. Also, the auditors with the State of Arkansas Division of Legislative Audit arrived on our campus the last week of March and began auditing the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2011. The Business Office is providing the necessary files and data to assist in the audit.

Legislative Update: Act 1244 which relates to "ability to benefit" will be implemented by January 2013. This Act requires that SouthArk submit a "student success plan" to the Arkansas Department of Higher Education (ADHE) on how we will address potential students that fall into this category.

Act 1197 that addressed "applied math requirements" and "remedial math" in Arkansas has taken more specific direction with the help of a committee and ADHE. A committee comprised by individuals from Arkansas higher education determined that the required math for academic programs can no longer be "intermediate algebra" since this was a remedial math course. The course must be College Algebra or an "applied math" course that will need to be identified with input from advisory committees (business/industry) and with the assistance of math faculty. A report of how the determination of the required math course was made for each program will need to be submitted to ADHE by May 1, 2013

Concurrent Enrollment: Arkansas law allows the enrollment of high school students in college-level courses under certain conditions. Concurrent enrollment allows students to obtain credit towards a high school diploma at the same time they earn college credit. Arkansas had identified NACEP (National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships) as the body that would provide standards for concurrent enrollment. NACEP has now been determined to "not be a fit" for all concurrent credit programs in Arkansas. Thus, a work group has been established to determine an appropriate concurrent enrollment model for Arkansas.

New College Operations Schedule: After much lengthy discussion and consideration, it has been determined that we will go to a new summer schedule to meet the use patterns of students and community patrons. The hours of operation will be 8A-6P Monday through Thursday and 8A-12P on Friday. If these hours work well, we will consider continuing with these hours in the fall. Due to the varying needs of the College, some employees, for example the custodial staff may be required to have a modified schedule which must be approved by the supervising vice president and president. The goal is to keep the areas that provide services to students, employees, community patrons/customers staffed.

The SouthArk Foundation has been extremely busy over the past months. The Foundation hosted its **Annual Donor and Scholar Luncheon** on April 10th. Over 70 scholars and their scholarship donors were in attendance. Current and past scholarship recipients, Lisa Sipes, Bobbie Smith, and James York gave eloquent and heartfelt tributes of thanks for the generous donations and for the tremendous support provided by SouthArk. The Foundation also hosted an **appreciation reception** and tour of the Health Sciences Center for 15 area health administrators on March 30th. The Foundation Board of Directors has also been busy planning and preparing for the **"Evening with the Stars" fundraising event**. A limited number of tickets for the gala are available for \$100/person. Friends of the College, Jane and D.R. James and Distinguished Alumni Sheriff Mike McGough and Patty Cardin will be honored. They will also recognize the SouthArk Outstanding Faculty and Staff honorees. A delicious meal will be served, followed by a brief program, a live and silent auction, and a dance. It is sure to be a memorable evening. We hope you will consider attending!

Arts in April: The Liberal Arts Division is offering many wonderful art events this month, many of which will showcase SouthArk students. I hope that you will attend all or some of these various events, as noted in the schedule listed below.

Projects: We continue to work on projects to improve the facilities, safety, and appearance at SouthArk. The College plans to raze three older homes we acquired on the corner of West Cedar and Summit Ave. Once cleared, we plan to expand and surface the existing parking lot and add a sidewalk by the Computer Tech Building. We also plan to raze the two houses just north of the Computer Tech Building and expand the existing staff parking area. Three other homes we acquired on Block will be razed. We will make necessary improvements to the Norman Preston House (blue one next to the Health Sciences Building), but tear down the garage apartment behind it. The new AREON and SATCO fiber technology huts will be located on the back (south end) of this property. **If you have any ideas on how the Preston property could be utilized by SouthArk, please send your detailed proposal to me by April 30th, as we will be making decisions on how that property will be remodeled and repurposed soon.**

We also have plans to correct a drainage problem behind the Billy McGehee Building, repair/resurface the parking lot between the McGehee and Workforce Buildings, and add entrance lighting to the East Campus. We are in the process of updating the fire alarm systems in several buildings on both campuses. The Library and McGehee buildings are slated for a few updates in 2012-13, as well. We plan for these projects to be completed within the next 12-18 months.

SGA Spring Fling: The SGA-sponsored an event in appreciation of students – the 2nd Annual SouthArk Spring Fling on April 11, 2012. The event was held on the "South Lawn" of the Student Center. Even with the weather being a little uncooperative, the event attracted 173 students. Events included inflatable activities such as a Velcro wall, an obstacle course and a basketball bungee run. There was also a dunking booth where students had the opportunity to dunk their favorite school employees such as: Dr. Cantu, Scott Larkin, Tanya Geary, Dr. Susanne Wache, Jim Roomsburg and Dean Inman. Games such as volleyball and basketball were underway with a "mean" water balloon toss in between. Students even had the opportunity to vote for SouthArk's future mascot. The votes have been tallied and will be revealed soon!

Commencement: We are honored that Representative Matthew Shepherd will be our spring 2012 Commencement speaker on May 11th. Spring Commencement will be held in the El Dorado Conference Center. We would also like to announce that we will hold a third commencement in August. This will enable our summer completers, especially the many Health Science program graduates, to walk immediately after they complete their programs. Moving to three graduation exercises will allow a smaller graduating class and guests to be seated in the Conference Center on campus which holds about 1300. I would anticipate that administrators as well as the program directors and faculty with graduates would attend this summer commencement exercise on August 3rd.

End-of-year and 20th Anniversary events: We have listed below many opportunities in which to engage in student and college events. We hope that you will be able to participate in many of them throughout our special 20th Anniversary year. It is important that students "see" us outside of the classroom or office setting, and that we support our co-workers and students who have put much work and preparation into these many special events.

It is a busy, but exciting time at SouthArk, as another successful semester and academic year comes to a close. I greatly appreciate and recognize your enduring commitment and dedication to our students, college, and community. The great coach Vince Lombardi so aptly said, **"Individual commitment to a group effort – that is what makes a team work, a company work, a civilization work."** With your ongoing "individual commitment," our team and institution work so well to provide our students and community with lifelong learning opportunities. It is an honor and a privilege to work with you. THANK YOU ALL!

Barbara R. Jones

Upcoming Events:

April

- Sunday, April 15 – Spring Choral Society Concert – 3:00 p.m. – South Arkansas Arts Center
- Sunday, April 22 – Writers’ Ink Awards Ceremony – 2:00 p.m. – Conference Center
- April 23-25 – Students’ Starving Artist Exhibit /Sale
- Tuesday, April 24 – “*Life’s Moments*” – SouthArk Acting Students – 6:00 p.m. – Library Auditorium
- Thursday, April 26 – Students-in-Recital – 12:00 p.m. – Conference Center
- Thursday, April 26 – Student Recognition Ceremony – 7:00 p.m. – Conference Center
- Saturday, April 28 – 20th Anniversary Gala Evening With the Stars – 6:30 p.m. – Conference Center

May

- Thursday, May 10 - GED Graduation – 2:00 p.m. – East Campus – Billy McGehee Building
- Friday, May 11 – Commencement – 7:00 p.m. – Conference Center
- Tuesday, May 22 – Board of Trustees Meeting – 3:45 p.m. – Administration Building Board Room
- Wednesday, May 23 – Foundation Board Meeting – Noon – Conference Center