



TOWARD FUTURE REALITIES

**A PLAN TO STRATEGICALLY POSITION
SOUTH ARKANSAS COMMUNITY COLLEGE, 2005-2010**

DECEMBER, 2004

MISSION STATEMENT

*South Arkansas Community College
promotes excellence in learning, teaching, and service;
provides lifelong educational opportunities; and
serves as a cultural, intellectual, and economic resource for the community.*

PURPOSES:

1. To provide an environment that fosters excellence in learning and teaching.
2. To provide a university transfer program of high academic quality for students who plan to continue their education.
3. To offer degree and certificate programs to develop or enhance occupational skills that prepare learners for a changing global economy.
4. To provide developmental courses to prepare students to do college level work.
5. To provide adult education and workforce development.
6. To provide comprehensive student services to enhance students' success.
7. To promote civic involvement, cultural life, and economic development in the community.
8. To make education accessible through innovative instructional methods.

VALUES:

The college has identified six value statements that serve as guiding principles in fulfilling the Mission and Purposes.

1. **Excellence in Education**
We are committed to providing students access to a highly competent, innovative, and supportive faculty and staff; modern facilities equipped with current technology; and high quality academic and occupational programs.
2. **Student Learning**
We are committed to providing support, respect, and encouragement, thereby enabling students to achieve their educational goals and develop skills for lifelong learning.
3. **Contribution to the Community**
We strive to serve the academic, occupational, and enrichment needs of the community; enhance its quality of life; and support economic development in South Arkansas.
4. **Quality of Work Environment**
Recognizing that everyone contributes to the learning process, we value each member of our college community; foster respect, trust, and support among faculty, staff, and students; encourage responsible, creative risk-taking and innovation; and recognize and reward exceptional performance and integrity.
5. **Respect for Diversity**
Believing that everyone should have an opportunity to learn and succeed, we value intellectual and cultural diversity in the classroom, in the workplace, and in the community.
6. **Commitment to Accountability**
We are committed to continuous evaluation of our institution to address the needs of the present and to meet the challenges of the future.

Participants in the Planning Process

- The Student Committee
- The Employee Committee
- The Competition Committee
- The Planning Committee
- Students in a Forum
- Community Members in a Forum
- Administration
- The Board of Trustees

The Planning Process

The development of this strategic plan started in January of 2004 when the Vice President of Academic Affairs, Dr. Tom Quinn, led a one-day session describing the challenges the College faces and outlining a process for planning based on marketing. The planning process was to focus on the competition, the needs of students, and the needs of employees. Three committees were formed: the Competition Committee, the Employee Committee, and the Student Committee. Each of these committees had meetings that were facilitated by Dr. Quinn who recorded their thoughts and gathered information. A student forum and a community forum gathered more information and validated previous input. Following this, Dr. Quinn wrote the draft of this document and shared it with the College Planning Committee, the Board of Trustees, and Administration to further validate the information and ideas and build consensus among all stakeholders. The Planning Committee was also charged with developing operational plans for future academic years that will be incorporated into the budget and work schedules of committees and employees.

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Introduction

The purpose of this document is to describe a strategic direction for South Arkansas Community College. This plan draws upon the thoughts of several groups that explored significant issues facing the college. The participants who contributed to this document recognize that status quo is not acceptable in the programming or services that the college provides. It is our belief that classic views of strategic planning, focusing on the college's strengths and weaknesses and comparing them to those of other colleges, will not move the college far enough toward a preferred vision. The participants were asked to think in terms of marketing and consider the needs of students, the impact of competition, the aspirations of employees, and social responsibility to our communities. This approach emphasizes that students must be recruited to come to the college and that the traditions and culture of the college are important to maintaining quality academic programming. Repeatedly, participants were asked what profound shifts in our environment will affect us and how we will react to these shifts. We believe it important to consider the wants and shared values of employees and the traditions of the college when planning. This plan will help the college adapt to a changing environment while maintaining a focus on student learning and a supportive environment for employees. Although the document included recommended changes, the ultimate goal was to describe a strategic direction. The document contains significant data that suggest change and narrative information that represents the college's vision for the future. The recommendations of the participants follow.

Tom Quinn, Ed. D.
Vice President of Academic Affairs

Planning Assumptions

Change at any college is limited by social, political, and economic realities that we assume cannot or should not be changed. While creating a plan for the future, we must consider these assumptions. Planning for SouthArk is bounded by the following realities:

1. SouthArk is governed by a local Board of Trustees.
2. The College is a state institution and must comply with state regulations and laws.
3. The community of El Dorado is supportive of the College's efforts. A local tax levy contributes approximately \$200,000 per year to the College.
4. State appropriations are not currently distributed using a formula that considers student enrollments, but a new formula that is already developed (but has not been implemented) will consider enrollments. The formula may reduce SouthArk's share of the financial appropriation to higher education.
5. SouthArk's approximate \$9.2 million budget contributes to the local economy. Students report they spend 720-990 dollars per month in their communities while they attend classes.
6. The College has thus far maintained two campuses in El Dorado. The West campus is located essentially in downtown El Dorado where land is valued at a premium and parking space is limited. The East campus has more land available and has been the traditional site of skilled trades programs. Many members of the college community

Summary of the Strategic Goals

South Arkansas Community College will accomplish its purposes by creating:

1. Communications that facilitate change and focus human energies toward a common vision.
2. Entrepreneurial employees who actively seek new program of regional appeal that lead to well-paying jobs.
3. Processes that maintain accreditation with the Higher Learning Commission.
4. A culture that values and assesses student learning.
5. Organizational structures that match the needs of the college.
6. Activities that support our college neighborhood and the communities which we serve.
7. Shared decision making and planning that is meaningful, credible, and connected to budgets.
8. Quality on-campus courses and online courses facilitated by faculty empowered with professional development opportunities.
9. Off-campus programs responsive to community needs.
10. Facilities that are functional and attractive.
11. Technology applications that improve instruction and student services.
12. Marketing that effectively communicates the services and programs available to the public, and in doing so, create an improved image.
13. A learning environment for all employees as well as students.
14. Student services that support the needs of students and facilitate learning.
15. A college that fully uses the assets of the communities it serves and excels in gathering resources.
16. Defined educational relationships with other communities and schools.
17. New workforce development programs responsive to the needs of employers.
18. Courses of value to students at home, in the community, and at work offered at times convenient to students.
19. Cultures that foster leadership and teamwork.

apply to the college earlier. Student orientation sessions must be offered earlier, and registration for the most part should be completed before July. The College will change the registration process to include a more personal touch and stronger academic advising. We will offer courses in new scheduling formats. Four-days-per-week and eight week calendars will be evaluated for some programs. The college will conduct forums to plan a new academic advising program.

Strategic Theme 19 - Leadership and Decision Making

Leadership must foster teamwork on a campus. A sense of sharing resources must be instilled in the culture, and employees must get behind new projects. Decisions must be centered on learning and focused on the achievement of students. Collecting accurate data for decision-making is important and must be improved. Leadership must have the courage to make decisions, promote trust, balance internal and external activities, and communicate information.

believe that the academic programming should be consolidated on one campus, but there is much disparity about this issue.

7. Local school districts will increasingly look to South Arkansas Community College for curriculum programming assistance. Legislative action mandating advanced placement courses and college courses available to high school students will affect the kind of assistance needed.
8. The current number of employees includes: 5 administrators, 17 professional managers, 51 full-time faculty, 39 part-time faculty, 41 classified full-time staff, and 1 classified part-time staff.
9. Workforce development, community service, occupational education, adult basic education, community service, developmental education, and transfer education will remain cornerstones to the college's mission.

Community Demographics



Service Area

- The College has a vast official service area including the counties of Union, Ashley, Bradley, and Chicot. This gives us a service area from South Central Arkansas to the Mississippi River. The distance from the College to the Chicot County seat is approximately 91 miles. The College's location, sixteen miles from the Louisiana border, makes it a border college with the associated problems of out-of-state marketing and tuition. Our official service area is also served by the University of Arkansas-Monticello, which offers two-year college programs and has two technical colleges in or near our service area (McGhee and Crossett). The total population in the area is approximately 94,311 people, not large for a two-year college service area. Approximately 1.6 percent of Arkansas residents attend a two-year college. If we were able to achieve a 1.6 percent enrollment in our service area, the College's enrollment would be approximately 1509 students. SouthArk's 2004 fall semester enrollment was 1359 students. We are currently achieving a market penetration of approximately 2 percent in Union County, but we cannot envision achieving this participation rate in the other counties in our service area. If we assume we could achieve a 2 percent share in Union County and a 1 percent share in the other counties, our student population would be 1392. This indicates that using traditional programming and delivery methods in the service area, is not likely to significantly increase enrollment. Currently, the College is able to attract students from Calhoun County (1.4% of all students), Columbia County (7.4% of all students), Ouachita County (4.4% of all students), and Union Parish, LA (3.2% of all students). These figures document the College's ability to attract a number of students from areas outside of its official service area. The College will need to determine if it has greater growth potential offering unique programs and on-line programs rather than delivering courses in Bradley and Chicot counties at potentially high costs. Columbia and Ouachita Counties are much closer to El Dorado. The market

population of the service area, as well as the market share currently achieved by the college, is given in the following table:

County	Population 2003	Population Change 1990-2000	Market Share Achieved
Union County	44,829	-2%	2.16
Bradley County	12,414	+7%	.059
Ashley County	23,583	-1%	.002
Chicot County	13,485	-10%	1.4
Total	94,311		

- Based on economic data from the 2000 United States Census Bureau, the median family income is \$32,182.00 per year. Young families have considerably less expendable income. This number may limit the ability of many families to pay educational expenses. In addition, Arkansas has a poverty rate of 18.8 percent, the highest in the nation. Data also indicates that average family income is dropping considerably (\$1322 from 2002-2003). Young families are concerned about acquiring the basic necessities before they consider education.
- The population of South Arkansas as well as the enrollment at area high schools is declining. The total population of the service area is expected to decline by 1000 in the next four years. Consequently, the number of high school graduates will decline. Projections indicate the following population change:

1994-2000	+9.4% increase
2000-2007	-4.8% decrease
2007-2012	-.09% decrease

- The unemployment rate of the area is high. Unemployment levels for the second quarter of 2004 are 8.3% for Union County, 9.4% for Bradley County, 11.2% for Ashley County, and 12.0% for Chicot County. The Arkansas average unemployment is 5.8 percent. Plant closings and layoffs have reduced the number of workforce development contracts the college has initiated. However, these closings may have also contributed to the recent increase in the number of regular credit students.

Student Population Demographics

As students cross the threshold of the college, they bring special problems with them, some resulting from the socio-economic conditions of the area. An examination of student demographic data clearly suggests a direction for change in programming and services. The demographics of the student population and suggestions for change are provided below.

- Many students who enter SouthArk need developmental education. Approximately 45% of students need remediation in writing, 80% in math, and 44% in reading. Many students require one year of remediation before they can take college transfer courses. Students recognize the necessity of preparing for college courses, but they do not want to

Strategic Theme 14 - Student Support

Support in obtaining housing will be provided to students in programs with regional appeal (e.g. Occupational Therapy Assistant and Physical Therapist Assistant). Child care services will be provided through contract. We will put more emphasis on student activities including student health. The College will continue to provide campus security and to improve parking lots. Students want the services of a placement office in securing a job. The College will strengthen the placement office by developing procedures to coordinate placement at the program level and central office level. The College will also examine the instruction given students in searching and applying for jobs. A new job-seeking course should be considered for all occupational students.

To improve our retention rate, students will be educated to use financial aid. The college will evaluate its financial aid program and provide aggressive financial packages including scholarships tied to recruiting. These packages will be provided to students early in the year if possible. The College will consider more scholarships for part-time students, and will evaluate salaries paid to workstudy students.

Strategic Theme 15 - Resource Gathering

The College will strengthen grant-writing activities and develop rapid response teams for grant and legislative opportunities. We will lobby for our share of state education appropriations and change our operations to maximize funding using a new funding formula. Tuition and fee structures will continually be evaluated.

Strategic Theme 16 - Educational Partnerships

Four-year degrees will be offered on campus using partnerships with four-year colleges. We will consider partnerships with other colleges to offer online programs when we do not have the resources or the economic advantage. More distance education facilities will be developed to facilitate these partnerships. We will strengthen concurrent enrollment packages to area high schools and consider the impact of the high school center on the viability of East campus post secondary programs.

Strategic Theme 17 - Workforce Development

Workforce Development will be responsive to the needs of employers and the local economy, offering non-credit, flexible, short-term training to the incumbent workforce. The College will offer more training in credit hour formats that creates a transcript and assist students who want to complete certificates and degrees.

Strategic Theme 18 - Scheduling and Registration

The past practice of the College has been to register students near the beginning of the academic year. Students who make a decision to attend a college in late July or August have lower success rates. Therefore, the College will attempt to create a community culture causing students to

teaching/learning spaces. A facilities master plan will be developed to guide the college in purchases and construction.

Decisions will be made about building on the West (downtown) campus and the appropriate size for the property available. This decision may cause a change in the use of the East campus. The impact of online classes on facility use will be evaluated. More parking will be made available and traffic patterns for services considered. Paramount in the discussions of the planning participants is the priority for a new bookstore, allied health facilities, and student commons area with food service. The Whitfield building may be remodeled to provide better facilities for existing medical programs. Alternate methods of funding will be considered to provide more learning spaces for medical and general education courses.

Strategic Theme 11 – Technology

A reliable computer information system is essential to the delivery of educational systems and will necessitate more technology staff on the East campus and possibly greater financial commitment to the Computer Center. We will make major improvements in our computer support department guided by a technology plan. The College will create high-tech environments that benefit instructors and students. Because students learn in different modes, faculty will need access to “smart classrooms” to show visual/digital information. The College will add two additional distance education classrooms, and the existing equipment will be updated. Also, the College will pursue funds to locate distance education equipment in off-campus locations.

Our technical programs are struggling to acquire and maintain up-to-date (or at least not obsolete) technology. Lack of resources is the major cause of the problem, sometimes exacerbated by resistance to change.

Strategic Theme 12 - Enrollment and Marketing

Marketing and recruiting practices must help increase enrollment and maintain a strong image in the communities we serve. College marketing and advertising will become routine, and recruiting efforts will involve prospective students as early as elementary school. The College will evaluate its admissions policies for the ability of students to benefit from college. We will review the name of the college and its name recognition. The College will create a program to improve freshman year retention and graduation rates. The College already recognizes the growth in the Hispanic population and will sponsor programs for them. The College will plan for a preferred size of the student body and create an organization to match it.

Strategic Theme 13 - Employee Welfare

To support change, the College will support more professional development for all employees. Employees need to visit other colleges and attend conferences to develop a world class vision for their areas of responsibility. There will be continual professional development in the use of digital technologies that enhance learning. Salaries, benefits, and rewards must be commensurate with those offered at other colleges.

needlessly waste time completing the courses. This data indicate developmental education is a significant part of SouthArk’s curriculum, and it warrants routine evaluation and an increased emphasis.

- In the Fall 2004 semester, seventy percent of students were female. This figure may indicate a need for more programs targeting the traditional interests of the male population. An examination of the catalog does not show a large number of skilled trades programs of traditional interest to men.
- A survey conducted during the Fall 2004 semester indicates that 74% of students have Internet services at home, and that 55% are interested in taking courses on-line. These figures are being validated by another survey. The number of students taking on-line courses is increasing steadily. Nevertheless, students remind us they often prefer on-campus courses because of the interaction with other students. Students appreciate the use of internet-assisted courses, and as the faculty updates courses, they are giving this option more consideration.
- 37% of students report they attend night classes. Data from the student record system indicate that an unduplicated head count of 526 attended night classes during the Fall 2004 semester. Students who participated in this planning process indicated they preferred the flexibility in course scheduling that night classes offered. Other students complained that some courses offered only at night would be preferred during the day. The percentage of students taking night courses is comparatively high for a college with a small population base.
- College records indicate that 194 students were new transfer students in the Fall 2004 semester. Survey information indicates that 42% of students attended other colleges before enrolling at SouthArk. Ten percent of students have already completed a degree. This survey information indicates that, in addition to typical student needs, it will be necessary for the College to process credit transfer requests including credit for work experiences.
- 45% of students have children living with them. Those needing child care services spend approximately 100-300 dollars per month for the services. Students often request day care services; however, students also report they rely on family members to provide much of the child care while they attend classes.
- 58% of students come to the college for job preparation or to upgrade skills in their current jobs. Community members tell us there is a shortage of people entering the skilled trades.
- 20% of students are between the ages of 19 and 22. Approximately 64% of students report they do not come to college directly from high school.
- Students come from 23 Arkansas counties and 2 other states. 71% of students come from Union County, and 5% come from Louisiana. These figures indicate a need for student housing in El Dorado.
- 72% of students report they commute more than 10 miles to the college. This may explain why they use the student center frequently and often request food services.
- 61% of students work part-time or full-time. An additional 13% are seeking employment. 6 – 8 dollars per hour is the most common income/salary students have reported. Students often report they have difficulty juggling work and college schedules and ask that courses be scheduled in blocks in either the morning or afternoon to accommodate part-time jobs.

- Sixty-six percent of students report they plan to continue education beyond an associate degree. 84% of students report they would participate in four-year degrees offered on campus. This figure indicates the College should maintain partnerships with four-year colleges to offer four-year degrees in El Dorado. Members of the community are interested in participating in four-year college programs. One private college currently offers four-year degrees in El Dorado.
- The high school vocational/career center is one of the largest programs offered. Local school districts need the center, but there is concern that funding may not be available to support the program in the future. Co-mingling a high number of high school students with post secondary students in the same program is now the norm at the East campus.
- 44% of students report they accept financial aid. This number is low compared to those of other colleges in other states. It is believed that students do not understand how to apply for financial aid, do not believe they are eligible for it, or do not want to accept it. To improve freshman year retention rates (freshman retention is approximately 50%) the college should provide financial aid training programs.
- In the 2003-2004 academic years, 164 students graduated with an AA or AAS degree and 194 with either a technical certificate or certificate of proficiency. The committees reached the conclusion that these numbers are low and the College needs to investigate the reasons.
- Community education staff report enrollments in their programs were 1331 from the Summer II session through Spring 2003 semester. Enrollments in workforce development programs were 1816 for the same time period.
- The student population (headcount) was stable for a number of years until the fall of 2004 when the College had a significant increase. With the exception of fall 2004, the growth rates of other colleges in Arkansas have exceeded that of South Arkansas Community College. SouthArk’s headcount enrollments have been:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Enrollment</u>
1998	1203
1999	1171
2000	1234
2001	1153
2002	1267
2003	1217
2004	1395

- Approximately 50% of new students drop out in the first year of college. At first glance this rate is alarming, but this number is consistent with that of other colleges. Students report that the graduation requirement for math is a major cause for high drop-out rates even though they often compliment the math faculty for their efforts. The failure rate for students in one developmental math course is approximately 74%.
- The county and student population by race is listed in the following table. The college believes that the Hispanic population is much larger than listed in census data, thereby creating an educational need and an opportunity for the college. The 2000 census population of Union County by race follows. The racial mix of the entire service area is approximately the same as that of Union County.

the area’s industries rely heavily on a locally trained workforce. Alliances between local companies and SouthArk not only serve local businesses but also ease the financial burdens the College must bear. Our workplace training programs need to be designed to attract new employers to Southwest Arkansas while retaining existing employees, making these programs important for local economic development. To achieve this goal, the College will discuss programming to develop the area economically. The College will pursue opportunities to fund new facilities.

Strategic Theme 7 - Processes and Policies

College processes and responsibilities must become more clearly defined, written, and easily accessible to support more productive and entrepreneurial employees. Budgeting processes need to be discussed openly to establish new priorities in programming and services and to use resources more efficiently. A portion of annual budgets will be connected to planning efforts. The College will consider the development of funding streams that support growth beyond state appropriations.

Strategic Theme 8 – E-Learning

Online educational offerings will grow, and faculty will receive course development support when they are ready. The College will create online programs and prepare organizational structures that can support them. The College must decide on the quantity of online offerings it will offer and strategically position itself in its markets. Faculty must maintain quality courses and implement online practices already developed. Professional development will be continual for faculty offering online courses and for those who want to enhance their courses using the Internet. Even though the College has made great strides in making library services available via the Internet, the College will continue this effort to improve while at the same time offering traditional services. Online advising services will be available for students who want to use them.

Strategic Theme 9 - Off Campus Locations

The College will carefully evaluate its presence in Bradley, Chicot, and Ashley Counties with the goal of creating educational opportunities for students in the area while keeping costs low. The programming offered at Warren will be evaluated, and new programming at Lake Village will be considered. The College will seek new sites for programs in Bradley County. Digital technologies will be used to deliver programs in these locations when possible. The College will market its unique programs in Colombia and Ouachita counties, as well as others in its de facto service area.

Strategic Theme 10 – Facilities

Attractive facilities are essential to recruiting students and creating a better image. We will enhance the aesthetic appearance, functionality, cleanliness, accessibility, and safety of current facilities, while effectively planning for future needs based on educational programs and services. We will continue to renovate classrooms into modern, comfortable, and flexible

Strategic Theme 3 - Learning and Advising

The College will reaffirm its commitment to assessing the effectiveness of teaching and create a culture whereby information gathered is used to enhance curricula and instructional practices. Faculty evaluation processes will be streamlined, and the processes will communicate a preferred vision for quality instruction.

We will implement a new advising system that ensures every student has contact with a trained academic advisor. We will establish an office of retention and advising to increase retention and help ensure student success. Collaboration between the Adult Education Department and developmental education will help improve retention and serve students who are under-prepared for college courses.

Strategic Theme 4 - Reaffirmation of Accreditation

SouthArk will complete a self-study for continued accreditation and reorganize the processes for continued accreditation. The College will consider a continuous quality improvement method of accreditation. The College will implement a plan to access institutional effectiveness.

Strategic Theme 5 - Organizational Structure

We will change the organizational structure of the College to support more effective programming and services. Many of the participants in the planning process believe that we should consider reorganization in administration. The role of the division chair is changing, and the workload of the position is increasing. We will consider a new division chair for college partnerships and E-Learning. It is expected that all employees will need cross-training to perform different functions. There will need to be stronger connections with planning and budgeting and greater emphasis on institutional research and data-driven decisions. The College will define responsibilities in the student services area including enrollment, registration, counseling, financial aid, and student life. The College will refine organizational responsibilities in the assessment of student academic achievement. We may expand student services to strengthen recruiting and advising, especially for the allied health programs. Workforce development and community education staff may have to accept additional responsibilities if enrollment numbers decline.

Strategic Theme 6 - The College's Neighborhood and Community

SouthArk will purchase neighboring properties and create a new surrounding community. We will publish information concerning the economic impact of the college on the service area and regularly gather information on our communities. The College will use more community resources including the South Arkansas Arboretum and externship sites. The College will discuss programming to develop the area economically. The College will pursue opportunities to fund new facilities.

SouthArk's role in preparing students for occupational licensure and certification requires careful attention to the interests of the local public, the occupation, consumers, and employers. Many of

	Union County	The College
African American	32.0%	30.9%
White	66.1%	67.3%
Asian	0.4%	0.2%
Native American	0.2%	0.2%
Hispanic	1.1%	1.3%
Other	0.5%	0.1%
Two or more races	0.8%	not reported

Students at the Secondary Area Career Center

The Secondary Career Center is treated separately in this document because of its special mission. The Secondary Career Center provides career and technical educational programs to high school students from six area schools. Its presence increases the number of career and technical programs available to student at a greatly reduced cost to local taxpayers. Secondary Career Centers are sponsored by the area school districts, education service cooperatives and South Arkansas Community College and are funded by the Department of Workforce Education. Over the past five years, the career center has averaged 185 students per year.

In the 2003-04 school year, approximately 120 students participated in concurrent enrollment programs and received over 1,000 hours of college credit. These students will have a transcript reflecting the college credit hours they have already earned in a postsecondary institution.

Six programs of study are offered at the center including Automotive Service Technology, Building Trades, Computer Engineering, Cosmetology, Medical Professions Education, and Welding Technology. The Center serves as a vital part of the curricula that are offered through the various high schools in Union County.

Students in Adult Basic Education

The Adult Basic Education program provides adults with the opportunity to improve their basic reading, writing, and math skills. Students may work on basic skills to improve their ACT scores, to take the official GED test, to improve their employability skills, to advance their workplace skills, or to gain personal satisfaction. The adult education program is conducted according to established laws, rules, and regulations. Since 1992 the program has not received a significant increase in funding. It faces the challenge of providing quality educational services with limited funding while serving more students. Specific programs included in this department include English as a second language, workplace education skills, computer literacy, and employability skills. In the 2003-2004 academic year, 546 students enrolled in over 12 hours, and over 925 students were served through the program



The Students

Student Wants

The Student Committee met to identify what students want in educational programming and services. The consensus opinion of the group was validated at a student forum. The following is a list of student wants:

1. More parking on the West campus. SouthArk has made recent progress in increasing parking spaces, but the effort needs to continue.
2. Good jobs after graduation and the skills to maintain them. Students want a strong job placement office to assist them in obtaining employment.
3. Students who are not from the area need inexpensive housing in El Dorado. The College needs to assist students in finding suitable housing.
4. Many students need more flexibility in the scheduling of courses. On-line courses offer course flexibility, but not all students want to enroll in them. Repeatedly, students described their problems in juggling work and college calendars. They want to see fewer courses bunched midday and want them scheduled either in the morning or afternoon. They also want easy access to course grades and assessment information.
5. Potential students want to know more about the college. Students report their belief that members of the community are not aware of the educational opportunities offered by the college.
6. Students want a better student center, food service beyond vending machines, a high percentage of students commute to college more than 10 miles and stay on campus between courses. They do not have the time between classes to go to a restaurant to eat. They also want a larger bookstore.
7. Many would like a greater number of weekend library hours and computer center hours. Currently, the library and computer center are open at the same time something which should be changed.
8. The on-line library services currently available to students are appreciated.
9. Students want more day-time activities that create a college atmosphere. This should include intramural sports and an open gymnasium.
10. A student newspaper would communicate needed information to students.
11. Students recognize the value of internships and externships and want to see greater use of community resources by the college.
12. Students want four-year degrees offered on campus.

student communications. The College will market signature programs and unique programs regionally. SouthArk will evaluate its image and take strides to improve it.

Strategic Theme 2 – Programming and Curriculum

Faculty, administration and professional staff must be entrepreneurial in suggesting and developing new programs and services. The College will develop a master academic plan to guide programming, create a diverse program mix, and create centers of excellence that provide for our communities. New programs will be limited to those that pay graduates high salaries. We will develop more one-year occupational programs, especially in the skilled trades occupations. These programs will be designed to foster good work ethics in students. We will create specialty, or “one-of-a-kind” occupational programs that will become signature programs for the college. We will increase the number of transfer programs and integrate liberal arts and technical courses to create new programs. All programs will be evaluated based on the program suspension policy and on costs.

We must learn from the quality movement in industry to become more responsive and customer-driven in creating programs. The College will encourage students to take advantage of general education to ensure they have the requisite basic skills to function effectively in today’s labor market. Advisors will encourage students to get a broad-based education that will allow them to negotiate today's treacherous job market.

Students understand the necessity of developmental education but knowing that developmental courses do not count towards graduation requirements, want to complete these courses as quickly as possible. The College will consider accelerated learning models and greater use of computer-assisted developmental education. General education will be examined to make sure it is meaningful to students at home, in the work place, and in the community. General education requirements for programs will be evaluated and articulation agreements with four-year colleges updated to strengthen course and program transfer. We will create new liberal arts courses, especially in mathematics, to improve the retention rate of freshman students. Because students and employees want physical activity courses that establish a healthy lifestyle, we will increase physical education course offerings at times that attract community members as well as students and staff.

The College will approve a program suspension/discontinuation policy to provide faculty criteria for program success. Program curricula will be continually redesigned to match the needs of markets. We will carefully structure advising for health programs to eliminate boom and bust in enrollments.

The Secondary Career Center will continue to be a vital part of the College, and it will change programs as needed. The Center will look for new programs that meet the needs of students as the community. The co-mingling of large numbers of high school students and post-secondary students will be reviewed.

We will evaluate our ability to serve students who have already had college experiences and consider them a new market opportunity.

- 8. An effective college marketing program using a full-time recruiter and effective web sites.
- 9. A new student center with food service.
- 10. A new bookstore.
- 11. College leadership that cares for employees.
- 12. Decision-making focusing on student learning.

Shifts in Employer/Employee Relationships

It is expected that future increases in state appropriations will be directed to colleges that have increases in enrollment. Therefore, we do not anticipate a significant increase in the number of employees at the college. There will be changes in employees' primary responsibilities, and retraining for new responsibilities will be common. The college will have more cross-trained employees who provide backups for other employees. For example, switchboards are already staffed by several persons who take time from their primary responsibilities to assist in this function. Division chairs are already accepting more responsibilities for entering scheduling data in the administrative computer system. Faculty will be asked to teach courses in new programs including courses in more than one division. The college will need to identify the processes by which we accomplish work to avoid overlap in functions and the contention this has caused. Lastly, there will be more communication with employees to coordinate projects.



The College's Reaction—A Preferred Direction

Strategic Theme 1 – Communications

Communication must be enhanced to provide employees the information they need to make decisions consistent with the direction of the College. We will improve communication between administration and employees to dispel the rumors that create fear and detract from good relationships. Current and prospective students want improved communications from the college. Because they rely on the web site for information, the web site will be redesigned and processes implemented to keep it up to date. Virtual tours on the web site and attractive compact disk marketing materials will be commonplace. Telephone switchboard functions will be evaluated. Computer kiosks and a student newspaper will be established and become essential to

- 13. Students are keenly aware of their educational shortcomings and are patient in taking developmental education courses. They like the practice of passing students who are ready to move on to the next developmental course even when it is done in the beginning of the semester.
- 14. Students want to pay minimal tuition and fees. They want scholarships for part-time students not connected to the number of enrollment credits. This request seems reasonable since so many students work part-time. They do not want to wait for financial aid checks as long as they currently do.
- 15. The students want a college with an excellent image.
- 16. Students want meaningful courses that help them meet their goals.
- 17. Child care services are requested.

Three planning groups contributing to this document discussed the image of the College. Students voiced their concern that SouthArk's processes are inflexible, and when looking for answers, students often get referred to numerous persons or departments before finding solutions. They stated the quality of instruction is excellent, and occupational programs are seen as a direct link to employment. Members of the community are proud of the college and would offer only one criticism -- the college needs to market its programs and services better.



The Competition

Identifying the Competition

The competition for SouthArk comes from traditional sources including other colleges, other external agencies that provide workforce development training, and competition among SouthArk's programs for students. Declining revenues and population demographics are causing other colleges to be more aggressive in programming and marketing. The competition from Southern Arkansas University and its extension campus, SAU Tech, was often discussed by the Competition Committee. Also discussed were the two-year college branch campuses of the University of Arkansas, which are supported by strong transfer linkages with the University of Arkansas. The University of Arkansas-Monticello offers two-year programs and has one technical campus in the middle of our official service area (Crossett). This campus already offers technical certificates and has proposed offering degrees. On-line colleges, including Phoenix University now located in Little Rock, are increasing in popularity. They are, however, much more expensive than SouthArk. Residential colleges increase efforts to recruit students using the appeal of a student-life campus. Four-year colleges, while trying to maintain

enrollments, are more reluctant to accept SouthArk courses in transfer. Lastly, private technical schools are entering the skilled trade's program market because public colleges are not serving the populace in this area.

Competitive Advantages

SouthArk has available resources for success that the competition may not have. The College has many nursing and allied health programs that are in high demand and can attract numerous students. SouthArk is part of a community considered to be a regional health care center. Information available indicates the medical community in El Dorado may grow, thereby improving this resource. Our experienced faculty has a reputation for providing quality education, and is becoming more entrepreneurial in the development of new programs. SouthArk is very capable of providing many different services with limited resources. We have excellent community support and a Board of Trustees with strong ties to Union County. The community is cooperative in providing the use of the community art center. The religious community in the area has great influence and may be able to assist the college in its efforts to disseminate information to the public. Murphy Oil Company, a local Fortune 500 company, is supportive of education. The location of part of our service area in the Delta region of the state provides more grant opportunities. The College has opportunities for expansion in our service area even though travel distances are great.

Shifts in the Competition

Other colleges are increasing their efforts to use technology to recruit students. They are using Web chat lines and well-manicured web sites with virtual tours to attract students. Residential colleges will maintain and even increase their efforts to recruit recent high school graduates. They already couple federal financial aid and scholarships in attractive packages for students. Other two-and-four-year colleges are increasing their use of digital technologies to deliver courses online.

The competition will continue to be aggressive in creating innovative programs that offer graduates high starting salaries. The Competition Committee predicts two-year colleges will offer more short term and online technical programs to meet the needs of industry.

Other colleges are creating partnerships to offer programs when they do not have the resources to offer them alone. A recent example is our partnership to offer a registered nursing (RN) program.

The Competition Committee also recognized that the lowering of skills demanded for service jobs will result in less education being required by the incumbent workforce. More companies provide their own training or use online education for professional development. Employees of corporations whose schedules do not allow them to attend classes are seeking other flexible means of training and education. There has been a noticeable reduction in training required in the use of computers.

Proprietary schools spend more for promotion and marketing than do traditional colleges. These schools offer students practical education in shorter time than that offered by traditional two-year institutions. Their programs use state-of-the-art equipment, employ qualified instructors who usually have related work experience, and provide high job placement rates. They offer classes year round, and because student can graduate in less time, they can enter the workplace sooner. The proprietary schools are making significant inroads among students who are turned-off by traditional educational institutions which put up barriers to entrance. A whole segment of students has been written off as uneducable because they don't have the requisite scores on the COMPASS, ACT, or SAT. Because the curriculum is not controlled by the State, these schools can work closely with industry to make the curriculum conform to industrial standards and employer needs. Without general education requirements, the proprietary schools have more leeway to design short, intensive programs.

The growth of certificate programs is an important trend, even though the total number of certificates awarded remains smaller than the number of associate degrees conferred. Most certificates involve specific, work-related training. Many community college students, especially older and part-time students who hold full-time jobs, do not want to pursue lengthy educational programs. The certificate programs appeal to those who want to upgrade their current skills or acquire new ones to increase their job opportunities in the marketplace.



The Employees

Employee Wants

The Employee Committee met to identify the changes they wanted for themselves and SouthArk. The following is a list of employee needs:

1. More professional development activities on campus and funds for off campus workshops.
2. Policies that are uniformly applied.
3. Clearly defined processes for completing work.
4. Clean facilities with high market appeal.
5. Competitive benefits and salaries along with adequate supply budgets.
6. Clerical support for allied health programs.
7. Technical support and training in the use of digital technologies including "smart classrooms."