

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

SOUTH SEATTLE COMMUNITY COLLEGE 2009 ACCREDITATION INSTITUTIONAL SELF STUDY AUGUST 2009

The Fall 2008 end of the research timeline for the South Seattle Community College 2009 Accreditation Institutional Self Study coincided with the beginning of the worst worldwide economic crisis since the Great Depression. Because of this timing, some of the financial analysis and conclusions in the Self Study no longer match our present reality. The purpose of this supplement is to report how South Seattle Community College met the financial crisis.

South's leadership responded early and decisively to the signs of approaching economic trouble, using as a model the college budgeting process already in place, which is grounded in college-wide participation and transparency. As a result, we are able to meet our goal of serving students and our community with minimal damage to the structure of the college. South is meeting its current FTE targets and has avoided layoffs of permanent employees. We will serve more students in the 2009-10 academic year than we did in the previous year.

South began its response to the financial situation in August 2008 at the first communication from the governor that state revenues would be significantly reduced and spending cuts would be required. President Jill Wakefield initiated Cabinet level discussions about how to meet the financial challenge, and reaffirmed an open process. In November, when specific spending requirements first were received from the governor, President Wakefield led two college-wide meetings to explain the cuts needed and encourage idea generation from faculty, staff and students. The primary agenda item for a quarterly Management Team meeting in November also was solution generation.

Our challenge was compounded because estimates of the budget shortfall continued to increase, the requests for potential cuts changed several times, and there were no specific numbers until the state legislature approved a budget at the close of its session in late April 2009.

To ensure visibility to the campus, and to our service community as well, a special page was set up on the college website to report on the changing proposed state budget cuts, the legislative budget drafting process, and South's budget planning.

Momentum for our process was sustained when Gary Oertli was appointed Interim President in January 2009, after Wakefield was selected as Chancellor of the Seattle Community Colleges. In ongoing campus-wide meetings, Interim President Oertli reaffirmed our overall goals: continue to meet the needs of students, meet FTE targets, and avoid layoff of permanent employees.

Our College Council accepted the responsibility for leading the budget adjustment process, in the same way it leads our annual budget development process, which it has done for more than five years. The Council is a representative body, with membership elected from all sectors of the college community: full and part-time faculty, exempt staff, classified staff and students. It is an advisory body to the President and Cabinet, tasked to consider campus issues that cross department or program boundaries, and recommend solutions. Our usual budget development timeline is mid-March through the end of May. The Council accepted extending its leadership from January through mid-June 2009, when the final budget was adopted. Interim President Oertli continued regular communication with the campus through-

out this time, reporting changes in state revenue forecasts and legislative activity.

In the final budget South maintained its reserve accounts at healthy levels. No full-time staff or faculty positions were lost; our transparent, collaborative process won the acceptance and even admiration of faculty and classified union leadership. No classes were trimmed, except where enrollment was unacceptably low, which is the usual practice.

Some negative impact on the college was unavoidable. For example, to save salary costs a number of key positions, from vice president to custodian, were left unfilled when employees left for other jobs or retired. South has been able to maintain an acceptable level of service through

interim appointments, creative adjustment of responsibilities, and disciplined priority setting. But we recognize that inequities resulting from these solutions cannot continue without greater damage to the institution. So, beginning in July some limited, targeted hiring began; the emphasis is on positions that directly affect students and visitors, such as custodial work.

The governor has signaled the likelihood of additional state budget reductions in the face of continuing drops in revenues. Though we are uncertain about the timing, the impact or the outcome, we have confidence in our process to meet the challenge, and the creativity of faculty and staff to find solutions that enable us to serve student needs.