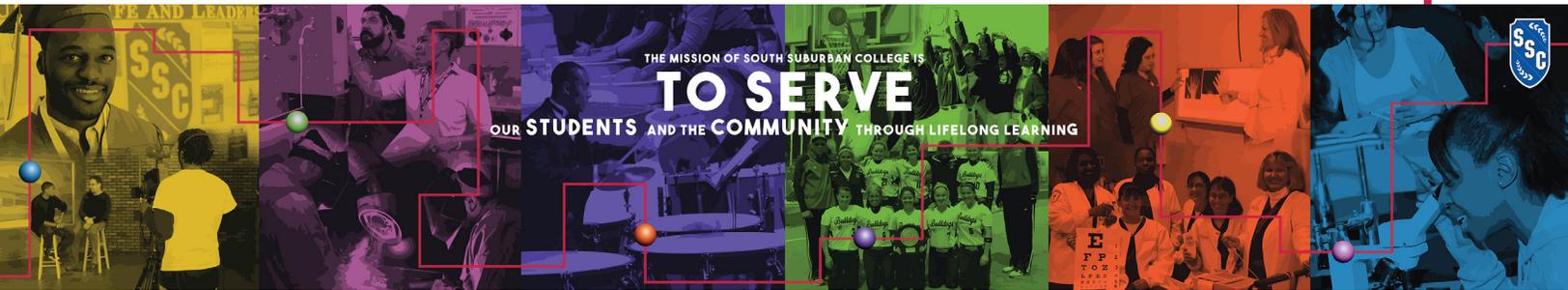


# ASSURANCE ARGUMENT

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### HLC REACCREDITATION SITE VISIT

MARCH 25-26<sup>TH</sup>, 2019



SOUTH SUBURBAN COLLEGE



## Executive Summary

### Criterion One: Mission

The institution's mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution's operations.

#### Excerpts from Assurance Argument

The mission of South Suburban College is to Serve our Students and the Community through lifelong learning.

SSC's mission statement is meaningful, concise, and easily understood by faculty and staff, the community served, and our students.

The college periodically reviews the mission statement during strategic planning. The mission statement was most recently reviewed during the development of the 2014-2019 Strategic Plan.

The mission, vision, and institutional core values support SSC's commitment to serve our students, partners, and community. Our mission, vision, and core values also support SSC's commitment to provide all students with an excellent, accessible, and student-centered institution.

Eight institutional core values articulate how the mission is lived and realized. The core values are Service, Student-Centered Environment, Community, Collaboration, Accessibility, Respect, Excellence, and Sustainability.

SSC's academic programs, training, and services support our mission statement.

The Board of Trustees supports the mission as it reviews and authorizes budget reports, facility modifications/upgrades, and personnel recommendations. This commitment is evidenced by the college's budgetary alignment with its mission.

SSC's governance promotes effective leadership and supports collaboration that enables the organization to fulfill its mission.

SSC clearly articulates its mission through multiple public documents and venues.

The strategic plan and the college budget guide the operations of the college.

The college's strategic plan underscores the institution's mission and demonstrates SSC's commitment to education.

The college is committed to workforce development and provides quality employer-driven curricula and programs to students and employees.

SSC is also sensitive to its region's economy. The college is committed to providing affordable college education. The college and Board of Trustees have maintained a low tuition rate, raising tuition and fees only if based on adequate vetting and data analysis.

Since its last accreditation, South Suburban College has expanded its facilities to provide the highest quality education while staying within our budget constraints.

The college recognizes the diversity of its learners, other constituents, and the greater society it serves. SSC's mission, vision, core values, and goals articulate the college's commitment to diversity.

The college also offers other programs that recognize our diverse student body. These programs include Veterans' Services, College for Kids and Continuing Education Classes for seniors and Student Organization for Latino Engagement & Success (SOLES), the Latino Help Center, Latino Outreach Scholarships, the International/Intercultural Studies Program, and involvement with One Million Degrees (OMD).

The college offers a comprehensive athletics program open to all full-time, academically eligible students.

SSC's Human Resources Department ensures equal opportunity employment for all employees and applicants.

South Suburban College practices nondiscrimination in all areas of employment and educational relations.

South Suburban College protects all individuals from retaliation arising from discrimination investigations, complaints, or findings associated with a discrimination investigation or lawsuit.

SSC strives to value our partners in business, industry, government, school districts, and fellow educators.

SSC is committed to the public good.

South Suburban College remains committed to offering a variety of credit and non-credit academic programs despite continual reduced state funding.

Educational programs and activities take clear priority in SSC's resource allocation and budgeting.

The college has received multiple grant awards that assist in the initiation and subsidization of programming for our students, employees, local teachers, and community members. These grant awards have funded a variety of initiatives including equipment and technological acquisitions for career programs.

SSC also provides a wide selection of adult and continuing education classes. In addition, the Business and Career Institute provides training and services to the community at large, local business, and industry.

Student Life enhances the quality of student life through the coordination of social, cultural, and entertainment events and activities. Activities include films, concerts, dances, performing artists, plays, guest speakers, field trips, workshops, and leadership-training seminars. Student Life also serves as the central resource for student clubs and organizations.

### Strengths

- SSC has a clear purpose for the college's work identified in a mission that developed through a collaborative process.
- SSC has a publicly articulated mission.
- SSC's Mission honors diversity by providing opportunities to all.
- SSC has a strong commitment to the public good.

### Evidence

- The college offers career education programs, certificates, transfer curricula, general education courses, and developmental education.
- SSC offers AGS, AA, AS, AFA, AES, and AAS degrees. In addition, SCC also offers advanced certificates and basic certificates.
- The college offers 28 Associate in Applied Science (A.A.S.) degrees and a number of stackable certifications for seamless matriculation.
- The dual credit numbers for spring 2018 (1826), summer 2018 (65), and fall 2018 (1184) reflect our high school students' participation in dual credit.
- The Adult Education Department celebrated its 47th graduating class on May 19, 2017. During these 47 years, SSC has graduated more than 5,000 students.
- In 2016, approximately 250 middle school and high school students visited South Suburban College for a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) Day that included a live link with astronauts. The highlight of this event was a NASA Educational Downlink, moderated by astronomers from Adler Planetarium in Chicago, where students met and spoke to U.S. Astronaut Commander Tim Kopra and Flight Engineer Jeff Williams live from the International Space Station.
- The college hosts a high school mock trial competition organized by the South Suburban Bar Association and Sixth Municipal Circuit Court of Cook County.
- The college also hosts the First District Appellate Court of Illinois for oral appellate arguments as part of annual Law Day events.
- The college serves a predominantly minority student population (76%), and, in recent years, the Hispanic/Latino student population has grown to approximately 20% of the total student population.

- The South Suburban College Financial Aid Office (SSCFAO) processed over 9,000 applications for financial aid during fiscal year 2018. The SSCFAO awarded 2,523 students with Pell Grants totaling \$7,832,993. In fiscal year 2018, the SSCFAO awarded 863 students Monetary Award Program (MAP) Grant Awards from the State of Illinois totaling \$1,090,392. The SSCFAO also helped over 200 veterans with federal and state veteran's assistance totaling over \$200,000.
- The South Suburban College Foundation awarded academic scholarships for \$1,988,075.00 for the period of 1989 to 2018.
- The college opened up the following new labs: a Manufacturing Lab, Welding Lab, Speech Lab, Reading Center, and South Works Maker Lab. The college purchased new equipment for programs including Nursing, Allied Health, Legal Studies, Manufacturing, and Business, such as a 3D printer, new echocardiography machines, simulators, stenograph machines, law books for the law library, and new computers for business labs.
- Facility improvements include updating technological equipment in classrooms, and aesthetic and educational design modifications in classrooms, meeting rooms, and restrooms. The college has built and/or upgraded laboratory classrooms for the healthcare, sciences, information technology, court reporting, and manufacturing areas. Improvements for safety and athletic performance to the Athletic Center have also benefited our student athletes and competing teams.
- Sixty-six percent (66%) of the operation budget directly supports student learning with instructors' salaries, instructional equipment/supplies, and student support services.
- SSC provides activities and events that highlight the diversity of the student population. Black History Month activities, Hispanic Heritage Month events, Women's History Month programs.
- Black Male Success Initiative sessions, and the annual Women's Conference & Expo are events proudly sponsored by the college.
- SSC's mission statement is articulated publicly to both internal and external constituents through the college's website, college catalog, student handbook, and other college documents.
- SSC has a strong culture of commitment to public good.

## Criterion Two: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

### Excerpts from Assurance Argument

SSC establishes and follows processes for fair and ethical behavior. Integrity is maintained across all areas of the college including its governing board, administration, faculty, and staff. The Board of Trustees ensures the financial stability and integrity of the institution and makes decisions in the best interest of the institution.

SSC follows the ICCB System Rules, which establish guidelines for ethical conduct in finance, academic, and personnel functions. Every five years, the ICCB audits all Illinois community colleges to ensure each college is in compliance and meeting Illinois state standards. The ICCB five year review process is similar to the HLC reaffirmation visits, and requires the community college to provide evidence of effectiveness and integrity in instruction, student services/academic support, finance/facilities, and accountability. In 2017, SSC completed its five-year review and was recognized by the ICCB to be in compliance.

SSC has established ethical practices for the Board of Trustees, administration, faculty, and staff. The policies are enforced through the Board Policy Manual and the Faculty, Adjunct and Staff contracts.

SSC has several processes for complaints.

SSC is also a member of the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA). SARA is an agreement among member states, districts, and territories that establishes comparable national standards for interstate offering of postsecondary distance education courses and programs.

South Suburban College provides detailed information about its degree requirements.

The college catalog contains complete listing of tuition and fees.

South Suburban College's (SSC) governing board is sufficiently autonomous to make decisions in the best interest of the institution, the students, its employees, and to assure the integrity of institutional operations.

The SSC Board of Trustees has policies and practices that articulate expectations, responsibilities, and accountability, as well as the division of authority and responsibility of the President. The governing board retains authority to ensure that the institution meets its objectives, for selection and evaluation of the president, and for assuring that the institution operates with integrity. Responsibility for managing the day-to day operations of the college is delegated to the president, faculty, and senior leadership.

Three board-approved documents guide SSC's operations. The Strategic Plan, Facilities Master Plan and annual budget establish college priorities, plans for resource

allocation, and plans for supporting the college infrastructure to meet current and future needs.

The SSC board also demonstrates commitments to internal and external constituencies through its strategic plans.

To ensure that the board is updated on a variety of topics, numerous presentations/ reports are part of the agendas of regularly scheduled board meetings. The board also participates in board retreats. At the most recent board retreat, board members participated in numerous activities, including a board self-evaluation led by an independent third party, the Executive Director of the Illinois Community College Trustees Association. In the report, the Executive Director states, "The South Suburban Board is clearly a highly performing Board benefitting from high performance leadership at the Board and staff levels."

The SSC governing board's practices and policies encourage external constituencies to engage with the board and present their interests and needs.

All meetings of the board are open to the public and are subject to the Open Meeting Laws of the State of Illinois. Agendas for each meeting are distributed in accordance with state law to media outlets in the service area, and agendas are posted on the college website, as are meeting minutes and reports.

Each meeting of the board always includes an agenda item to allow the public to bring issues before the board, among other items that appear on monthly board agendas.

The Board of Trustees Policy and Procedure manual establish rules and regulations for ethics in contracting and purchasing, vendors, hiring, and promotions and pay raises that ensure ethical decisions and processes.

The duties of the board, president, and administration are clearly listed in the Board of Trustees Policy and Procedure manual.

The board delegates day-to-day management of the college to the administration and expects the faculty to oversee academic matters. The President of the college is the contact person between the board and college employees.

Student trustees represent students in decisions about education at the college, and they help keep students informed about issues affecting student life. They communicate regularly with students about board activities and gather student input about issues facing the board.

The board's policies and practices support its independence from undue influence. In addition, independent auditors review the institution's finances and operations.

The South Suburban College Foundation has separate policies and a self-governing Board of Directors, which ensures that the college governing board is not unduly influenced by large gifts to the college.

All board members and administration must also file an ethics statement as required by Illinois law.

College governance is a cooperative enterprise requiring faculty involvement. Faculty knowledge and expertise is used to make recommendations to the college's chief academic officer, president, and trustees. Toward that goal, the SSC faculty contract codifies faculty participation on the college's numerous committees. Since faculty members are fundamental to the college's mission, the college considers it imperative that faculty guide teaching and learning.

South Suburban College is committed to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning. Both the faculty Agreement and Adjunct Faculty Agreement protect Academic Freedom.

The college maintains formal grievance processes for all faculty and staff through their collective bargaining agreement. Student grievance rights relating to the student code of conduct, affirmative action, discrimination and sexual harassment, and violence and threats of violence are documented in the college catalog and on the website. Grievance processes protect confidentiality, freedom of expression, and diversity of opinion.

The SSC Library offers instruction to the SSC community with locating and ethically utilizing research sources. The SSC Library offers instruction to the SSC community with locating and ethically utilizing research sources.

South Suburban College students are guided in the ethical use of information resources from many sources. Some examples are Information Literacy Month activities, general education core classes that teach appropriate research techniques, the proper citation of material, and the nuances of plagiarism.

### Strengths

- Integrity is fundamental to the mission of the college.
- The College is presented clearly to students and the public.
- The Board of Trustees is responsive to the needs of students, employees, and community members.
- Freedom of expression and pursuit of truth are highly values.

### Evidence

- In 2017, SSC was recognized for meeting the Illinois Community College Board standards, which establish broad guidelines for ethical conduct in finance, academic, and personnel.

- The Board of Trustees has established policies governing the operation and use of the college and its facilities, and changes to these policies require a board vote in an open board meeting.
- The College has ethics policies for its employees.
- SSC provides access to public records in accordance with the Illinois Freedom of Information ACT (FOIA).
- The College maintains consistent and transparent financial processes, which include publishing annual budgets and audits reports.
- SSC has multiple policies and procedures in place to ensure quality and integrity in academic functions, including student academic integrity, faculty participation in curriculum development.
- Freedom of expression and pursuit of truth in teaching and learning are highly values and supported in professional development activities.
- SSC has a student code of conduct and due process protections for its students.

### Criterion Three: Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support

The institution provides high quality education, whenever, and however its offerings are delivered.

#### Excerpts from Assurance Argument

South Suburban College (SSC) offers both degrees and certificates that support its mission and commitment to student success. The college's degrees and certificates meet industry standards and expectations, specialized accrediting agencies, and standards of practice of higher education in Illinois. All associate degrees require a minimum of sixty credit hours. The certificate programs require credit completion commensurate with knowledge required by the industry. SSC's degree and certificate requirements are in the college's catalog and on SSC's website.

As a two-year public institution, SSC must comply with the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), which establishes guidelines for course and program development in transfer, career, and technical fields.

The college awards the Associate in Arts degree (A.A.), the Associate in Engineering Science degree (A.E.S.), the Associate in Applied Science degree (A.A.S.), the Associate in Science degree (A.S.), the Associate in Fine Arts degree (A.F.A.), and the Associate in General Studies degree (A.G.S.). The college also offers certificate and basic certificate programs.

South Suburban College offers courses at two principal locations. The main campus is located at 15800 S. State Street, South Holland, Illinois 60473. The Oak Forest campus is located at 16333 Kilbourne Street, Oak Forest, IL 60452. Additionally, the college offers numerous online course offerings. Regardless of the delivery format or course/program location, the quality and learning goals for courses and programs are consistent.

The college's Adult Education Program offers High School Equivalency (HSE) exam preparation classes as well as English as a Second Language (ESL) courses. Non-native students may improve their English skills in levels from beginning to advance in the English as a Second Language program. Each level includes a civics component to familiarize students with American history and government.

SSC provides dual credit opportunities to the in-district high school students in relation to career and technical education fields.

Dual credit at South Suburban College allows high school students to take college credit courses taught by college-approved high school teachers. Students earn credit for high school requirements while earning college credit. Dual credit courses are not pre-college or preparatory courses. These dual credit courses are college level and taught at the same level as college level courses. SSC offers many approved dual credit courses to thousands of high school students.

SSC ensures that students are appropriately placed into courses in which they will succeed yet be challenged. SSC's general education programs provide students the opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills for success in their academic, career, and personal lives. The purpose of general education at SSC is not simply to prepare students for a life of work, but to prepare them for the work of their lives.

Both degree programs and certificate programs offer students an opportunity to obtain basic requirements in their program of study. Students must demonstrate mastery of skills through internships, portfolios, and/or capstone experiences. Introduction, reinforcement, and mastering of content and skills for each course/program is established in course syllabi and course outlines. Curriculum maps grid each learning outcome or skill. General education outcomes are aligned with specific degree and certificate programs.

Being a two-year community college, the objective of SSC is providing excellent instruction and learning experiences. Unlike larger four-year colleges and universities, research is not a priority. Faculty members spend more time engaging with students to help them succeed. The student population that SSC serves comes from diverse backgrounds. The faculty commit considerable time and resources in success practices.

The college has sufficient faculty to satisfy classroom and non-classroom duties. The full-time and adjunct faculty agreements establish the responsibilities and expectations for SSC faculty with respect to teaching load, professional development, participation in departmental work, and college-wide committee service. SSC has a long history of faculty participation with campus-wide decisions and activities. Program coordinators and department chairs are faculty who receive release time to perform administrative functions such as curricular review and assessment.

Oversight of the curriculum and expectations for student performance is faculty-driven and monitored by faculty-chaired committees. These standing committees include Curriculum Committee, Academic Standards, and Outcomes Assessment.

All instructors are prepared in accordance with accepted standards and practices for teaching, supervising, counseling, and administering the curriculum or supporting system to which they are assigned.

The college maintains academic control of its unit of instruction and monitors this process with classroom observations in accordance with the tenure track process and gathering student evaluations each semester from randomly selected courses and programs.

To maintain the quality of the college's educational process, full-time tenure track faculty engage in a three-year process to demonstrate their teaching effectiveness; ability to engage students; ability to demonstrate commitment to student success; and ability to demonstrate to their committee their contribution to initiatives that further the mission and goals of the department and institution. The three-year evaluation process includes

development of syllabi and topical outlines and teaching materials that support learning outcomes; development of unit and final examinations that assess acquisition of knowledge; faculty and administrative visitations and observations; gathering feedback via student evaluations; and establishing professional development plans and statements of self-reflection.

Additionally, the college evaluates instructional quality and teaching for part-time faculty.

The primary mission of the Faculty Development Committee is to offer professional development programs for full-time and adjunct faculty. This faculty-chaired committee works with administration and meets monthly in face-to-face or virtual meetings as deemed appropriate. Its goal is to improve instruction and promote faculty excellence.

The college has a staffed faculty development center known as the Teaching and Learning Center (TLC). Faculty enjoy assistance with training modules, professional articles, and faculty development resources. Faculty receive professional development utilizing hands-on technology and creating accessible instructional materials and pedagogy.

In addition to the professional faculty development opportunities offered by the TLC, faculty development training for full-time and part-time faculty is offered twice per year in the beginning of the fall and spring semesters.

The college supports staff members in their development through numerous staff development events. The events are planned by the Staff Development Committee composed of staff members and college administration and are held regularly. In addition, the committee organizes a staff development day each semester, which allows all staff to participate in development activities. The development events and staff development days focus on a wide range of sessions for the personal and professional development of our staff.

SSC provides extensive resources to students to assist in academic planning, personal development, and career attainment. These services range from preparation for college-level coursework to services for students in our college-level curriculum.

SSC provides many services for new and returning adults. These student services include an Academic Counseling Center, an Academic Assistance Center, a Career and Development Center, a Financial Aid Office, a Veterans' Office, Services for Students with Disabilities Office, a Latino Center for Services and Information, a Transfer Center, and a Student Life and Leadership Office.

The Adult Education Department offers a range of opportunities, including Adult Basic Education (ABE), Adult Secondary Education (ASE), High School Equivalency (HSE) preparation classes, and English as a Second Language (ESL). All courses are offered free of charge.

SSC Circle is a convenient location that brings together support resources and staff to assist new and returning students in enrollment, including admissions, registration, and financial aid services.

Students may also obtain information about financial aid, SSC scholarships, SSC waivers, and the SSC monthly payment plan.

Students also receive assistance in choosing courses via placement testing through the college's Assessment Center. Enrolled students also enjoy services such as the Transfer Center, which provides students with resources needed to transfer to a four-year institution.

Registration and Records maintains the accuracy, consistency, confidentiality, and integrity of student information. The area also oversees the grade records, for accurate transcription of student records, and for ensuring that the college adheres to ethical and legal requirements relating to student records.

The Financial Aid Office provides a comprehensive program of student financial assistance consisting of scholarships, grants, and student employment.

The college's Student Services area provides additional resources. These include our office of college recruitment, the Career Development and Jobs Center, and the Services for Students with Disabilities Office.

The Career Development and Jobs Center assists students, alumni and community members, businesses, and industry partners with career and job placement.

The Services for Students with Disabilities Office (SSDO) offers numerous services including pre-admission counseling, priority registration, classroom accommodations, as well as special equipment for student use.

The Veterans' Services Office assists students daily with personal or financial needs, such as the Illinois Veterans Grant (IVG), Illinois National Guard Grant (ING), veterans scholarships, and Veterans Tuition Waivers.

The Latino Center for Services and Information was developed in response to the growing Latino community.

New student orientation assists students in educational planning and introduces them to the resources available to SSC students.

The Academic Assistance Center provides free services through individual and/or group tutoring. The center also provides self-help tools including subject-specific videos and printed academic aids. The Academic Assistance Center also provides placement test reviews for incoming students, as well as academic survival skills sessions.

The Reading Center has computers and the latest software technology to assist with a range of reading concerns from basic comprehension to more advanced topics such as speed-reading.

The Speaking Center aids students, employees, and the college community. Topics include overcoming speaker anxiety, presentational skills (both verbal and nonverbal), along with speech construction, outlining, and research.

The Writing Center is available to students who are currently enrolled and provides assistance to improve their writing skills for their coursework.

The Counseling Department is comprised of professional counseling faculty who serve the academic, vocational, and personal needs of our students. The counseling staff assists students in determining career choices and in planning programs to reach their educational goals.

The college adopted Student Planning, an academic advising, degree audit, and registration program to assess program completion and develop academic plans. Student planning assists our students in staying on track in earning their degrees by identifying what students need to complete a program, as well as classes taken to date. This planning tool helps students clarify, plan, and track courses of study in order to more directly and confidently earn degree completion.

The Library is a vital part of the college's mission and boasts resources and trained staff to support our students and faculty. The college employs full-time faculty members with extensive training in library sciences. Our librarians work with the administration and faculty in academic departments to ensure the Library collections are up-to-date and used by our students. In addition to physical collections, the college is a member of the Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois (CARLI) with other academic libraries in our state that allows us to share in a much wider collection than we could provide onsite.

South Suburban College provides numerous co-curricular activities for students and the community. Several programs enrich and extend student learning beyond the classroom.

The Study Abroad Program annually sends students to Africa, Asia, and Europe.

The college's Service Learning Program combines service in the community with academic learning in the classroom wherein course objectives are linked to service learning. Students learn through participation in an organized service activity. By reflecting on their service activity, students better understand course content, appreciate the relevance of the course to everyday life, foster social and civic responsibility, and increase self-worth through contribution to the community.

SSC has many co-curricular activities focused on media and the arts. Several art gallery events are hosted at the college with regular shows and receptions. SSC has roughly six art shows per year, which are free to the community.

Similarly, the Performing Arts Center hosts music productions. Approximately twenty musical events are held throughout our community yearly. Performers are SSC students (credit and non-credit). These events are free to the public.

The Theatre Department's SSC Playhouse, The Children's Company, and The PAC Rats Theatre Company produce shows year-round.

The college's literary journal, The Scriblerian, features writing and art by students and faculty. It is published annually and distributed free to students.

The college's athletics program features several men and women's sports. Combining the accomplishments of the various teams—women's volleyball, women's softball, men's baseball, men's and women's basketball, and men's and women's soccer—the SSC Bulldogs boast many regional championships and multiple NJCAA Hall of Fame coaches. Hundreds of student athletes have transferred to play at the NAIA and NCAA levels, including the NCAA Division. More than fifty athletes have played professional or semi-professional sports.

The Continuing Education Department and the Business and Career Institute offer courses to meet the needs of our student population, a multi-generational community from youth to senior citizens, throughout the academic year.

Courses include personal and professional development seminars, healthcare programs, job skills, and just for fun or special interest. These classes are presented within our community and are hosted in several locations for easy accessibility. Non-credit programs are promoted on Facebook, SSC360, the SSC website, and other outlets.

A College for Kids program is also offered by the college.

SSC annually hosts the Women's Conference & Expo, which has approximately 500 attendees.

The Highway Construction Career Training Program stresses increasing knowledge of local apprenticeship programs.

## Strengths

- Degree programs and certificate programs reflect the mission.
- Faculty and staff are effective at providing high quality programs and services.
- Substantial infrastructure and resources are available to support teaching and learning.
- Enriched educational environment exist inside and outside the classroom.

## Evidence

- SSC's internal process for curriculum approval aligns with ICCB Administrative rules and Program Approval manual.
- Career and technical education programs have advisory committee that provide feedback on the curriculum from an industry perspective, and many of our adjunct faculty are employed in their teaching field.
- SSC and local high schools convene an annual meeting between SSC program/department chairs and faculty to discuss course content, and pedagogy for dual credit courses.
- General education outcomes are aligned with specific degree and certificates programs and academic disciplines, and they are validated by faculty at least once every five years during the program review process.

## Criterion Four -Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments, and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

### Excerpts from Assurance Argument

All college transfer programs (CTP), career programs (CP), and academic support service programs must complete a review process every five (5) years.

The program review must meet the requirements of the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB). SSC sets high standards for programs and these reviews ensure the college provides high quality programs and complies with the ICCB requirements.

The program reviews contain information about our programs, improvements, and rationale for action, enrollment trends, and occupational demand.

SSC is committed to the integrity of the credits that it transcripts. The college evaluates all credit transcribed and follows best practices in awarding credit for military service, experiential learning, prior learning, and advanced placement.

SSC policies assure the quality of credit it accepts in transfer. These policies outline the number of credits a student must complete at SSC. SSC accepts only college transfer credit from an institution of higher education as recognized by a regional accreditation organization at the time credit was earned.

SSC has articulation agreements with other higher education institutions to assist students who wish to transfer from into a baccalaureate degree program. General education courses appear on the Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI), ensuring that students who transfer from one state college or university to another will receive credit for general education courses.

The college's Curriculum and Academic Standards Committees oversee any changes, modifications, or alterations in the curriculum for courses and programs and applicable academic standards policies. Faculty lead these committees. Committees will suggest changes in courses, pre-requisites, or degrees/certificates, and the Curriculum Committee ensures that the curriculum is consistent with college objectives. Once approved by the committee(s), proposals are forwarded to the Vice President of Academic Services for final approval.

The college ensures that all full-time and part-time faculty are qualified through education and/or professional experience as determined by the HLC credential guidelines for Determining Qualified Faculty through HLC's Criteria for Accreditation and Assumed Practices.

The Vice President of Academic Services, the academic deans, faculty and the Director of Enrollment Services continually review dual credit programming to ensure adherence to all state laws, regulations, and accreditation standards. Potential dual credit courses go through an articulation process in collaboration with participating high school faculty, college faculty, and academic deans.

SSC is an officially recognized community college district by the ICCB. Many of SSC's programs are also accredited or approved by external agencies.

SSC is committed to improving learning through comprehensive assessment of student learning. SSC's goals for student learning are at the course, program, and institutional levels established by faculty with support from academic administrators.

The college's Outcomes Assessment Committee created and maintains a comprehensive assessment plan in collaboration with all areas of academics and student services.

Every program/department participates in assessment. Assessment activities measure the student's understanding of the subject matter. The assessment activities are consistent with the goals of each course, department, or program.

Program and course objectives are developed by faculty and evaluated by the Curriculum Committee. Program and course objectives, rationales, assessment methods, delivery modes, prerequisite skills and knowledge, and other features are reviewed and evaluated. Approved program goals are articulated in the college catalog, and course objectives appear on course syllabi.

The course syllabus contains student learning outcomes. The syllabus also states the methods to be used by students in demonstrating proficiency. Each department and program have articulated student learning outcomes on the college website. The college has general education objectives, which are in the college catalog and on the college website.

Courses in the baccalaureate/transfer programs align course-learning objectives with the course goals related to the subject content. These course objectives are also written in the framework of the Illinois Articulation Agreement (IAI) and course alignments with baccalaureate institutions to ensure transfer.

The college regularly assesses learning outcomes of courses and programs. Faculty members collect data on learning outcomes each semester. The data may be aggregated annually at the department level and then become part of the dialogue between faculty and academic leaders improving assessment.

Each department/program is responsible for analyzing assessment data and sharing those results with faculty or an advisory board. The information is used to determine weaknesses and strengths of a class or program. Advisory boards are an objective

evaluator, making recommendations that increase the student's understanding of a subject matter.

SSC's continuing focus on retention, persistence, and completion rates demonstrates its commitment to improvements in the degree and certificate programs.

As further evidence of the college's commitment to student success, and its recognition that the college needed to improve student success measurements, SSC submitted an application to be part of the HLC Persistence and Completion Academy and received acceptance to participate in the academy on May 26, 2015.

As a participant in the HLC Persistence and Completion Academy, the college submits detailed reports and receives responses from our HLC mentor and scholar. To date, the college has submitted six academy reports. The reports address initiatives, projects, and activities demonstrating the college's commitment to educational improvement for our students.

In addition, as a Predominantly Black Institution, SSC is sensitive to the issues and opportunities presented by a diverse student population. In 2015, the college submitted a Predominantly Black Institution grant proposal to the US Department of Education to improve the education of members of its minority populations, particularly African-American males. SSC proposed to implement a project titled BLAST II. The college received the initial five-year grant award notification from the US Department of Education on October 4, 2016, in the amount of \$2,029,147.

The BLAST II project was designed to increase African-American male persistence and to increase their success and retention from semester to semester, ultimately leading to degree and certificate completion

To increase access and success in higher education, the college continually uses peer benchmarks and research to evaluate all strategic initiatives and endeavors. The college has invested significant resources in technologies to streamline reporting and provide new avenues for research.

### Strengths

- Comprehensive program review process.
- Course, program and institutional goals for student learning. Broad-based engagement in assessment processes.
- Ongoing attention to retention, persistence, and completion.
- Active participation in the HLC Persistence and Completion Academy.
- Recipient of Predominantly Black Institution Federal grant to improve the education of its minority populations, particularly African-American Males.

## Evidence

- Detailed program review for the years 2008-2018. Multiple comprehensive reports submitted to the HLC Persistence and Completion Academy.
- Comprehensive update reports submitted to the US Department of Education for the PBI Blast II federal grant.
- Systematic and comprehensive Outcomes Assessment plan.

## Criterion Five-Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness

The institution's resources, structures, and processes are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities. The institution plans for the future.

### Excerpts from Assurance Argument

SSC has the fiscal resources to support and sustain operations of the college. SSC also has a very experienced Board of Trustees, Senior Administration, and Treasurer/Controller to address financial challenges.

The SSC governing board is knowledgeable about the institution, institutional operations, and provides oversight of college finances, operations, and academic practices. The board meets monthly in public sessions. All board members receive a packet of briefing material along with the meeting agenda prior to each session.

The SSC Board of Trustees is familiar with the institution and provides consistent oversight of the college's financial, academic, and general operations. The board is engaged in best practices and professional development for college governance and has the information necessary to enhance governance issues. Additionally, the board's policies promote leadership and collaboration.

The governing board meets its legal and fiduciary responsibilities through policies that govern the college.

The Illinois Public Community College Act requires an annual audit of accounts, financial records, and transactions of all funds of the college. Independent certified public accountants conduct the audit. The Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO) awarded a certificate of excellence in financial reporting to South Suburban College for its CAFR for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2017. This award is granted only after review of the CAFR by a panel of certified public accountants and practicing school business officials. This is the twenty-sixth year that the college has received the Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting award.

In the Single Audit 2018 and the Letter from Auditor, the auditors reported that the college complied, in all material respects, with the requirements referred to in the audit that could have a material effect on each of its federal programs for the fiscal year

ended June 30, 2018. The college's financial audits are consistently positive with minimal findings or questioned costs.

The college over the last several years has had declining enrollment and reductions in state funding. The college continues to struggle with negative revenue trends and the ability to attract and retain our student population. Total credit hours have significantly declined for the period of 2005-2018. In addition, a negative trend in state funding continued to persist during the period of 2005-2018. Funding from Illinois had also significantly decreased over this same period.

It must also be noted that state funding to institutions of higher learning across the State of Illinois was substantially reduced due to an Illinois budget impasse. The budget impasse was a 793-day-long crisis from July 1, 2015, to August 31, 2017. Illinois was without a complete state budget for fiscal years 2016, 2017, and part of 2018. Historically speaking, the college's composite ratios have always been strong. The college had plenty of reserves to be applied in the event of some type of unexpected shortfall, such as this impasse. The adverse effect from the budget stalemate resulted in no state funds for the college as well as not funding the Monetary Awards Program (MAP) for our students. The loss of direct state revenue and the loss of financial aid to our students has propelled the college's composite ratios negative the last three years.

The college has taken a number of reactionary steps as a result of reductions in state funding and declining enrollment trends at the college.

In our HLC Financial Report 2016, the college outlined its financial position and identified several proactive initiatives to address declining enrollment and revenue trends affecting the college since 2010.

The Board of Trustees and administration were also compelled to take additional steps to address continued enrollment and revenue declines. The administration, in compliance with its collective bargaining agreement believed it was necessary to take steps to right size the college through staff adjustments. The process of a reduction in force affected full-time, part-time, and temporary employees across departments.

As part of our right sizing analysis, the institution analyzed areas from across the college. Based on review of the data and discussion with the faculty and staff union representatives, adjustments were made through salary freezes, furloughs, union contractual concessions, the closing of the Child Care Center and, ultimately, a decrease in the college workforce across divisions.

The college continues its strategic class scheduling process by involving faculty, deans, and the Vice President of Academic Services and Vice President of Student Services.

SSC continuously reviews its internal processes to reduce costs.

SSC has provided funds for capital improvements and upgrades to infrastructure and technology despite the negative enrollment and revenue trends. Furthermore, the

college has continually upgraded its infrastructure and technology over the last 10 years.

The college maintains an IT department to support students, faculty, staff, and administrators. Helpdesks support students and employees working remotely and on campus. The institution made significant investments in network connectivity and infrastructure to support bandwidth intensive applications and innovative curriculum.

Faculty and staff must also engage in annual training concerning campus safety, sexual harassment, Title IX, and FERPA. Campus safety staff provide annual training for emergency preparedness, active shooters, and personal safety.

SSC's governance structure is based on shared governance through councils and committees that offer engagement of all internal constituencies.

### Strengths

- Sufficient resources for continued commitment to mission despite difficult financial challenges occurring in the State of Illinois and District 510.
- Experienced senior administrative team.
- Board of Trustees provides regular and consistent oversight of college operations.
- Documented evidence of operational performance.
- SSC maintains a focus on educational programs and academic support.
- As a result of sound fiscal planning and focus on educational priorities, the college has increased expenditures on instruction and academic support even as revenue has declined.

### Evidence

- The Board of Trustees consists of seven voting members (six-year term) elected at large by the qualified voters of District 510 and one student member (one-year term) elected by the student body. The student board member casts an advisory vote and has the privileges of membership, including the right to make and second motions and to attend executive sessions. The Board of Trustees holds public meetings each year. Board packages, including agendas, minutes, and detailed information on action items, are available for review by the college community on the website. Elected leaders from SSC's faculty and staff unions are represented at each monthly public meeting. In these public sessions, trustees approve such items as monthly reports from the treasurer, payment of bills, the college budget and any budget adjustments, the capital improvement plan, tuition rates, hiring of administrators and faculty, establishment of staff positions, union contracts, and settlement agreements.
- The board regularly reviews institutional finances and operations.
- In addition to financial issues, the board approves such items as the college mission statement, strategic plan, new units of instruction to be submitted to the

Illinois Community College Board, awards of tenure, faculty promotion in rank, and board policies covering students and employees.

- Periodically, members of the governing board participate in board retreats for board training, discussion of board responsibilities, and in setting goals for the board. These retreats strengthen understanding among board members and assist the board in setting goals for the board and the college President.
- During 2017-2018, the board fulfilled its responsibility for the hiring of the college's new President, Dr. Lynette D. Stokes, upon the retirement of Donald Manning.
- Since her tenure as President of SSC, President Stokes has encouraged a more transparent and inclusive communication loop across organizational lines through her initiative of hosting informal gatherings whereby all employees have an opportunity to directly communicate and share with the President their views and opinions on internal and external events and issues of global relevance to the college community. As a result of the listening sessions, pending projects include expansion of professional development opportunities, hosting standing meetings with union representatives, increased awareness of cost efficiency strategies across the college and a recommitment on the part of administration to creating a questioning culture and shared governance model.
- The key Leadership body at SSC is the President's Council. Led by the President, the council regularly meets and includes the Vice President for Academic Services, Vice President of Student and Enrollment Services, Vice President of Administration, Associate Vice President of Accreditation and Institutional Effectiveness, and Treasure/Controller. The Council reviews and discusses key issues, policies, and practices at the college.
- Details from our most recent Comprehensive Financial Annual Report (CAFR) CAFR 2018 show that the college received revenue from sources including Tuition and Fees (2.18%), State Sources (43.13%), Property Taxes (28.00%), Federal Grants and Contracts (21.03%), Local Sources (.90%), and other Operating and Non-operating (4.76%).
- For fiscal year 2018-2019, operating expenditures are budgeted at \$32,165,133 with projected revenue of \$27,760,231. Non-operating expenditures are \$19,352,828 with revenue projected at \$18,961,237. In aggregate, fiscal year expenditures are \$51,517,961 with projected revenue at \$46,621,468.
- One of SSC's top priorities is to offer the highest quality academic programs and curriculum to students. At a time when state funding for public institutions is declining in Illinois (as it is in other states), SSC has increased funding for instruction cost by \$1,361,227. Instructional cost was \$23,145,201 (41.19% of total expenses in 2018 from \$21,783,974 (40.14% of total expenses) in 2017).
- SSC's budget process is transparent and engages all campus stakeholders. In addition to regular monitoring of expenses, college finance leaders also monitor revenues due to the volatile nature of funding. Operating departments have access to real-time budget data through the student management system.

Detailed expenditure, revenue reports, and a report of actuals vs. budget are presented to the governing board each month in public session.

- SSC's budget and resource allocation are guided by our Strategic Plan 2014-2019 and aligned with the mission, vision, and core values of the college. The SSC mission and institutional priorities drive allocation of resources. All planning aligns with the mission, thereby enhancing its capacity to fulfill that mission.
- SSC engages in regular, comprehensive strategic planning. Strategic planning occurs every five years, resulting in a plan that guides strategic and operational activities.
- SSC issued \$9.97 million general obligation debt with long-term rating of A+.
- While the financial situation has turned negative over the last several years, the college is under its legal debt limit for issuing new debt.
- SSC has provided funds for capital improvements and upgrades to infrastructure and technology despite the negative enrollment and revenue trends. Furthermore, the college has continually upgraded its infrastructure and technology over the last 10 years.
- The college continues to update classrooms, as technology becomes available, to maintain the quality of teaching. Two Facility Master Plans were approved over the last ten years. The Facilities Master Plan 2009 and the Facilities Master Plan 2017 identified current and future projects that keep our students, faculty, staff, and community members safe on campus. Both campuses, as well as the gymnasium, have new roofs. Several focus group meetings were held to gather information and input from faculty, students, administrators, and community members for the 2017 plan.
- SSC planning, on all levels, accounts for changes in technology, demographics, and globalization.
- At the February 11, 2016, regular Board of Trustees meeting, a number of right sizing initiatives were approved to lower the operational overhead.
- In planning class schedules, all areas must analyze past and projected departmental enrollment data to maximize opportunities for our students while minimizing the number of classes cancelled due to low enrollment. Strategic scheduling allows the college to maximize seat utilization for each class and reduce per section cost.
- The college has implemented new marketing strategies, including targeted marketing on social media to bring in new students and assess new program opportunities. The renewed focus on targeted marketing efforts included hiring an Executive Director of Public Relations & Resource Development with position responsibilities that include implementing a multi-level strategy to include public relations advertising, publications, media, corporate and business partnerships, foundation board development, endowment growth, major donor outreach, resource development and identification of new grant opportunities, crisis communications, and special events.

- The college supports professional development for faculty and staff. Faculty regularly engage in professional development activities. Professional staff can participate in local training and attend national and regional training and professional development programs. All faculty and staff may register for tuition-free credit courses at SSC.
- Many professional development opportunities are available to staff and faculty employees through staff/faculty development committees. These include on-campus workshops, seminars, and all-day events.
- Faculty members participate in instructional governance and institutional oversight through standing committees and faculty members are strongly represented on committees including curriculum, academic standards, faculty development, outcomes assessments, international/intercultural studies, academic computing, academic appeals, honors, and distance learning. Faculty also participate in professional growth, calendar, disciplinary standards, and academic conduct committees. Faculty also participate in departmental committees.



