

AQIP PARTICIPATION APPLICATION

Name of Institution: **Seward County Community College**

City, State: **Liberal, Kansas**

Application Date: **October 18, 2005**

To answer Question 1, present evidence that will allow the AQIP Admission Panel to evaluate and affirm your organization's continuing compliance with the Commission's accreditation expectations. Label the sections of your response for each of the five *Criteria*, and make sure each section encompasses the Core Components (listed in the boxes) of the Criterion under discussion.

1. How does your organization currently demonstrate that it meets each of the Higher Learning Commission's five *Criteria for Accreditation*?

Criterion One: Mission and Integrity. The organization operates with integrity to ensure the fulfillment of its mission through structures and processes that involve the board, administration, faculty, staff, and students.

- The organization's mission documents are clear and articulate publicly the organization's commitments.
- In its mission documents, the organization recognizes the diversity of its learners, other constituencies, and the greater society it serves.
- Understanding of and support for the mission pervade the organization
- The organization's governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the organization to fulfill its mission.
- The organization upholds and protects its integrity.

Seward County Community College (SCCC) is a public, associate degree granting institution. Our College has a 6-member Board of Trustees which are elected representatives of Seward County, Kansas (i.e. must reside in Seward County.) The Board of Trustees is granted certain powers by Kansas law authorizing for the assessment of local (county) property taxes, the issuance of revenue and general obligation bonds, adoption of the mission and objectives of SCCC, the establishment of instructional programs (career certificate and associate degrees), the employment of personnel, the purchase of land, and the purchase and construction of buildings.

SCCC is coordinated by the Kansas Board of Regents (KBOR), which is appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Kansas Senate. The KBOR approves programs of instruction, disburses state aid, provides technical assistance regarding curriculum, grants, etc., and is responsible for the oversight of articulation and matriculation of higher education in the state (private, proprietary, and public institutions.)

The Board of Trustees employees the President of the college and authorizes for the employment of operational personnel. Dr. Duane M. Dunn was hired as the 9th president in July 2004 following the untimely death of Dr. James Grote (president from 1993-2003) and the service of interim president, Dr. James Tangeman (interim from 2003-2004). The administrative team of SCCC includes Ms. Cynthia Rapp, Dean of Instruction, Dr. Randy Smith, Dean of Student Services, Mr. Tom Williams, Dean of Administrative Services, and Mr. Dale Reed, Associate Dean of Educational Services. Ms. Rapp, Mr. Williams, and Mr. Reed have 59 years of combined experience at SCCC as instructors and administrators. Dr. Smith began employment at SCCC in July 2005.

SCCC celebrated 35 years of instruction in 2004. The College began classes in 1969 in various locations within Liberal and the campus was constructed in 1972. Additions have been added with the most recent additions of classrooms, wellness center, conference rooms, offices, student living center, and the agriculture and cosmetology buildings constructed in 1996-2002. Our allied health programs are provided in the Epworth Building (former hospital and the original building for SCCC), and our adult education programs are offered at the Colvin Adult Learning Center (former corporate headquarters for High Plains Pizza.) The continued support for the College by the residents of Seward County is evident in the passage of construction bonds in January 1995, the fact that our budget has not been contested by the public for several years, and the utilization of the College by service and civic organizations, etc. It is that confidence that indicates community validation of the integrity of SCCC. There have been no concerns expressed by accrediting agencies that have not been addressed and resolved, and no violations of local, state, or federal regulations.

The SCCC Board of Trustees adopted the following mission, philosophy and function of the college in 1999. The statements are prominently displayed throughout the campus, are included in publications, and are referred to as guiding principles in planning and decisions within the College operations.

MISSION

Seward County Community College will provide opportunities to improve and enhance each person's life through a variety of higher education programs and related services for the development of better futures.

PHILOSOPHY

Seward County Community College is a quality learning-centered institution that believes:

- A well-educated citizenry is a responsible citizenry;
- Knowledge is dynamic and evolutionary;
- Education and learning are lifelong activities;

- Higher education is an investment in future societies, and the community college plays a major role in this endeavor;
- Every human being is valuable regardless of gender, age, race, creed, cultural background, socioeconomic status, knowledge, or physical and emotional adjustment;
- Individuals are unique and deserve the opportunity to develop their optimum potential for learning and living; and
- The college, as an integral community component, responds to the interests and needs of the community.

INSTITUTIONAL PURPOSES/FUNCTIONS

Seward County Community College will offer:

- COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY TRANSFER that will assure a quality higher education curriculum to meet the needs of students who wish to transfer to other colleges and universities;
- OCCUPATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION that will assure programs that meet the occupational objectives and the needs of a changing work force;
- GENERAL EDUCATION COURSES in each program of study that will contribute to the students' educational and cultural growth;
- CONTINUING EDUCATION/COMMUNITY SERVICES that will offer off-campus activities, adult basic education, continuing education, work-force development, use of facilities, and cultural opportunities;
- STUDENT SERVICES that will fulfill the financial needs of the students and enhance the educational, physical, social, and cultural qualities of the students through guidance services, housing and food services, academic advising, student government and other activities;
- DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION that will assure that the institution identifies individual needs and offers appropriate courses and tutoring to help each student succeed;
- ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT that will provide institutional leadership in promoting economic development in the region;
- ASSESSMENT that will assure student educational achievement and growth through appropriate, systematic and periodic measurement; and
- INTEGRITY that will assure institutional honesty in our practices and relationships.

Criterion Two: Preparing for the Future. The organization's allocation of resources and its processes for evaluation and planning demonstrate its capacity to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its education, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

- The organization realistically prepares for a future shaped by multiple societal and economic trends.

- The organization's resource base supports its educational programs and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future.
- The organization's ongoing evaluation and assessment processes provide reliable evidence of institutional effectiveness that clearly informs strategies for continuous improvement.
- All levels of planning align with the organization's mission, thereby enhancing its capacity to fulfill that mission.

The changing demographics of our service area has resulted in an increase in first generation students, students with English as a second or other language; students with economic and educational disadvantages; and students who would be considered "non-traditional" in regards to age, family commitments, and employment commitments. In an effort to improve the services to students SCCC has been able to secure a Title III grant designed to improve the academic advising, academic transition, and academic development of students with low academic skills. Additionally, we have secured a TRIO Student Support Services grant with goals of addressing the needs of first generation and economic disadvantaged students with focused advising, counseling, and academic assistance.

Our College is fortunate to have adequate financial resources to meet the instructional and student support expectations as stated in our mission and philosophy statements. Although the College found it necessary to make substantial budget adjustments due to reduced state appropriations during the past few years, we have been able to continue serving students and offering the academic courses, programs, and other learning experiences without detriment to student success (graduation, placement, assessment rates, etc. have continued to excel.) During the past two years, we have realized an increase in state aid and the county valuation has increased, affording the College with an opportunity to lower the local tax rate without decreasing the operational budget. This is a result of effective prioritizing, communicating within administrative divisions, and the support of the local constituents.

The College's strategic plan is under continual review and assessment by the administrative team and the Board of Trustees. Regular feedback regarding progress toward the strategic goals is provided to the employees (faculty and staff) and adjustments are included as initiatives are completed and/or modified due to external factors. The administrative team provides annual goals to the faculty and staff for input and then submits those recommended goals to the Board for adoption in the fall. Those annual goals are in congruence with the strategic plan, but provide specific annual goals for assessment and accountability of institutional performance. The KBOR performance agreements blend with the institutional strategic plan, division goals, assessment needs, and annual College goals. College committees are provided opportunities for regular review of the goals, accomplishments, and initiatives. Feedback from those committees is used to adjust initiatives and to develop the subsequent annual goals.

- The College has a published operating budget of \$16,681,921. Approximately 64% of the budget is local property tax; 25% is state aid; and the remaining budget is student tuition/fees and grants.

- The College Strategic Planning process is well-developed, detailed and involves internal and external participation and involvement
- The College has been successful in submitting and receiving federal and state grant awards
- The College has a long-range technology plan which includes a replacement schedule to assure currency in computers and other equipment
- The College has a strong Development Foundation that provides for student scholarships and instructional and professional development support (assets of approximately \$3.8 million)
- The College has a well-staffed and competent Information Technology department that provides technology and distance learning support
- In 2000, the College purchased and began implementation of SCT Banner, the Student Information System (SIS) that is integrated campus-wide
- The SIS provides needed data on students, employees, all aspects of finance and is accessible by all employees through secure sources
- The College is financially stable with minimal (\$6.8M) in outstanding debt, a strong unencumbered cash balance (\$3.8M on 6/30/05) and a \$16.6M budget which includes resources, and methods to manage growth.
- The College has continued to increase, expand and provide the necessary upkeep to its facilities—a Cosmetology building and a new student living center have been added to the campus, a softball field and a Ropes Challenge course have been constructed, several office areas and classrooms have been renovated to accommodate personnel and activities from the Title III and SSS grants, many new windows and entryways have been added to provide more energy efficiency and the College maintenance staff keeps the facilities clean and modernized both inside and out
- The College has a program review process for all instructional and instructional support areas

Criterion Three: Student Learning and Effective Teaching. The organization provides evidence of student learning and teaching effectiveness that demonstrates it is fulfilling its educational mission.

- The organization's goals for student learning outcomes are clearly stated for each educational program and make effective assessment possible.
- The organization values and supports effective teaching.
- The organization creates effective learning environments.
- The organization's learning resources support student learning and effective teaching.

As stated in the Mission of SCCC, the college is committed to the improvement of each individual's life through instructional programs and activities. Systems have been put into practice to continually review those programs and activities, implement modifications, initiate strategies to address the changes in demographics, technology, learning styles, and the community needs. Financial and human resources are provided to insure development opportunities are available as well as continual assistance to capitalize on the development activities.

- The College has developed learning outcomes at the institutional, program and course level
- The learning outcomes being addressed are stated in each course syllabus—assessment strategies used to measure these outcomes are also included in the syllabus
- Instructional programs have developed their own mission statements and program level outcomes
- The college has a well established assessment committee with faculty representatives from all four instructional divisions, representation from student services, instructional support areas, information technology, the Title III federal grant project, and the instructional dean
- The assessment committee has lead the faculty through development of rubrics for the nine institutional outcomes—the writing rubric was piloted with artifacts from 2005 graduates and the oral communications rubric will be piloted this year (these rubrics are also being utilized at the program and course levels)
- Members of the assessment committee have attended numerous assessment of student learning professional development opportunities and have utilized the information gleaned from these opportunities to facilitate the training of the full-time and part-time faculty—“assessment experts” and SCCC faculty have helped facilitate a new culture of “assessment of student learning” at the College
- The assessment committee establishes yearly goals and publishes an on-line and paper assessment newsletter
- An assessment website is fully developed and accessible—the website includes goals, outcomes, assessment techniques and strategies, course and program data, institutional data, articles on student learning, links to pertinent information and reporting forms
- Graduate assessments currently being utilized are the ACT CAAP Critical Thinking and WorkKeys assessments for Math, Writing, Listening, and Reading for Understanding—the use of these assessment tools is currently being evaluated as to their effectiveness (the rubric pilot is one step in this evaluation and the committee will make a formal recommendation regarding institutional graduate assessment tools later this year)
- The College has a well-developed library, and an Academic Achievement Center which provides tutoring services to students
- The College supervises and supports the Colvin Adult Learning Center at a downtown location—the Colvin Center provides ESL classes, GED preparation and completion, basic skills classes, and Citizenship preparation classes for over 600 adult students each year
- The Federal Title III grant that was awarded in 2003 includes many activities that will strengthen student learning and effective teaching—the grant activities include a revitalized advisement process; a student success center where students can do career exploration, work with advisors, and participate in placement testing; a “bridge” program that is focused on assisting students at the Colvin Center easier access to higher educational opportunities; and the development of a teaching/learning center with focus on professional development opportunities at all levels
- The College has been an active member of the EduKan consortium since its inception—EduKan is a consortium of 6 western Kansas community colleges that provides an on-line associate degree opportunity for students
- The College has developed a thorough faculty credential review process which is utilized for full-time and part-time faculty—the process includes review by faculty, division chairs and administration

- The College has also developed a hiring process which includes applicant screening, interviewing and selection (faculty interviews now include a teaching demonstration)
- Faculty, both full and part-time, are encouraged to seek out and participate in professional development—division budgets include opportunities for professional travel, the instructional dean’s budget also allows for professional development opportunities regarding assessment or other pertinent areas, the federal grants that have recently been awarded also allow many opportunities for professional/staff development
- Professional development dollars are available through a board policy supporting full-time and part-time faculty and staff development opportunities that enhance or update credentials/qualifications
- The campus prides itself on the currency and availability of technology to students and staff—computer labs and computer access is available across campus including an “Internet café” in the student union
- Resources are dedicated to assure computer security including firewalls, and technical assistance
- The College utilizes many off-campus sites for clinical experiences for students and budgets support these efforts

Criterion Four: Acquisition, Discovery, and Application of Knowledge. The organization promotes a life of learning for its faculty, administration, staff, and students by fostering and supporting inquiry, creativity, practice, and social responsibility in ways consistent with its mission.

- The organization demonstrates, through the actions of its board, administrators, students, faculty, and staff, that it values a life of learning.
- The organization demonstrates that acquisition of a breadth of knowledge and skills and the exercise of intellectual inquiry are integral to its educational programs.
- The organization assesses the usefulness of its curricula to students who will live and work in a global, diverse, and technological society.
- The organization provides support to ensure that faculty, students, and staff acquire, discover, and apply knowledge responsibly.

- The College has a well-developed website which houses pertinent information for current and prospective students and employees
- The College publishes a yearly Annual Report which highlights all aspects of the college and is provided throughout the campus and the community
- The local and area newspapers, radio and television stations cover the college throughout the year
- The College yearly recognizes excellence by selecting National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development (NISOD) Excellence recipients—these recipients attend the annual NISOD meeting in Austin, Texas to receive their medallion award and recognition
- The College has a well-established Academic Affairs Council that sets academic policy and procedure and maintains the courses and programs submitted for Kansas Board of Regents approval

- The College utilizes numerous advisory boards and committees comprised of community and area individuals who review curriculum and provide input
- The College supports all avenues of professional development through policy and budget
- The College encourages and supports numerous student organizations campus-wide and within individual program areas—Student Government Association (SGA), Hispanic Anglo Leadership Organization (HALO), and Phi Theta Kappa (PTK) are just a few examples
- The College is proud of its award-winning student newspaper—the Crusader has won numerous national awards for its print and on-line publications
- The College encourages and supports civics education by maintaining its charter membership in the Kansas Compact, serving the community utilizing the athletic teams and student organizations with involvement in the Big Brothers/Big Sisters organization and many other local and area student and faculty contributions
- Student Support services are numerous, well-developed and institutionally supported and embedded—financial assistance, student housing, student activities, athletics, and technology are just a few
- The College has established and implemented a campus-wide ethics policy which is included in course syllabi and at each program level

Criterion Five: Engagement and Service. As called for by its mission, the organization identifies its constituencies and serves them in ways both value.

- The organization learns from the constituencies it serves and analyzes its capacity to serve their needs and expectations.
- The organization has the capacity and the commitment to engage with its identified constituencies and communities.
- The organization demonstrates its responsiveness to those constituencies that depend on it for service.
- Internal and external constituencies value the services the organization provides.

- The College has a Business and Industry office that coordinates training opportunities for local and area businesses
- The College provides off-campus educational opportunities at ten outreach sites
- The College has been heavily involved in providing Spanish language training to many businesses
- The College facilities are heavily utilized by the community—many civic groups host regular meetings in our conference rooms and classrooms are often utilized for specified training opportunities for groups like law enforcement and our local Pizza Hut regional office employees
- SCCC is host to regional and national trainings programs related to the oil and natural gas industry
- The College has a strong athletic “booster” club
- The Colvin Adult Learning Center is a wonderful service to the community and surrounding area by providing much needed ESL and Citizenship preparation classes to adults (a local beef packing plant utilizes our Center for English language training for their employees)

- The College hosts many cultural events for the community—concerts, plays, speakers, etc.
- The College has many collaborative partnerships with other Kansas community colleges and universities—the EduKan on-line consortium; AccessUS, a partnership of the six EduKan community colleges and three of the Regents universities, provide bachelor degree completion programs for students who cannot leave southwest Kansas to attend a university; several collaborative grant efforts with Kansas State University have been successful for students; SCCC has partnered with Garden City Community College with regard to shared Allied Health and math instruction
- The College provides concurrent enrollment opportunities for high school students at eleven local and area high schools
- The College contracts with many out-of-state medical facilities to provide the best clinical experiences for allied health students (these out-of-state contracts are necessary due to our campus being located in extreme southwest Kansas and closer to facilities in Oklahoma and Texas)
- Student Organizations are heavily involved in community activities and organizations
- Our home and surrounding communities are consistent and strong supporters of fund-raising efforts
- The College staff provides many parent workshop opportunities regarding financial assistance and the college experience at off-campus sites
- The College is expanding efforts toward providing information about higher education and the college in Spanish

2. Answer both parts of this question candidly and substantively.

2A. Through what specific actions has your organization demonstrated its responsiveness to the Commission in addressing specific accreditation concerns or challenges identified by the Commission's last comprehensive evaluation?

SCCC's last comprehensive evaluation was completed in April of 2000. There were two recommendations required by the Commission after this evaluation. A progress report on part-time faculty credentials and on plans for addressing diversity issues was due on 4/30/02; and a progress report on assessment of student learning was due on 4/30/03.

The first progress report was received by the Commission on 4/11/02. The staff analysis indicated that SCCC did **not** sufficiently address the evaluation team's challenges regarding part-time faculty credentials or diversity and requested a monitoring report before 6/1/03. The monitoring report was submitted in June of 2003 with Commission staff acceptance in April 2004. The report documented evidence of an increased percentage of part-time faculty with qualified credentials, a commitment from the College to provide financial support to part-time faculty attempting to improve their credentials, and an improved communication link between part-time and full-time faculty. The report also included a Diversity Plan which addresses the employment search process; a strategy for retaining minority students (which the award of a Title III grant in 2003 and a TRIO SSS grant in 2005 will positively impact); an employee professional development emphasis on multi-cultural perspectives and awareness; and plans to strengthen the College's presence and involvement in the community.

The second progress report on assessment of student learning was received by the Commission on 4/28/03 and accepted in June of 2003. The Commission analysis commended SCCC for the work it is doing to improve student learning. The progress report detailed a complete assessment of student learning revitalization at SCCC. Institutional, program and course level assessments of student outcomes, with both direct and indirect measures are evident. The Assessment Committee, completely faculty driven, accepted the challenge to lead faculty in developing program mission statements and learning outcomes. Communication about and commitment to assessment of student learning was evidenced by indications of faculty involvement. Assessment of student learning is reported by faculty on-line and documented on the college website. An assessment newsletter shares ideas and assessment strategies and techniques. Assessment data is collected, distributed, reported and evaluated within the committee and within the institution. The report demonstrated assessment growth, focused work of the Assessment Committee, the support of administration, and the developing acceptance of faculty.

SCCC fully recognizes that both of the items mentioned above must remain as top priority items. The diversity of our home community and surrounding area continues to be a challenge to the College. While we recognize progress, we understand that there is still much we can do to better serve the needs of our ever-changing population. And, since student learning is at the core of our foundation, assessment of student learning will continue to evolve and change.

2B. What specific actions or activities are you planning to take in order to address any accreditation concerns or challenges from the Commission's last comprehensive evaluation that are still active issues?

Not applicable. There are no active issues or updates requested by the Commission.

3. Why does your institution wish to participate in AQIP? What benefits do you hope to gain as a consequence of participating?

Seward County Community College completed the last comprehensive evaluation in 2000 and its latest strategic plan in 2004. Since then, a new President, Dr. Duane Dunn, has assumed the leadership role of the College and, as a result, we are provided an opportunity to re-evaluate the strategic plan, the operational processes of the College, and analyze methods for continuous improvement – including AQIP as our next approach to NCA-HLC accreditation affiliation. As we approach the next accreditation review the opportunity to participate in the AQIP process will enable SCCC to evaluate all aspects of the College, its operations, its long-term and intermediate plans, and determine effective and appropriate methods of addressing the identified needs. Our college is at the critical time in the accreditation cycle that allows SCCC to seek AQIP recognition, as our next regularly scheduled visit would be in 2010. Our Board of Trustees has endorsed the administrative recommendation to seek AQIP accreditation. (Pursuit of AQIP was included in the 2004-05 annual institutional goals which were reviewed by all SCCC faculty/staff and were adopted by the Board of Trustees in November 2004.) That recommendation was based upon the need to further our institution's commitment to quality (as stated in our mission and philosophy statements), the need to address the ever-changing scope of responsibility to our community based upon demographic and economic trends, the opportunity to realize a correlation between evaluation, planning, and improvement cycles as expected

through the AQIP process, and the realization that our last strategic plan, which although well intentioned, includes substantial gaps in aspects of project development and implementation.

4. Since broad understanding of, support for, and commitment to a continuous improvement approach and AQIP are essential for their success, what is the current level and extent of these elements in your organization? What is the evidence that key groups in your organization (e.g., Board, CEO, senior leaders, faculty, and staff) understand the nature of continuous improvement efforts and the demands of AQIP?

The administrative team has endeavored to include continuous quality as a guiding concept in the decision-making and project planning aspects of each division within the College. Utilization of best practices and the discussion of those practices have resulted in a concept of review, adjustment, and assessment of practices – instructional, operational, and service aspects of our College. There is an effort to encourage feedback from students, external constituents, employees (exempt and non-exempt), an “open door” philosophy is maintained and concerns, comments, and ideas discussed by the administrative team. Increased efforts have been realized in opening the communication lines as a result of minor adjustments (changes in committee functions, distribution of Board agenda materials, etc. to significant organizational structures (technological improvements, program reviews, etc.)

The AQIP process has been presented to the Board of Trustees and the employees of SCCC numerous times. Dr. Grote, past SCCC President, attended an AQIP conference in 2003 and reported to the Trustees regarding AQIP. Ms. Rapp, Dean of Instruction, and three key faculty members, a division chair, and a representative from information technology participated in a pre-convention workshop at the 2004 NCA-HLC annual meeting and provided reports to the Board and the staff regarding information she obtained. Dr. Dunn, current President, reported to the Board on information Dr. Stephen Spangehl, NCA-HLC Director, presented to the Kansas Board of Regents in September 2004. The intent to pursue AQIP designation was included in the 2004-05 institutional goals. AQIP has been an information and discussion item during each of the all-staff meetings held during FY2005 and FY2006 to date. Ms. Rapp, a division chair, and a faculty member attended the June 2005 Vital Focus training session. Special discussion meetings were held with the Buildings, Grounds, and Maintenance staff in October 2005 to answer questions, explain the intent and importance of the Constellation Survey, and reinforce the necessity of total involvement of all sectors of the SCCC employee base.

5. What are your plans for integrating participation in AQIP into your organization’s current agenda? Are there major events on the horizon (e.g., a change in leadership, a major contract negotiation, budget cuts), and how are you planning to address them or integrate them into your quality efforts?

SCCC has realized major changes in our community, our leadership, and the state coordination of higher education since our last accreditation visit. The demographic and economic structure of our community has changed during the past few years. The growing Hispanic population (many who are not English speaking and have no college experience) has resulted in an increased need to serve those who are seeking English, citizenship, and developmental academic courses. We have also realized an increase in the number of first generation college students,

many of whom must attend SCCC on a part-time basis due to family and employment commitments. The primary economic base of our community has traditionally been agriculture and energy (oil and natural gas). As the economic stability of those industries has changed, so have the employment needs of our area. Efficiencies in production agriculture have shifted employment to more specialized agriculture skills and increased value added employment (processing, marketing, and sales of agriculture products). The technological efficiencies in the energy industry have resulted in fewer mid-management opportunities. However, there are substantial employment opportunities in corporate swine operations, beef packing, and oil/gas production. These changes in the nature of available employment (combined with a low unemployment rate) have resulted in adjustments to instructional programs, career/academic advising and counseling, adjustments to services provided to students for retention and academic development, and the need to provide college experiences to the family as well as the traditional student.

We are now coordinated by the Kansas Board of Regents. That change in coordination from the Kansas State Board of Education to the Regents occurred as a result of the passage of the Kansas Higher Education Coordination Act (SB345) in 1999. The move of state level coordination from KSDE to KBOR has realized changes in curriculum approval, distribution of funding, and accessibility to coordinating staff. One aspect of KBOR coordination is the requirement for all higher education institutions to submit annual performance agreements beginning in 2004. Those agreements must address selected system goals (adopted by KBOR) and include institutional goals, benchmarks, and strategies to meet the system goal(s). A portion of the state aid distribution is based upon the institutions ability to show progress toward those goals on an annual basis. SCCC has submitted these performance goals, the 2004 and 2005 goals have been approved and our College has received the full appropriation of available funds based upon our annual progress. The 2006 performance agreement has been submitted and will be acted upon at the November 2005 KBOR meeting. The performance agreement lends itself to continuous improvement, and the AQIP process will aid in our College's identification of goals, benchmarks, and strategies.

6. How are you planning to organize your quality effort? Explain which current or new structures (committees, systems, etc.) you will use to organize and run your improvement efforts? What organizational systems, structures, and other resources (e.g., a quality council, quality "champions," task forces, training programs, etc.) currently exist or are planned that will sustain your continuous improvement efforts?

It will be critical that we utilize our current committee structure and utilize input from the may staff members who are participants in those committees. Changes in the structure of those committees have been made in an effort to focus on continuous improvement rather than addressing a momentary need. For instance, the Council for Quality Improvement (CQI) has been in existence for numerous years, but was charged with a new focus last year. Previously, CQI (consisting of operational directors) provided activity and status of project reports. That function has changed to gain input, recommendations, review, and evaluation of institutional policies, procedures, operations, and improvements for the College. Likewise, the marketing committee (again, a committee with significant history) has been modified as IMPACT (Institutional Marketing Promotion and Activities Committee/Team) to address all aspects of

developing a marketing and promotion plan. The previous function of that committee included admissions and recruiting strategies, which have now been assigned to the Enrollment Management Committee (formed in 2005).

It is our intent to imbed the concepts of continuous improvement within the institutional culture, not address it as a stage in the accreditation cycle. We will utilize the existing standing committees including CQI, IMPACT, Enrollment Management, Academic Affairs, Instructional Team, Deans Council, Student Government, and the Assessment Committee charging each committee to review the action plans, develop assessment and feedback strategies for identified needs, and utilize an already existing structure to further improve on our operations.

7. Prior to attending a Strategy Forum, how are you planning to meet AQIP's requirement to conduct a preliminary self-assessment from a systems- or process-focused perspective, one that includes input from perspectives external to the organization?

We have scheduled the Constellation Survey to be completed October 17 – October 28, 2005. Information has been provided to the Trustees and employees regarding the purpose of the Constellation and a letter from Dr. Dunn has been sent to all individuals who are requested to complete the survey (all full-time employees, long-term adjunct faculty, regular part-time employees, and Trustee members.) The individual survey questions were reviewed the SCCC representatives who attended the Vital Focus Seminar in July 2005, and finalized by Dr. Dunn, President and Ms. Rapp, Dean of Instruction.

We have planned for the Conversation to occur with all employees and the Trustees in January 2006. We anticipate inclusion of a number of community members in the conversation as well – individuals who serve on program advisory committees, the Development Foundation Board, alumni members, student representatives, etc.

We have submitted a request to participate in the Strategy Forum scheduled for May 17-20, 2006. Attending the Forum will be Dr. Dunn, Ms. Rapp, a member of the Board of Trustees (to be selected by the Board in January), and faculty/staff members who will form the AQIP steering committee (to be named upon receipt from NCA-HLC of our acceptance in the AQIP process.)

8. Prior to attending a Strategy Forum (within the 12 months following admission), how will your organization identify issues, challenges, problems, or opportunities that might become Action Projects?

As we receive the results of the Constellation Survey and feedback from the Conversation Day, we will determine primary action projects for SCCC. The information will be compared to the College's strategic planning document, the institutional annual goals, the Kansas Board of Regents annual performance goals, and the goals of our federal grants. Those comparisons will be of benefit in coordinating activities, responsibilities, departmental role and scope of involvement, and create a link of all initiatives within the College's continuous improvement cycles. A member of the Board of Trustees will be identified to serve as a representative for AQIP planning and implementation. Additionally, representatives will be identified from our external constituents (i.e. Development Foundation Board, advisory committees, student representatives, etc.) for inclusion in the Action Project identification and implementation. Although the administrative team currently has ideas for Action Projects, we have not pursued

those as separate projects until the Constellation Survey and Conversation Days have been completed and we have received feedback.

When you submit this application, please name a formal AQIP Liaison for your organization – someone who is centrally involved in your quality initiative. (It need not be the CEO or chief academic officer. We intend to continue to communicate closely with your CEO, CAO, and other members of your leadership, but we must have someone we can call or email directly regarding details of your relationship with AQIP. You inform AQIP whenever you change your AQIP Liaison.)

Contact Information for Organization's AQIP Liaison:

Ms. Cynthia Rapp
Salutation, Name

Dean of Instruction
Job Title of Liaison

Seward County Community College
Organization Name

1801 N. Kansas, PO Box 1137
Office address

Liberal, Kansas 67905-1137
City, State, Zip

620.629.2612 Fax: 620.626.3058 crapp@sccc.edu
Office phone(s) and extension(s) Office fax Email address

Name and address to which AQIP should send invoice for application fee of \$275:

Dr. Duane M. Dunn, President
Salutation, Name, Title

Seward County Community College
Organization Name

1801 N. Kansas, PO Box 1137
Office address

Liberal, KS 67905-1137

City, State, Zip

Before you email your *Participation Application* to AQIP@hlcommission.org, make certain it has been reviewed and approved by your organization's CEO.

UNDERSTANDINGS AND EXPECTATIONS OF PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

A Participating Organization is one that elects to maintain its accreditation with the Higher Learning Commission by regularly providing the Academic Quality Improvement Program with evidence of the vitality of its academic quality improvement initiative and the results that initiative has achieved. Participation is subject to approval by AQIP and the Commission. The Academic Quality Improvement Program's goal is to create a culture, a set of shared understandings, with its Participating Organizations that will:

1. **enhance** *communication, ongoing learning, and public understanding of systematic academic quality improvement;*
2. **encourage** *systems-thinking and provide resources that will stimulate continuous improvement and accountability;*
3. **promote**, *within and among organizations, a culture of involvement and shared responsibility for academic quality, and*
4. **develop** *the critical judgment, skills, and capabilities required for systematic quality improvement.*

These understandings and expectations relate formal points of agreement between AQIP and the organization that establish the conditions for this accreditation process.

To support Academic Quality Improvement Program operations and activities, the organization will:

- identify an official organizational liaison with AQIP and the Commission, notifying AQIP promptly of temporary or permanent changes affecting this liaison role;
- participate in all scheduled AQIP activities (e.g., Strategy Forum, Systems Appraisal, Annual Updates, Checkup Visit, Reaffirmation of Accreditation), which are essential to the operation of this accreditation process and required by AQIP for its accrediting determinations;
- inform AQIP promptly of major organizational conditions, events, or changes that could negatively affect the organization's viability, operations, or quality improvement efforts;
- pay fees charged for participation in AQIP Workshops, Appraisals, and other activities promptly; and

- continue to meet the Commission's *Criteria for Accreditation*, responding promptly to any inquiries the Commission receives regarding possible violations of these fundamental Commission membership expectations, and observing other Commission policies and obligations of membership (e.g., concerning organizational change and dynamics, annual report, complaints, public information, etc.).

To respond to an organization's needs and requirements, the Academic Quality Improvement Program, its staff, and the Higher Learning Commission will:

- collaborate with a participating organization to help it accomplish its goals;
- make information about an organization public only with the organization's consent;
- respond energetically, quickly, and courteously to requests by a Participating Organization for assistance or information in all quality-related areas;
- keep program costs and the fees charged to a Participating Organization as low as possible, thereby promoting opportunities for broader involvement in AQIP's activities and services; and,
- share information on organizational quality improvement by identifying, evaluating, validating, and sharing best and innovative practices discovered by participating and partnering organizations.

The Higher Learning Commission agrees to:

- maintain the organization's AQIP participation so long as the organization continues to take part in AQIP activities and provides AQIP with credible evidence justifying continuation;
- indicate in the organization's Statement of Affiliation Status (SAS) under a section titled "Next Reaffirmation of Accreditation," the scheduling of the date for a reaffirmation seven academic years in the future;
- transition the organization, after appropriate notice and consultation, to the standard accreditation process if (1) the organization so requests, (2) the Commission has evidence that the organization is no longer continuing in its good faith effort to participate in AQIP according to the terms of these understandings and expectations; or (3) AQIP review for Reaffirmation of Accreditation shows a lack of progress in continuous quality improvement and that the organization or the Commission would be better served by a standard process;
- if the organization has participated in AQIP for five years or more, to schedule its next comprehensive visit five years after the year it leaves AQIP; or
- if the organization has participated in AQIP for fewer than five years, to schedule its next comprehensive visit either for the year that it was originally scheduled before the organization joined AQIP,

or at least one full year after the year the organization ceases to be an AQIP participant, whichever is later.

The Commission continuously re-examines its programs and processes to make changes and corrections where appropriate. In the event the Commission makes changes that will affect this agreement, the Commission agrees to notify Participating Organizations in advance of implementation and allow a reasonable period of time for organizations to make appropriate adjustments or request transition to a standard process.

APPLICATION AFFIRMATION

I affirm that the application emailed to AQIP@hlcommisdsion.org presents our institution accurately, and that we agree, if admitted, to abide by the *Academic Quality Improvement Program Understandings and Expectations* and to:

- commit to a systematic initiative to improve continuously our academic and related processes and their results;
- engage faculty, staff, and other constituents in defining and implementing quality improvement efforts so that an institution-wide culture and understanding of systematic academic quality improvement evolves;
- promote and provide broad-based involvement in activities and in professional development that builds awareness and understanding of the principles and practices of systematic quality improvement at all levels of the institution; and
- establish systems for communication across staff, students, and other constituents and stakeholders regarding our institution's involvement and progress in systematic Academic Quality Improvement.

Signature of Organizational CEO

Date

Duane M. Dunn, President

Printed/Typed Name and Title

Seward County Community College

Name of Organization

1801 N. Kansas

Address

PO Box 1137

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Liberal, Kansas 67905-1137

City, State of Organization, ZIP code