

**YEAR SEVEN MISSION FULFILLMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY  
PEER-EVALUATION REPORT**

**STONE CHILD COLLEGE**

**BOX ELDER, MONTANA**

**OCTOBER 16-18, 2017**

*A confidential report of findings prepared for  
The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities*

## **Evaluation Committee**

Richard W. Cummins, Ph.D., Chair  
President  
Columbia Basin College

Mrs. Suzanne Bolyard  
College Preparation Instructor  
Treasure Valley Community College

Ms. Patricia Charlton  
Senior Vice President for Strategic Initiatives and Administrative Services  
College of Southern Nevada

Glen Cosby, Ph.D.  
Vice President of Student Services  
Spokane Community College

Chato Hazelbaker, Ph.D.  
Chief Communications and Information Officer  
Clark College

Mr. John Martens  
Vice President for Instruction  
Centralia College

Mr. David Ongley  
Director, Tuzzy Consortium Library (retired)  
Ilisagvik College

Ms. Valerie Martinez, Liaison  
Vice President  
Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities

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## Introduction

A seven-person evaluation team (“the Committee”) conducted a Year Seven Mission Fulfillment and Sustainability Evaluation Visit to Stone Child College (“SCC” or “the College”) from October 16 through October 18, 2017. The visit covered Standard One through Standard Five in response to the *Year Seven Mission Fulfillment and Sustainability Report* submitted by the College to the Commission in September of 2017.

The College's report documented and analyzed its efforts toward mission fulfillment. The Committee conducted numerous interviews with both individuals and groups that included the governing board, key administrators, all full-time members of the faculty, various staff, and numerous students. Committees also reviewed numerous College documents before and during the visit. When requested, additional documents were promptly supplied, most notably by Barbara Bacon, whom the Committee compliments for her diligence and passion for assessment at the course, program, and college level.

The Committee could not have asked for a more welcoming and generous visit. The College administration, faculty, staff, and students were kind hosts who also participated in impressively large numbers at our open sessions and made themselves otherwise available throughout the visit. The Committee compliments the helpful and pleasant staff at every level of the institution. Stone Child College exudes a spirit of goodwill. The Committee members observed a deeply felt sense of mission, focused on preserving the language and culture despite the enormous pressures of the dominant culture. As a group, the Committee members felt grateful to be in the presence of this animating force.

## Eligibility Requirements

The College addresses all eligibility requirements in their report and the Committee sought evidence to verify compliance with them. The College infrastructure—human, technological, financial—demonstrates the requisite capacity for mission fulfillment.

## Institutional Context

First and foremost, the Evaluation Committee would like to compliment the College for its resilience following the loss of President Nate St. Pierre a few short weeks before this visit. Leadership loss is always consequential, and in a small community where kinship relationships are deeply woven into the social fabric, the loss of a leader is familial, tribal, and therefore especially poignant.

Second, the Committee would like emphasize that tribal colleges occupy a unique position in American higher education because their communities are so unique. We heard from several people who analyzed this phenomenon with the theory of historical trauma. While there is great diversity in Native America—566 federally recognized tribes in 35 states—historical trauma

theory posits that all Native Americans are embedded within cultures that have experienced historical trauma in three successive phases.

The first phase entails the dominant culture perpetrating mass traumas on a population, resulting in cultural, familial, societal and economic devastation for the population. The second phase occurs when the original generation of the population responds to the trauma showing biological, societal and psychological symptoms. The final phase is when the initial responses to trauma are conveyed to successive generations through environmental and psychological factors, and prejudice and discrimination. Based on the theory, Native Americans were subjected to traumas that are defined in specific *historical losses* of population, land, family and culture. These traumas resulted in *historical loss symptoms* related to social-environmental and psychological functioning that continue today [italics original] (Whitbeck, Adams, Hoyt, & Chen, 2004 as cited in Brown-Rice, 2013).

The validity of historical trauma theory, in its broad outlines in the literature, is robust. For the purposes of this accreditation report, it is important to understand that the College's efforts to preserve Chippewa Cree language and culture through educational and community programs is part of a 500-year struggle against the dominant culture. Rocky Boy's Indian Reservation has 70 percent unemployment and commensurate levels of food insecurity, chronic health issues, substance abuse, domestic violence, and other ills. Conversely, an individual student's success is about the community in its entirety, so the faculty and staff focus on individual achievement. Historical trauma theory understands that the whole community needs healing, which is distinct from dominant culture understandings, which focus more on the individual while deemphasizing social context. Trauma is "collective and multilayered rather than being solely centered on an individual" writes Brown-Rice (2013). This is divergent from a "typical Eurocentric perspective of illness and treatment, which tends to reduce suffering to discrete illnesses with individual causes and solutions" (Goodkind, Hess, Gorman, & Parker, 2012, p. 1021, as cited in Brown-Rice, 013). At its core, the College is focused on its fundamental mission of preserving Chippewa Cree language and culture within this historical and community context in a comprehensive fashion across the range of its programs and services. The Committee found numerous illustrations.

For example, during the week before the visit, an early blizzard left roads nearly impassable and a campus with 30 inches of frozen slush. At the height of the storm, college staff processed payroll, knowing that a lack of student worker pay means heightened food insecurity. One student, stating his gratitude for faculty and staff across the board, recounted this example to let the Committee know that "even in the middle of a blizzard they still made sure we were paid." Another example is Monday Drum, a ceremonial drumming that lasts for several minutes in the student commons during lunchtime. While ostensibly a way of sharing a cultural moment that connects students to Chippewa Cree history, the more blatant purpose is to give students a meal in a community with high levels of food insecurity. Further inquiry into this dynamic revealed lots of occasions involving students and food as well as plenty of available free snacks in the tutoring and library areas. The College also operates its own small bus to pick up and take home students every day. As one of the drivers put it, "I tell them to let me pick them up even if they do have a car, which most of them don't. But if they do, they can save their gas money with me."

A second contextual factor for understanding Stone Child College is that soft money fuels its efforts. The budget is composed of three main revenue streams: the Indian Student Count allocation; tuition and fees; and grants, contracts, and associated overhead accounts. When a grant is lost, services are either discontinued or a financially strapped college makes difficult choices in order to continue them. The TRIO program Student Support Services was discontinued but the College still tries to continue the wraparound services using the proverbial duct tape and baling wire as best it can.

Finally, the College shares problems endemic to rural colleges everywhere in America in terms of talent recruitment and retention and an economy scale that requires many individuals to wear many different hats. The downside danger of being a “jack of all trades” is becoming a “master of none,” so it is commendable that College puts professional development funds into each departmental budget.

From an objective standpoint, the Committee would like to emphasize that Stone Child College is a bright spot for students to create viable pathways to transfer or work. The work ahead, while needing progress in the planning, assessment, and continuous improvement model for mission fulfillment, will build upon the substantial efforts of highly dedicated faculty and staff who have made SCC the transformational tribal college that it is today. The Committee hopes that this response to the College's self-evaluation will assist in taking this very fine institution to higher levels of success through further refinement of the alignment between Mission, Core Themes, and Indicators and by further developing its approaches to planning, assessment, and continuous improvement.

The Committee offered compliments for the evident and pervasive sense of love and ethos of caring that drives the mission at Stone Child College. All members of the evaluation committee noted the generosity and compassion and commitment to student success among faculty and staff at all levels. Despite being stretched thin, the hard-working SCC employees exhibit a remarkable commitment to serving students and their community and one another.

## **Response to Student Achievement Data**

The Commission requested that the Evaluation Committee address student achievement data from Stone Child College in a special section titled “Response to Student Achievement Data.” These data are derived from the institution’s self-reported numbers submitted in the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) survey with the exception of 2016 enrollment data that originates from the self-reported numbers of the NWCCU Annual Report. Specifically, the Commission requested that the Evaluation Committee respond to the following four questions.

1. What are the key challenges of the institution related to the institution’s graduation rate and other data provided?
2. What is the institution doing to improve the graduation rates?
3. What initiatives appear to be effective in improving graduation rates?
4. What might accreditors do to assist institutions to improve graduation rates?

1. To answer the first question, one must understand the unique context of a tribal college. At least three factors emerge as conducive to lower than desired graduation rates. These factors include (a) an outsized effect from the typical countercyclical rotation of enrollment, retention and graduation with employment levels in the context of a labor market that holds a deeply held ethos of community care; (b) a higher percentage, per capita, of substance abuse than non-tribal college communities; and (c) an absence of community employment support systems for first-generation college students.
  - (a) In typical community colleges, enrollment surges when employment level plunges. This is true at Stone Child College, but there are two additional variables that cause an even greater effect on graduation rates, which decrease during times of high employment. First, unemployment is endemic and can be as high as 70 percent even when times are good. Second, the community ethos of care is pervasive across the college community, so during times of low employment, enrollment will increase with students who are not likely completers but are attending because financial aid dollars are available. The College is currently reviewing its policies because there is an ongoing tension between open access and the need for rigorous standards of academic progression.
  - (b) One senior administrator told the Evaluation Committee that in every family; at least one family member is suffering from substance abuse. The volatility of this community profile affects retention and graduation rates.
  - (c) While the major employers theoretically value college completion, family relationships rather than degree qualifications often trump employment decisions, undermining the attainment goal.

Additional hurdles include food insecurity, homelessness, and lack of financial resources both for students and permanent hard money sources for the College.

2. The institution is working on multiple fronts to improve graduation rates. Chief among these, quite honestly, is an abiding sense of love and care for students. Every member of the faculty and staff is genuinely concerned about student success, so they work reflexively and daily to remove barriers to completion. So much so, one staff member opined, “maybe we baby them a bit.” Within the context of this deep sense of mission and ethos of caring, the College has a retention plan, a retention committee that meets regularly, and goals against which data are gathered so that learning and improvement can occur. Regular assessment activities contribute at the college departmental and classroom levels as well.
3. Successful efforts are linked to stable funding sources at a College that runs principally on soft money. Most recently, “Project Success” is helping on multiple fronts at the individual and organization levels. For example, if a student has car troubles that inhibit attendance, this grant can provide payment to the vendor for services. Institutionally, this grant pays for Achieving the Dream participation. The latter’s emphasis on cohort analysis, data disaggregation, intervention strategies, and so forth, are having effects that are already ripe for measurement. Other strategies tend to revolve around food and events where food is provided because food insecurity is a real issue here. For example, a Monday drumming ceremony happens at lunch time every week, and students gather to share culture and free food.

4. As for what accreditors can do to assist institutions to improve graduation rates, we found this a difficult question to answer. In Stone Child College's case, lobbying at the federal level for more funding, as well as greater stability and equity, is desirable but perhaps not possible. For example, the College lost its TRIO/Student Support Services grant a handful of years ago but have found ways to continue the services in a reduced fashion.

The Committee nonetheless recommends two specific actions.

- First, a Commission "listening convening" of tribal college leaders would allow the Commission to hear a collective voice about how these institutions, vital in unique ways to their communities, need assistance. While these institutions are contained within the larger category of "Community College," they are sufficiently unique to warrant focused attention.
- Second, the Committee suggests the Commission create a portal for best practices specifically for tribal colleges that could also be used by other small or rural colleges. The specific challenge to address is here is the economy of scale issues that cause small colleges to be sometimes less effective in policy development, governance and general advocacy because staffing levels, talent recruitment and development, and so forth, are often significant challenges.



## Standard One: Mission, Core Themes, and Expectations

Stone Child College's Mission Statement states its value proposition in transactional as well as aspirational terms.

*Stone Child College (SCC) is a tribally chartered college established to deliver post-secondary educational opportunities through degrees, certificates and continuing education. SCC stresses the importance of preserving the Chippewa Cree language, culture and history. SCC will promote transfer students, professionally prepared and career-ready individuals.*

Students, faculty, and staff are all aware of the college mission, which is widely published and widely understood by the community. Committee members interviewed individuals associated with the various aspects of the mission—transfer, workforce, cultural, and community educations—and found that each of these mission elements gave strong direction to the College's efforts.

Stone Child College identifies four Core Themes: (a) Transfer Education; (b) Workforce Education; (c) Cultural Education; and (d) Community Education. Collectively these four Core Themes encompass the college's overall mission of delivering post-secondary education through degrees, certificates, and community education, preserving the Chippewa Cree language, culture, and history, and of promoting transfer students and professionally prepared and career-ready individuals. The Core Themes are aligned with the mission statement and collectively encompass the educational goals of the college. SCC defines mission fulfillment in terms of acceptable level of institutional performance on the Objectives and Indicators that delineate the Core Themes. (1.A.2). Actionable elements of mission fulfillment are represented in a core theme and each core theme is reflected in the mission.

The Committee believes that work is still needed on developing verifiable indicators of achievement for all of the Core Themes (1.B.2). The college has identified nine distinct objectives with at least one objective for each of its four core themes. Each of these objectives has at least one indicator and an associated benchmark. Although the objectives and indicators are relevant to their associated core themes, it is not clear in all cases that achievement of the objectives would imply satisfactory performance with respect to the core theme. Moreover, in some cases the indicators need revision or expansion to demonstrate achievement of the associated objective.

For example, the current Core Theme 1 Indicators need improvement. In the case of Objective 1.A, Indicator B, no benchmark was set for evaluating the meaning of completion rates. In the case of Objective 1.A, Indicator C, it is not specified how the data regarding student perceptions were derived, nor was justification provided for the relatively low (70%) target. For Objective 1.A, Indicator D, the indicator is meaningful, assessable, and verifiable, but the achievement rate is low given the central importance in higher education of achieving student learning outcomes. For Objective 1.A, Objective E, the target is listed as "maintain," but this seems incompatible with a model of continuous improvement required by the standard, and there are large drops in service levels (roughly 30% declines in AY 12-13 and 15-16 over the previous years) that would seem to merit either remedial action or explanation.

For Objective 1.B, Indicator A, the target is also relatively low, but more concerning is the presence of a year of 100% attainment (AY 13-14) preceded and followed by levels of 40%. In the case of Objective 1.B, Indicator B, both the target and the benchmark use the term “monitor,” but no definition of what constitutes “stable enrollment” is offered, so the indicator does not seem very meaningful. The same point holds for Objective 1.B, Indicator C. A chart of remedial course completion rates is given in the corresponding section of the self-study under Core Theme planning (Self-Study, p. 95), but its relationship to the indicator is not made clear. The Committee’s question, simply, is “What level of remedial course enrollment and completion is satisfactory and indicative of an acceptable level of success, and what level would signal a cause for alarm?” If the college is still gathering data to make a determination of a more specific target, then that fact might be made clearer.

In the case of Objective 1.C, Indicator B, the results are simply affirmative for every year under consideration, but there is no specific information given regarding the grant objectives, though there is a detailed discussion of the numbers served in each case. One might assume that the numbers detailed are in excess of the grant expectations in every case, except for the fact that in least one instance (the STIC project), it is noted that the goal was not met.

Objective 1.D, Indicator B refers to the amount requested for classroom and institutional technology from grants, but the target refers to the percentage of available funds spent, which leaves unanswered the critical question of whether the available funds are adequate to the expressed need. For Objective 1.D, Indicator C, the benchmark mentions adequate funding but the criteria for adequacy is not stated, even though the claim is made that it was met.

The Committee also determined that the current Indicators for Core Themes 2, 3, and 4 also need improvement. For example, Core Theme Objective 2.A has two components: (a) graduates are prepared for transfer; and (b) graduates are prepared for successful entry in their field with appropriate skill sets. The second of these is addressed through the two indicators, however the first is not addressed. The third core theme, Cultural Education, reflects a holistic approach to using core themes to embrace the entire College mission. Five indicators have been identified to assess this core theme. The indicators are course enrollment and completion rates, completion of Chippewa and Cree language courses, completion of Montana State Class 7 Cree Language courses, attendance and evaluations at cultural activities, and a printed collection of Chippewa Cree History. The indicators are available and assessable but the targets are vague and are not meaningful. Finally, for Core Theme 4: Community Education, there is one objective. This objective has two indicators of achievement that simply count the number of workshops and seminars and completions as inputs rather than as indicators that are outcomes-based.

Concern:

The committee is concerned that Stone Child College has not developed meaningful, assessable, and verifiable indicators of achievement for all core theme objectives. The indicators should form the basis for determination of mission fulfillment and be reflective of an ethos of continuous improvement

## **Standard Two: Resources and Capacity**

### **Governance and Governing Board**

The Board of Directors has nine members, four of whom are tribal council members. This structure creates alignment without dominance, assuring autonomy for the College. The Board and leadership regularly gather input from stakeholders, and leaders monitor and adhere to compliance with accreditation standards. Members do not appear to have conflicts of interest, and the Board appropriately reviews policy and procedures as appropriate, while speaking with one voice to the administration and community. The only area of concern was Standard 2.A.8. While the Board has responded to a self-evaluation instrument administered through the Governance Institute for Student Success (GISS) through the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT), it was not clear that they had used the combined results for group discussion and reflection. The Board should consider developing its own instrument for regular periodic evaluation .

### **Leadership and Management**

The College is fortunate that Interim President Sangrey-Billy worked closely with the late President St. Pierre and was prepared to assume executive leadership. The management staff of the College is well-organized and though it is composed of a sufficient number of individuals, professional development is an ongoing concern that the College understands and addresses with development funds.

Compliment:

The Committee compliments the leadership--including the Board, the Elders, and Interim President Cory Sangrey-Billy, and all faculty and staff--for the courage, empathy, and perspective needed to effectively solve the challenges facing this small tribal college dedicated to preserving the culture and language of the people they serve.

### **Policies and Procedures**

#### **Academic Policies**

The college has clearly communicated its academic policies related to students through the College Catalog and Student Handbook as informed by the college's Policy Manual. Policies related to faculty and staff are available in the college's Policy Manual. The Committee did not find policies related to service, scholarship, research, or artistic creation (2.A.12). Library policies are contained in the Stone Child/Rocky Boy Community Library Manual, which is referenced in the college Policy Manual (2.A.13). Transfer of credit policies for students entering the college and advice for students planning to transfer to another college are published both in the college catalog and in the Student Handbook. The college has also worked to developed articulation agreements with other colleges and universities to facilitate transfer to other schools. The Dean of Academics, in consultation with discipline faculty members, makes decisions on specific courses transferred into the college.

## Students

Students have access in the catalog to this information. It was also stated by students that they felt that they were fairly treated in the administration of these policies.

Admission and placement policies at the college are driven by the college's open access mission. As a small college, they also use a high-touch approach with every applicant having a one-on-one conversation with someone from the college, most often the registrar. In terms of placement, the college has successfully made the transition from Compass testing to Accuplacer for math, and has published guidelines for placing students into the appropriate coursework.

Students who need remedial work are redirected to local partners at the same time that they may be enrolled in courses at the college. The policies regarding academic progress and readmission are in the catalog and easily accessible.

A student leadership council exists and the students appear to play a vital role in governance. An elected student has a seat on the Board of Directors and elections for other officers were taking place.

There was some information about co-curricular activities posted outside the Student Services offices, but the Committee encourages the College to develop a clear definition of co-curriculum while ensuring that policies are created and included in published materials as appropriate.

## Human Resources

Human resource policies can be found in the Stone Child College Policies and Procedures Handbook. The staff reported that they regularly reviewed policies and procedures and knew where to find them.

The staff reported that they all knew the grievance procedure and that it was followed. They also expressed that the "chain of command" was followed and that through this they were able to take care of many conflicts as they occurred.

The Human Resources Officer reviews the human resource policies with new hires. Additionally the President and the Human Resources Officer hold regular new employee orientations. Some forms and the related policies can be found in the file share on campus. The most comprehensive source of policies is the Policy and Procedure manual. The Committee observed appropriately posted materials in the Human Resource office regarding employment law.

The institution keeps records locked in appropriate storage rooms and has procedures for how records are to be accessed. The use of electronic records is limited and the IT staff reported that they limit access to those records and have a process by which supervisors must provide permission to individual employees in order to access student records. Additionally, some records are stored in iCloud.

The Committee is concerned that records are currently spread out among a few locations and there may not be strong enough protections in place to ensure the level of confidentiality required to keep personal information safe .

### **Institutional Integrity**

SCC complies with these standards. The College represents itself accurately and consistently, and regularly reviews its publications. High ethical standards are codified in the Policies and Procedures Manual, as are policies controlling intellectual property. The College represents its accreditation status accurately and enters into contracts with vendors in a manner consistent with accreditation standards.

### **Academic Freedom**

Academic Freedom policies are published in the Faculty Handbook. Faculty, students, and administration expressed that SCC promotes an environment that supports independent thought in the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge (2.A.27). That the College follows these principles was affirmed in a well-attended meeting with both full- and part-time faculty. The unanimous opinion of faculty and students when asked in interviews was that the college was supportive of open and non-restrictive of thought. Specific examples of potentially controversial topics and issues were offered as evidence (2.A.28). The policy is adapted from principles expressed by the American Association of University Professors and affirms the academic freedom of faculty in research and classroom instruction, and affirms their freedom from institutional interference in the exercise of free expression as citizens, subject to certain caveats that take into account their special status as scholars and educational officers in the community.

### **Finances**

The College has defined policies that are approved by its board and maintains appropriate fiscal controls.

### **Human Resources**

SCC does employ a sufficient number of qualified personnel. Faculty, staff, and students did not report that they felt any particular job skills were lacking. Job descriptions were updated across the college when Dr. St. Pierre started at the college and those are available in the Human Resource office. Staff reported that their job descriptions did accurately reflect their duties, though it is clear that staff regularly go above and beyond in terms of serving students outside of their regular duties.

The staff reported that they clearly understood the grievance process and relied on the lines of authority to resolve any conflicts that arise.

Grants often determine qualifications for positions, and position descriptions are standardized. The college has a clear process for how job descriptions are updated by supervisors prior to posting to ensure consistency and that the posting clearly meet the needs of the college.

As stated in the Year Seven Self-Evaluation Report, there have been high levels of turnover in key positions at the college. The college appears to be handling this turnover well with individuals stepping in to fulfill new roles or temporarily taking on new duties. The Committee compliments the college for how well they have provided service even when short staffed or in times of high turnover in key positions.

The Committee compliments the number of staff members who are highly qualified in terms of helping SCC achieve its mission in cultural preservation.

The Committee compliments the college on its ability to be an employer of choice in the community, where many individuals in the community want to work.

A concern in this area is the high turnover reported in key positions and the difficulty in finding qualified staff. Additionally, staff and faculty talked about the number of key faculty and staff nearing retirement. Staff reported that conversations had started on these topics and the Committees encourages a formal strategy to address recruitment, retention, and succession planning.

Staff reported being reviewed on an annual basis. They are using a standard instrument that has been adjusted in the recent years in order to meet the needs of administrators and staff.

Evaluations are stored in the Human Resource office.

SCC provides a range of opportunities for professional growth and development, particularly in making sure that they fill in gaps that may exist on the campus. For instance, when the maintenance staff reported that the College needed additional expertise in boiler maintenance, they took action to bring in someone from the outside to teach the staff how to provide this support rather than relying on the outside contractor to provide the maintenance service. This kind of professional development seemed to go across the institution at both an individual and college level. Individuals had the opportunity to pursue additional education off campus as well, resulting in a more well qualified staff and faculty. Another example would be the Library Director, who was supported as she earned her Master of Library Science (MSL) and participated in national leadership programs.

There are a number of outside organizations the college relies on for professional development. For instance, they are relying on organizations like American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) to offer training for the staff and faculty on how to use data. The committee commends the College for its professional development efforts.

The institution employs a small but highly dedicated faculty. They report feeling wholly involved in the planning and governance of SCC. They currently do not offer any distance education, and have a strong connection with each other and with students.

The faculties strong connections to the community clearly help drive discussion of new programs.

One area of concern is the recruitment of part-time faculty to sustain academic programs. Being in a rural area it may be difficult to recruit appropriately qualified faculty in the numbers to achieve the educational mission of the college.

Faculty are clearly going beyond their regular work duties as stated in the contract in some cases, but they did not feel that they were required to do so and felt that they were able to balance teaching, service, scholarship, research, and artistic creation. Faculty reported that teaching and advising students (on both academic and personal matters) are of primary importance. Faculty discussed how they work among themselves to balance workload. The faculty reported that they work with their supervisor when there are any time constraints.

The faculty expressed a need to balance the ethic of care and the dedication to the academic discipline, or, put another way, the rigor and compassion. However, each faculty member expressed clear thoughtful strategies for how to do this, and reported that students clearly understood the academic expectations that the faculty placed on them.

The Committee compliments the faculty on dedication to students as demonstrated on the time that they spend with students in class and by opening their offices to students.

Faculty evaluations each year are made up of three parts. They are (a) peer evaluation; (b) an evaluation by the Academic Dean; and (c) student evaluations. Faculty reported that this process was collegial and fairly applied.

One issue that was raised is that within a small faculty there are not colleagues who share an academic discipline who can complete the peer evaluation. Also, because of the size of the faculty and the longevity of faculty members many have been evaluated by the same person a few times. However, the process of peer review is well established and includes discussion both before and after the class that is evaluated.

The review by the Academic Dean was described similarly and also was reported to be collegial. It also included discussion.

Faculty reported that the student review process tended to be complimentary and the faculty sometimes felt that students were afraid of hurting faculty member's feelings. Several faculty members reported that they encouraged students to be honest on the evaluation, and some reported employing other creative tools to get feedback on their teaching.

The Committee is concerned about the evaluation of part-time faculty. While the process is rigorous for full-time faculty, the process appears to be inconsistently applied to part-time faculty.

Compliments:

The Committee compliments the number of staff members who are highly qualified in terms of helping SCC achieve its mission in cultural preservation.

The Committee compliments the college on its ability to be an employer of choice in the community, where many individuals in the community want to work.

The Committee compliments the extent to which the college encourages and provides professional development. The staff reported feeling that they have opportunities for growth with the resources that they need to fulfill their roles, duties, and responsibilities. This commitment is reflected in both innovative strategies to provide onsite development and is evidenced in departmental budget resource allocations.

#### Concerns:

The Committee is concerned regarding high turnover reported in key positions and the difficulty in finding qualified staff. Additionally, staff and faculty talked about the number of key faculty and staff nearing retirement.

The Committee is concerned regarding the recruitment of part-time faculty to sustain academic programs. Being in a rural area it may be difficult to recruit appropriately qualified faculty in the numbers to achieve the educational mission of the college.

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## Education Resources

All programs of study are offered on the main campus through predominantly traditional lecture (theory) and laboratory (guided practice). Programs of study are comprised of courses which appear to appropriate in stated content and rigor. Program of study include associate level transfer and workforce degrees, and workforce certificates, all of which fall within the mission of the college. The Commission has approved the college for candidacy status for a baccalaureate level teacher education degree, but this has not yet been launched. The scope of the mission appears broad enough to accommodate the addition of a baccalaureate degree. Each degree pathway has published student outcomes and all degrees and certificates are college level, have transparent and recognizable fields of study. SCC programs demonstrate appropriate content and rigor and are consistent with its mission. Programs lead to college-level degrees and certificates with designators consistent with program content in recognized fields of study. Transferability and articulation are the focus of academic degree programs. Advisory input from industry and third-party skills assessment demonstrate employability for technical degrees and certificates. Faculty are responsible for ensuring that programs culminate in achievement of clearly identified student learning outcomes.

Degree, program and course learning outcomes are identified. Degree outcomes are readily available to students in the SCC Catalog. Course learning outcomes (and program learning outcomes for general education courses) are part of the course syllabus provided to each student. Student transcripts document course level student achievement. The SCC Catalog describes the manner in which credits and degrees are awarded and includes policies consistent with higher education norms.

Programs and degrees have program plans which are published in the college catalog and which contain clearly identified program outcomes. In addition, those programs intended for transfer



have an identified core of general education that has its own set of 6 outcomes. Policy 409.00 of the Policy Manual mandates that all faculty produce syllabi and that these contain, among other elements, course objectives. Evidence indicates syllabi are being given to students, but staff relate that although timely distribution was not always achieved in the past, this has been addressed. The Dean of Academics maintains a file of the syllabi).

The credit policy 406.00 and grading policy 408.00 establish standards that are congruent with generally accepted practice. Degree plans contain courses and credit loads appropriate to those degrees. Learning outcomes for transfer degrees include a core of general education with additional academic coursework that supports the degree emphasis area. Workforce programs include related instruction as well as coursework that builds skills appropriate to the degree. The college has developed well-defined and coherent degree pathways and admission and graduation requirements are delineated in the college catalog and the student handbook, at a minimum.

Faculty are deeply involved in these processes through the work of the curriculum and assessment committees.

The faculty responsibilities related to this standard are well described in the self-study. Discussion with administration, faculty, and staff as well as documentation provided as evidence support a conclusion that faculty are the primary drivers for curriculum development, approval, implementation, and revision of the curriculum. They are involved in the decisions concerning what to develop, but take input from the community and the strategic planning process. The college has developed a faculty centered assessment process that appears to be inclusive.

As documented in the Self-Study, faculty work with the librarian to assist students with their coursework by providing informational resources and demonstrated their uses. In interviews with the librarian and the faculty it became clear that only some teaching faculty require the use of the library's informational resources. Some faculty will bring their classes as a whole to the library for library instruction; others will send their students individually. The Committee encourages the faculty to involve their students in the critical skills of information literacy in every program.

Degree programs demonstrate a coherent design with appropriate breadth, depth, course sequence of courses, and synthesis of learning. Admission and graduation requirements are clearly defined and are published in the SCC Catalog. Faculty are responsible for the design, approval, implementation, and revision of the curriculum, and are actively involved in the selection of new faculty. Faculty are responsible for fostering and assessing student achievement of clearly identified learning outcomes, which are published on syllabi. Faculty ensure that the use of library and information resources is integrated into the learning process.

SCC does not offer credit for prior experiential learning.

Stone Child College maintains several articulation agreements with other higher education institutions and exercises due diligence in accordance with this standard in the acceptance of transfer credit.

SCC policies state that the final judgment in accepting transfer credit is the responsibility of the receiving institution. In accepting transfer credit, SCC ensures that the credit accepted is appropriate for its programs and is comparable in nature, content, academic quality, and level to the credit it offers. SCC has established articulation agreements between institutions where patterns of student enrollments have been identified.

Decisions on transfer credit are made by the Dean for Academics in consultation with discipline faculty to ensure high academic quality. The college has pursued articulation agreements with Montana State University as well as other tribal colleges to facilitate student transfer. Prior to the development of their own baccalaureate in teaching, the college arranged a transfer agreement with Salish Kootenai College and offered courses on the Stone Child College campus.

## Undergraduate Programs

Stone Child College identifies appropriate student learning outcomes for all courses and programs and assesses the six learning outcomes it has identified as general education outcomes regularly and systematically. Associate transfer and the proposed teacher education baccalaureate program build upon a well-defined general education core. The core includes components of communications, mathematics, humanities, fine arts, social science and natural science. All published program plans include at least 30 credits of general requirements. Moreover, the college has invested considerable effort in developing assessments for its general education outcomes.

Several of the workforce degrees and certificates are missing one of the three related instruction components. Specific examples include the certificate in Accounting/Information Management (42 semester credits) which does not clearly include human relations and the Certificate -Rural Health (31 semester credits) which appear to lack computation.

The evaluation panel strongly encourages Stone Child College take prompt action to ensure all workforce degrees and certificates of 30 semester credits or more in length contain a recognizable core of related instruction or general education with identified outcomes in the areas of communication, computation, and human relations that align with and support program goals or intended outcomes.

Assessment of the six general education learning outcomes and has received considerable investment, as evidenced through its overall general education assessment plan and the numerous Assessment Record documents. Moreover, the college has engaged the assistance of a consultant to further develop a course crosswalk that ties these outcomes to specific courses and program level (workforce, transfer, and baccalaureate). Although not as well developed, the current work includes the related instruction component of the workforce degrees and certificates.

The related instruction component of certificate programs has not been separated from the professional core in most instances. Work in this area appears to be underway and the panel encourages the college to continue work on ensuring the related instruction components are aligned with the certificate program goals and that related instruction outcomes are assessable

and assessed. These components can be taught through stand-alone blocks or may be embedded in other courses, but the faculty responsible for this content must be appropriately qualified .

SCC does not offer graduate programs.

SCC offers non-credit leisure learning and workforce training coursework, which is compatible with its mission to “to deliver post-secondary educational opportunities through degrees, certificates, and community education.” Although SCC does not grant credit for these courses, academic departments are responsible for the academic quality of the courses and programs. The Cultural Education committee maintains records which describe the number of courses and nature of learning provided through non-credit instruction. Under Core Themes 2, 3 and 4, programs are delivered that include credit and non-credit courses, cultural and business seminars, cooperative extension workshops, presentations and other special programs and events. These offerings are very robust with nearly two a week per semester. Over 2000 students participated last year. Evidence was provided that these programs are compatible with the institution’s mission and goals.

Continuing education and special programs are developed in-house based on the results of the Community Needs Assessment which is completed every five years. Grants to fund programs with major needs are written based on this assessment. The Faculty Curriculum Committee approves all credit courses offered under the Workforce Education, Cultural Education and Community Education core themes. The Registrar’s office monitors enrollment and ensures that established procedures are followed. Faculties, both full-time and adjunct, are involved in planning and evaluation of these special programs where appropriate.

The Committee compliments SCC on their diverse and numerous workforce, cultural and community offerings that are compatible with the institution’s mission and goals. These various programs and services serve the Rocky Boy community well.

CEUs are not offered at this time by SCC. Credit courses and special learning activities conform to SCC’s mission and policies and are guided by generally accepted norms consistent across the institution with objectives and learning outcomes.

The institution maintains records which describe the number of courses and nature of learning provided through non-credit instruction.

As stated in the Self-Evaluation Report, the Registrar’s office is responsible for maintaining records for courses and compiles accurate data of programs offered as well as the descriptions of those programs.

Finally, the Committee wishes to express the concern that SCC may wish to more carefully delineate programs offered as Workforce Development and those offered as Community Education, as well as between credit and non-credit programs.

Compliment:

The Committee compliments SCC on their diverse and numerous workforce, cultural and community offerings that are compatible with the institution's mission and goals. These various programs and services serve the Rocky Boy community well.

Concern:

The Evaluation Committee is concerned that all workforce degrees and certificates of 30 semester credits or more in length do not have a recognizable core of related instruction or general education with identified outcomes in the areas of communication, computation, and human relations that align with and support program goals or intended outcomes.

## **Student Support Resources**

The learning environment at SCC reflects the students, enhances the mission, and creates a positive learning environment for students. The facilities are well maintained and arranged in a way that encourages interaction. There is a full range of student services, and staff at the college are highly engaged with students in providing services.

SCC provides both peer tutoring and staff tutoring and the faculty work closely with students to help them achieve their educational goals and understand course materials.

The Committee would like to compliment the work that has gone into creating and maintaining the Learning Center. This is an important area of the campus for students and from computer access to food, and it is appreciated by students. The Committee would also like to compliment the college on the way that the artwork and displays in the building celebrate the culture and history of the community in a way that appears to enhance the cultural aspects of the mission .

The institution makes adequate provision for the safety and security of its students and their property at all locations where it offers programs and services. Crime statistics, campus security policies, and other disclosures required under federal and state regulations are made available in accordance with those regulations.

Students reported feeling very safe and the crime statistics, campus security policies, and disclosures can all be easily found. While the security staff is small, they reported getting training and working with local law enforcement partners. The college has also made an effort to ensure student safety by employing security cameras, electronic alarm systems, and the emergency alert system RAVE.

A concern is in documentation and training for students related specifically to Title IX policies and procedures. It also does not appear the college has a trained Title IX investigator. There is information on sexual harassment, but it does not appear to cover the whole breadth of the Violence Against Women Act or some of the other federal regulations found in the Dear Colleague Letter. This is a potential risk to students and to the college which relies heavily on federal grant funding.

As an open access institution SCC admits any student seeking services. Using appropriate tools the evaluate students and work one on one to place the students into the appropriate courses, including directing students to community GED resources if those are needed.

The college is proactively reaching into the local high schools providing dual credit opportunities through Department of Education grant programs, and the college has regular contact face to face in the local high schools.

The Freshman Seminar is a critical piece in making sure that students understand many of the policies and procedures they will need to be successful at SCC and if they transfer. This coursework appears in well thought out and a key to student success. However, the Committee is concerned that the mandatory nature of the Freshman Seminar course is not reflected in the catalog and encourages the College to make sure it has easy-to-find documentation regarding this fact.

The Committee would like to compliment the college on its proactive efforts to help students obtain all of the documentation they need to enroll. Working one on one, face to face with students they use existing relationships in the community and their resources to track down transcripts, immunization records, and other documents that may be needed to enroll students.

The Committee learned that in the event of significant changes in program requirements, individual students are sent a letter. Faculty as part of their duties on the Curriculum Committee ensure that faculty advisors and other staff know the changes. Programs are not regularly eliminated but rather programs are retired but left extant with the ability to bring them back if enrollments pick up in a particular area. Degree programs are evaluated for enrollment over several years, and only after years of having few or no enrollments are programs retired.

The catalog included all of the information required by the standard 2.D.5. In order to ensure the accuracy of published information there is a system of review which includes a final review by the President before information is published.

SCC relies primarily on paper records and those are secured appropriately. In the new buildings they have made sure to provide adequate protections. There are policies regarding the records and FERPA training is taking place.

A concern is that currently the institution does not appear to have good comprehensive back up for records. During previous flooding some records were destroyed, and while improvements have been made in the safe storage of records many different types of records are not backed up electronically. This was stated as a goal.

Students are educated about Financial Aid and their responsibilities at Orientation and then again as part of the Freshman Seminar. Financial Aid policies are published in the catalog for all students. Additional information about scholarships and grants are found published with specific Program Coordinators in the grant areas (2.D.8). The college does not offer student loans. There is financial literacy information and Financial Aid information that is provided through the Freshman Seminar. The information covered in the Freshman Seminar is very helpful for students who may transfer and it helps them understand the many financial options open to the

majority of students who are Native American and have access to both state and federal financial resources to attend college.

Students at SCC are assigned a faculty advisor at the time of admission, but student understanding of academic programs begins even before that as the admission officers help students choose a particular path through the college based on the student's educational goals. The advising requirements are published and easy to find.

Students reported that they knew what was expected of them every term, and that they were able to get the courses they needed to make academic progress. Faculty take their advising responsibilities very seriously, and reported that they spent a majority of their time on campus advising when they were not actually in the classroom.

The Committee compliments the college on the way in which it identifies and then proactively reaches out to students who may be faltering in their coursework. There is a well-developed process in place which includes faculty and the retention coordinator. The process includes specifics of where a student is falling behind and includes a phone or personal conversation with the student to help get them back on track or advise them how to drop the class to ensure they will not experience negative financial or academic consequences.

Students participate in a limited number of co-curricular activities that are consistent with the mission.

The campus operates a book store but does not have housing or food service. The book store provides appropriate service to the campus and is proactive in working with faculty and staff to make sure they have the materials that they need.

One area of concern at the college for faculty and staff was the need for regular food service. Students expressed a desire to have food options closer to the campus and staff and faculty reiterated that as well.

The Committee compliments the faculty and staff on the extent to which they have tried to address food insecurity, or even just basic food needs of students by providing numerous places to get free snacks or meals including the "Monday Drum" which also serves an important role in community building.

The intercollegiate athletic opportunities at the college are limited to men's and women's basketball, and in some years there have not been enough individuals to field a team. The requirements for participation are clearly found in the catalog.

The College does not offer distance education courses or programs.

Compliments:

The Committee would like to compliment the work that has gone into creating and maintaining the Learning Center. This is an important area of the campus for students and from computer access to food, and it is appreciated by students. The Committee would also like to compliment

the college on the way that the artwork and displays in the building celebrate the culture and history of the community in a way that appears to enhance the cultural aspects of the mission

The committee compliments the faculty and student support staff for the efficacy of advising students and making sure that students have a clear path to achieve their educational goals. Students expressed that they knew exactly what they need to complete their educational plan and had access to advisors who went above and beyond to get them information

Concern:

The Evaluation Committee is concerned regarding the lack of documentation and training for students related specifically to Title IX policies and procedures. It also does not appear the college has a trained Title IX investigator. There is information on sexual harassment, but it does not appear to cover the whole breadth of the Violence Against Women Act or some of the other federal regulations found in the Dear Colleague Letter. This is a potential risk to students and to at the college which relies heavily on federal grant funding.

## **Library and Information Resources**

The library and its special archival collections of local Native American materials, children's and youth collections and substantial database access, provides informational resources and services that are highly consistent with the mission and core themes of the college. The collections contain the depth and breadth to support the curriculum. The library supplements its collection by partnerships and consortia agreements with other tribal colleges and Montana universities to provide interlibrary loan services, periodical databases and online catalog services. Of equal importance to the physical collections is the capacity of the staff to manage the collections and teach students and faculty their uses and to advise them in their research needs. The library staff at SCC is small but highly capable. The Committee notes that the library's archival collection is of great importance to SCC and the Rocky Boy community and encourages the College to create plans for additional staffing and adequate storage for this valuable collection as it continues to grow.

The Librarian's Master's Thesis, included in Addendum V and dated from 2016; entitled Measuring Library Satisfaction at the Stone Child College/Rocky Boy Community, is a very thorough assessment of library needs. In addition, data collection is gathered on library usage by the library staff on an hourly basis. This usage data along with resource circulation data from the online catalog comprise the monthly statistical data collected. It indicates trends and growth in resource usage by students, faculty and the community. Also, each year the library solicits input from both faculty and students as to recommendations for additional material and the deletion of outdated or those no longer necessary for courses. Informally, verbal recommendations are collected at the main library desk through interactions with students and staff as well as through the library's Facebook page which is current and active. The librarian serves on the Curriculum Committee and is fully informed on changes necessary for the library to support the curriculum.

The librarian provides instruction to classes and individuals in the use of appropriate and effective informational resources that are consistent with the mission and core themes.

The library regularly measures the quality, adequacy, utilization and security of its resources and services using standard and traditional library metrics. More sophisticated technics may be employed in the future. Cooperative agreements with other libraries and agencies to measure and evaluate services are conducted by SCC library staff.

Compliment:

The Evaluation Committee compliments the College for the excellent collections and services that are provided by the library to the SCC students, faculty, staff and community.

## **Financial Resources**

SCC has an established history of financial stability. The College's long-serving chief financial officer retired recently. A qualified internal candidate who has extensive experience within SCC with deep knowledge of the institution was hired. SCC has developed a fund reserve policy that is in the final stages of approval with the Board of Directors. The College has sufficient cash flow and reserves to support ongoing College operations. Institutional reserves have not been needed to support operations because solid financial management and conservative and effective fiscal has overseen the operation. As a tribal college, SCC's operating budget is primarily comprised from resources received through tuition and fees and funding associated with the number of native students (Indian Student Count). The College has a significant amount of grants that support the mission of the institution. These are restricted for prescribed and associated purposes. The institutional reserve policy addresses fiscal risk management in the case of unanticipated financial issues. These include, but are not limited to, enrollment fluctuations and outlay for compensated balances (such as annual leave payout and sick leave).

Through evidence provided in financial reporting that included audited financial statements, revenue and expenditure reports, and analysis of all funds, the College has maintained stability of financial resources. Projections are realistic, address operating requirements, and address an anticipated future reduction in revenue as a result of changes in negotiated/allowable indirect costs. SCC is diligent in the analysis of revenues, expenditures, and over-all operations. Overall enrollments are stable, including the number of native students, which impacts revenue receipts received through the Indian Student Count (ISC) funding. The institution is mindful of the careful balance between enrollment levels, tuition and fees, grant funds and indirect costs revenues. Fluctuations in enrollments have a direct impact on revenue; expenditures must be adjusted to meet actual revenues.

Financial planning and budgeting is accomplished through an engaged and comprehensive process with college departments, leadership, and approval by the Board of Directors. While direct linkage of the budget to the mission and core themes was not evident, due to transition in leadership in the financial department and the president's office, this was an exception. The College leadership team is mindful that the connection of decisions and resource allocations, as informed by assessment and evaluation, is needed. SCC illustrated commitment of resources consistent with goals and objectives as evidenced by the allocation of necessary resources in support of the new bachelor's degree in elementary education. The SCC budget is developed and receives approval through a three-step process of review, adjustment, and implementation with final approval by the Board of Directors. An initial draft of the budget, developed with faculty, staff, and administration is presented to the Board. Once the Board reviews and



recommends revisions, a final budget is presented, typically in May of each year for approval and implementation prior to June 30<sup>th</sup> of each year. The evaluation team believes that the SCC staff, faculty and administrators have an understanding of the value of fiscal planning and sustainability to the institution and have demonstrated over time an ability to leverage their resources effectively. Noteworthy were the innovative strategies that SCC deploys through their budget processes to support faculty, staff, administrative and board professional development. This was seen in the evidence provided in both written documents and interviews on campus with all groups.

From the evidence provided in the self-study document and interviews on campus with the college leadership and chief financial officer, SCC has taken extraordinary lengths to develop clearly defined policies and procedures for financial management and budget development and deployment.

SCC has an integrated administrative information system that includes accounting. The accounting system follows generally accepted accounting principles and incorporates an effective system of internal controls. All accounting functions are performed within the software to insure timely and accurate financial information and an effective system of internal controls.

SCC has an ongoing relationship with a local architecture firm that supports campus development and includes effective utilization of the physical site provided by the Rocky Boy/Stone Child Tribe. Capital expenditures are consistent with institutional planning and priorities. Construction projects are dependent on external fundraising and are limited. SCC currently has no debt service.

SCC has a bookstore that comprises its auxiliary enterprises and is not dependent on the College operating budget for sustained operations. The evaluation team learned of the interest from the college community for a food service operation and some interest in residence halls for students. The college leadership recognizes that research and planning are necessary to ensure appropriate financial resource, models and plans are adequate to support such operations.

SCC financial statements are audited annually by an independent certified public accounting firm in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards. SCC has received unqualified opinions on its annual audits. Annual audit reports are presented and discussed with the Board of Directors in advance of the required completion date of March 31<sup>st</sup> of each year.

SCC does not have a foundation that raises funding on behalf of the College.

## Physical and Technological Infrastructure

SCC has multiple buildings situated on the Rocky Boy's Indian Reservation in north central Montana outside of Havre, Montana. The campus facilities are beautiful and celebrate the culture of the Chippewa/Cree tribes. The buildings promote an environment of student learning, community engagement, and culture. A combination of classrooms, laboratory space, campus child care, athletics facility, and community spaces provide for a quality learning environments for faculty, staff and students. The campus library and student learning center provide students and the community with access to resources and support to assist them in college studies and lifelong learning interests. Facilities are compliant with ADA and provide access to students with disabilities. The campus operates in a safe and secure manner, with appropriate emergency management planning and notification processes for students. The campus utilizes RAVE for notification to staff and students. Faculty, staff, and students reported feeling safe on campus.

SCC has policies and procedures in place to ensure that hazardous materials are handled effectively. Policies and procedures are understood and followed by faculty and facilities department staff. The campus has limited laboratories and hazardous materials that are utilized.

SCC develops and operates campus facilities consistent with its mission and institutional priorities. Campus development occurs with engagement of the campus community, programs, and the Rocky Boy/Stone Child community. Because the college has a unique relationship with the tribal community, the development of campus space and buildings is consistent with the local needs. SCC facilities serve as community resources, and utilization is significant. Frequent community events are supported by faculty, staff, and students. The College recently worked with the local tribe to secure an additional five acres to accommodate future expansion and development.

The institution manages the physical resources in a manner that ensures adequacy and usability for instruction and other student support functions. The College also leverages its resources for equipment purchases and prioritizes fluctuations that may occur particularly in utility needs. For example, financial resource allocation needs to accommodate a spike in heating costs due to an increase in rates for propane and cold weather.

SCC is commended for the buildings and grounds reflect the pride that the facilities staff demonstrate in serving students and the community; each site is welcoming.

SCC maintains computer access for its students and staff. The Information Technology Department provides network infrastructure support, computing services, and hardware support. The College maintains adequate security over hardware and software resources. SCC has developed appropriate policies and procedures for information technology purposes, including an acceptable usage policy, which has not been finalized and approved. The Information Technology department has systems in place to protect the information and has backup systems in place for network file storage. The college is in the process of transitioning some hard copy files to electronic documents, and the Committee encourages the College to continue those efforts, which will facilitate redundancy through automated backups to limit data loss and disruption in operations.

The College maintains adequate staffing in IT to support students, faculty and staff. Training on new technologies/software applications is facilitated through subject matter experts and knowledgeable faculty.

SCC has developed a comprehensive policy and procedure to address technology life-cycle maintenance and is in the process of deployment of the policy. Replacement and deployment of new technologies is accomplished through a combination of general operating budget funding and grant funding. Through campus interviews with faculty, staff and students, the Committee believes that technology, equipment, and resources are appropriate, well maintained.

**Compliment:**

The College's buildings and grounds reflect the pride that the facilities staff demonstrate in serving students and the community; each site is welcoming, well cared for, and reflective of the quality programs and services offered.

## Standard Three: Planning and Implementation

### Institutional Planning

Stone Child College engages in planning that is “ongoing, purposeful, systematic, integrated, comprehensive” which is implemented and made available (Standard 3.A.1). The Mission Statement is concise and creates the grounding context for the development of its Core Themes discussed in 3.B, but the Committee is concerned about the alignment of institutional planning with Core Themes planning and assessment.

The Board has approved of SCC’s planning approach and results since 2009, when the revised accreditation standards required the first statement of Mission and Core Themes.

*Stone Child College (SCC) is a tribally chartered college established to deliver post-secondary educational opportunities through degrees, certificates, and continuing education. SCC stresses the importance of preserving the Chippewa Cree language, culture and history. SCC will promote transfer students, professionally prepared and career-ready individuals. (“Self-Study,” p. 78)*

The planning culture for the College was established in 2001, when College leaders worked with outside consultants with expertise in tribal and community colleges. The College adopted a funnel approach that incorporated simple but powerful planning concepts. These included external and internal environmental scan processes, a set of core of core values, a vision with mission and goals, the first strategic statement of future directions, and a set of tactics for achieving those strategy directions. This process is extant, and was most recently used in 2015-2016 to create the current plan, which extends until 2020. Participation in the plan is “broad-based and offers opportunities for input by appropriate constituencies” with nine sub-committees composed of internal and external stakeholders (3.A.2). In performing its planning processes, the College appears to use relevant and appropriate data sources that include internally generated data, reports from other tribal or governmental agencies, internal and external surveys, focus groups, and so forth and uses this information to create questions to address an evaluation of mission fulfillment (3.A.3). As far as the Committee could ascertain, the College uses its plan to direct general resource allocation and to make decisions about the College can or cannot afford to do (3.A.4), though it is not evident that all of the Core Themes are embedded in these processes. The College also complies with appropriate emergency and contingency planning standards (3.A.5).

### Core Theme Planning

Stone Child College has identified four Core Themes and has provided evidence that these Core Themes are being measured in certain ways. However, it was not clear to the Committee that strategic planning and Core Theme planning are integrated. The direct connection between Core Theme assessment and the strategic planning process does not appear to be as well developed or documented at this point, though it does appear to be under active development as evidenced through the minutes of the strategic planning retreats, the Assessment Committee, and the SCC Assessment Activities Checklist. Because the Committee did not find evidence that the Core

Themes are embedded in the strategic plan or other institutional planning processes, the Committee is concerned that the Core Themes are not an integral part of the planning process, which might result in misaligned programs and services and thus thwart the ability to assure that objectives are achieved.

For example, the Self-Study lays out eight strategic planning focal areas (p. 104). Each of these focal areas has several sub-categories for a total of 56, and for each of these 56 there is a corresponding goal with attendant strategies. However, it was unclear to the Committee what rolls up into what. While there is clearly assessment going on at the course, program, tactic, and Core Theme level, how these various pieces cohere is not clear. Since mission fulfillment is defined entirely in terms of achievement of the Core Theme objectives, the connection between those objectives and the work being done under the aegis of strategic planning should be more easily discerned. These factors make it difficult to discover if the Core Themes assessment helps to drive resource allocation from an institutional planning perspective.

Nonetheless, and as stated in the Self-Evaluation Report, Core Theme evaluation is an ongoing process at SCC. Stone Child College has invested considerable effort in its strategic planning process. Regular and intensive strategic planning retreats, associated assessment activities, needs assessment (2015), and the 2016-2020 Strategic Plan are evidence of this. The development of its teacher education baccalaureate program is an example of a change made to its overall mission because of this planning process. The strategic planning retreats are mandatory for all members of the faculty and staff, and minutes from these retreats indicate a high level of engagement and fruitful thought.

## **Standard Four: Effectiveness and Improvement**

### **Assessment**

SCC engages in a systematic collection and analysis of data. The college has developed an institutional evaluation and assessment plan, overseen by the Assessment Committee. This committee monitors and assesses goals and outcomes and has initiated a system of evaluation of programs and services at SCC. Through the Curriculum Committee, faculty members share the responsibility of evaluating educational programs and services.

Assessment begins with faculty performing course-level assessments. Rubrics provide a clear view of knowledge and performance objectives for a student assignment, though the use of rubrics is not universal. Faculty and administration express the desire to use them more. The college documents student achievement of course outcomes. Results are contained in the Assessment Record Book (ARB) or, more recently, the Assessment Planning and Reporting format.

The linkage to the program level is created, in part, through efforts to assess the general education outcomes that are a part of transfer and workforce programs. The college has developed a “Curriculum Map” which assigns specific general education outcomes to specific faculty members during a given assessment cycle. The college has invested considerable effort in refining its process to assess General Education Learning Outcomes with program faculty

members responsible for assessing each outcome. Baseline data were collected in the fall of 2013 and throughout 2014-2015. Results were reviewed in the summer of 2015 and work has been ongoing. The assessment reports generated demonstrate considerable faculty buy-in.

Courses are linked to each specific program's general education areas through a crosswalk. These assessments of general education and core outcomes appear to be done regularly and are documented in the Assessment Record Book. The Comprehensive Assessment and Evaluation Plan is likewise documented, along with example assessments across several program tracks. Faculty indicated that they are attentive to the alignment of courses and course objectives with Core Theme objectives, so this also needs to be documented clearly, as does the connection between program outcomes and Core Themes outcomes.

The College provided several charts that map strategic priorities to Core Themes as well as to functional areas, demonstrating how the College has grappled with the problem of integrating planning, but it is not clear how successful this has been. The College has created ten strategic planning sub-committees to help ensure broad campus engagement in strategic planning. One of these subcommittees, the Institutional Assessment Committee, is charged with determining how to use assessment data to make improvements, and this committee provides a connection to the core theme objectives. The Self-Study notes that the achievement of learning objectives is fundamental and that the core themes are the structural base and the "true test" of whether the institution is fulfilling its mission. The Committee encourages the College to improve the alignment between the strategic planning subcommittees and the assessment/improvement cycle of Core Theme objectives.

The self-study mentions the guidance provided by Dr. Cheryl Crazy Bull (p. 105) in assisting the college with its overall assessment process, and the committee was told of her recommendation that the college show the connections between the strategic planning committees and processes, on the one hand, and the Core Theme outcomes assessment, on the other, in a more transparent and evident manner. The committee concurs with this observation.

The Self-Study notes that SCC reviews institutional effectiveness in an ongoing cycle including its annual Strategic Planning Retreat. A review of core themes and their indicators and goals is conducted during this retreat. As stated in the Self-Study, annual reviews and periodic reviews of all core themes helps provide continual feedback to the college on its progress toward goal achievement. This information was verified by interviews with faculty and staff. The college states in its self-study that assessment processes are reviewed annually as a part of its Strategic Planning Retreat. Minutes from these retreats supports this assertion.

While the institution certainly chose indicators that were available and assessable, faculty and the instructional dean recognize that some of them do not provide meaningful information. Improving these processes can ensure SCC appraises authentic achievements while still yielding meaningful results that lead to improvement. For example, the Community Education Core Theme has two Indicators: (a) the number of programs and presentations offered and (b) the number of community members completing the programs. Performance results are compiled in an achievement table with which the College measures its effectiveness in accomplishing the mission. Adjustments to programs and services stem from this evaluation. The Committee encourages the College to continue refining its Indicators to make sure that meaningful

assessment that can lead to improvement of efforts directly tied to mission fulfillment. The Core Themes Indicators might be better conceived if they are measurements of achievement rather than, in this case, records of attendance.

Although core theme and program assessments are documented and institutionally determined indicators are identified, it is not clear the extent to which core theme assessments are used to inform planning and resource allocation. As has been mentioned, SCC has developed core themes, assessment, and evaluation of indicators for programs and services. Assessment and evaluation of goals and indicators are facilitated through institutional committees. Efforts to “close the loop” have been initiated through engaged communication and reporting mechanisms. However, evidence that illustrates how these efforts impact resource allocations was lacking. The strategic plan, core themes, and assessment/evaluation process was adopted in 2016, due to the institutional transition that occurred in early 2017, structure and time to inform the budget process for the 2017-18 year may not have been adequate.

The institution gathers much data. The Committee compliments the College for cultivating a culture of ongoing and rigorous assessment at both the program and course level. The Comprehensive Assessment and Evaluation Plan is a lively and living document and obviously informs much of the institution’s planning and practice. Future improvement will depend on deepening of the existing culture of assessment such that ongoing systematic collection and analysis occurs on the most meaningful, assessable, and verifiable data possible. Quantifiable data are analyzed annually to determine whether the Indicator was achieved or not. Subsequently, results of Core Theme objectives are documented and presented to the Board and college community.

Concern:

Since the core theme outcomes are directly related to the institution’s mission fulfillment, the connection between the assessments related to core themes and the assessments related to strategic planning needs to be made evident. The committee is concerned with the lack of direct alignment of Core Theme assessment with the outcomes assessed as part of the college’s strategic planning processes.

## **Standard Five: Mission Fulfillment, Monitoring, Adaptation, Sustainability**

### **Mission Fulfillment**

As a comprehensive tribal community college, SCC provides access to transfer, workforce, and community education with the additional focus on preserving tribal culture.

*Stone Child College (SCC) is a tribally chartered college established to deliver post-secondary educational opportunities through degrees, certificates and continuing education. SCC stresses the importance of preserving the Chippewa Cree language, culture and history. SCC will promote transfer students, professionally prepared and career-ready individuals.*

The College defines mission fulfillment as “demonstrating an acceptable level of performance on the objective indicators for the Core Themes” (“Self-Study,” p. 112). While the Committee has noted earlier that the College might benefit from further refinement of these Objectives and Indicators, we are satisfied that Stone Child College is meeting its mission, one that is powerfully reshaping the destiny of the Chippewa Cree people for the better. The College routinely engages in data-gathering and analysis in a very thoughtful manner. In every instance, faculty and staff members spoke with knowledge about the College’s mission, intentions, goals, and outcomes. Though continuous improvement is always necessary, assessment results are used to inform decisions and these are communicated quite well to all appropriate stakeholders.

## **Adaptation and Sustainability**

Regular cycles of data-gathering, analysis, assessment, and “closing the loop” improvement activities are pursued at every level of the institution.

Equally important, from the Board leadership perspective, is strategic thinking that scans the environment and determines future directions based on core values and emerging opportunities. The sustainability of communities, organizations, and individuals in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is increasingly linked, as we all know, to higher levels of education. A tribal college is more vulnerable than most to issues of adaptation and sustainability because the revenue sources are almost exclusively federal with very little local revenue in a poor community. Stone Child College is deeply dependent on the Indian Student Count allocation combined with Title IV sources. Within this context, entrepreneurial efforts can be difficult, so it was very heartening to hear that the College is currently a Title III recipient and will explore Title V. Beyond expanding access to federal dollars, though, the Board is to be complimented for initial planning for building a campus residence that would be aimed at recruiting Native American students from across the nation to attend Stone Child College. Bold ideas like this, if proven to be viable after proper due diligence, are exciting.

## **Summary**

The Committee for the on-site peer review of Stone Child College’s *Year Seven Mission Fulfillment and Sustainability Report* expressed its deep appreciation to the administration, faculty, and staff for the great work being done to create access to higher education opportunities and to preserve the vitality of the Chippewa Cree culture, history, and language. The Committee discovered broad support, high regard, and great enthusiasm for the College’s mission in this community. The College is making deep, life-shaping differences for its students, families, and tribal members.



## Commendations and Recommendations

### Commendations

The Committee commends the pervasive sense of love and ethos of caring that drives the mission at Stone Child College. All members of the evaluation team noted the generosity and compassion and commitment to student success among faculty and staff at all levels. Despite being stretched thin, the hard-working SCC employees exhibit a remarkable commitment to serving students and their community and one another.

The Committee commends the leadership--including the Board, the Elders, and Interim President Cory Sangrey-Billy, and all faculty and staff--for the courage, empathy, and perspective needed to effectively solve the challenges facing this small tribal college dedicated to preserving the culture and language of the people they serve.

The College's buildings and grounds reflect the pride that the facilities staff demonstrate in serving students and the community; each site is welcoming, well cared for, and reflective of the quality programs and services offered.

The Evaluation Committee commends the College for the excellent collections and services that are provided by the library to the SCC students, faculty, staff and community.

The committee commends the extent to which the college encourages and provides professional development. The staff reported feeling that they have opportunities for growth with the resources that they need to fulfill their roles, duties, and responsibilities. This commitment is reflected in both innovative strategies to provide onsite development and is evidenced in departmental budget resource allocations.

The committee commends the faculty and student support staff for the efficacy of advising students and making sure that students have a clear path to achieve their educational goals. Students expressed that they knew exactly what they need to complete their educational plan and had access to advisors who went above and beyond to get them information.

### Recommendations

1. The committee recommends that Stone Child College develop meaningful, assessable, and verifiable indicators of achievement for all core theme objectives. The indicators should form the basis for determination of mission fulfillment and be reflective of an ethos of continuous improvement (Standard 1.B.2)
2. The evaluation panel recommends Stone Child College take prompt action to ensure all workforce degrees and certificates of 30 semester credits or more in length contain a recognizable core of related instruction or general education with identified outcomes in the areas of communication, computation, and human relations that align with and support program goals or intended outcomes. (Standard 2.C.9)

3. Since the core theme outcomes are directly related to the institution's mission fulfillment, the connection between the assessments related to core themes and the assessments related to strategic planning needs to be made evident. The committee accordingly recommends that Stone Child College more directly align Core Theme assessment with the outcomes assessed as part of the college's strategic planning processes. (Standards 3.B.3, 4.A.6, 4.B.1)

## References

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