



Year One Self-Evaluation Report

Submitted to Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities

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Institutional Overview

As “*The Public Liberal Arts University of the West*,” Southern Oregon University (SOU) focuses on student learning, accessibility, and civic engagement that enriches both the community and bioregion. The University is recognized for fostering intellectual creativity, for quality and innovation in its applied learning programs, and for the educational benefits of its unique geographic location. SOU serves the whole of southern Oregon and the northernmost counties of California. It is engaged internationally through a strong proportion of students from other nations, many exchange programs, and longstanding sister university alliances, notably the 40-year partnership with the Universidad de Guanajuato, Mexico.

Named a “hidden gem” of higher education by *The New York Times*, SOU has been designated a Center of Excellence in the Fine and Performing Arts by the Oregon University System (OUS). It is one of twenty-six institutions across the nation selected for membership in the Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges (COPLAC). SOU is the first university in Oregon—and one of the first in the nation—to offset 100 percent of its energy use with clean, renewable power.

Enrolling approximately 5,500 undergraduates and 500 graduate students (SOU Fact Book, <http://www.sou.edu/ir/factbooks.html>), SOU addresses regional needs through its academic programs, partnerships, public service, community outreach, sustainable practices, and economic development activities. The University consists of the College of Arts and Sciences, the School of Business, and the School of Education. SOU’s main campus in Ashland is largely residential in character. On-campus housing includes three complexes with residence halls and excellent dining, family housing with childcare service, and a facility for visiting groups participating in the University’s educational enrichment offerings.

The Ashland campus is home to an Oregon Health & Science University’s Nursing program. In addition to SOU’s main campus, classes are offered on the University’s satellite campus in downtown Medford, the Higher Education Center jointly owned and administered by SOU and Rogue Community College. SOU students choose from more than 100 areas of study, including 36 majors in the sciences, the arts, business, and education. The University’s student-to-faculty ratio of 21:1 allows for small, individualized classes and close mentoring relationships between students and faculty. All classes are taught by faculty—not graduate students. Ninety-three percent of SOU faculty hold the highest degrees in their fields.

From world-class to community theatre, art galleries and a thriving culture of music and film, Ashland has attracted artists and enthusiasts from around the world with its access to natural beauty, performing arts, over 80 galleries, and an international film festival. Moreover, the Western States Art Federation and the Oregon Arts Commission report that, according to the Creative Vitality Index, the Jackson-Josephine County region has the highest non-profit arts sector income per capita in the state, suggesting our region is a model for the creative arts cluster in Oregon. Thus, it is not surprising that Southern Oregon University has been designated a Center of Excellence in the Fine and Performing Arts by the Oregon University System (OUS).

Whether they are helping to transform the local wine industry, discovering new microbial species in Crater Lake, or predicting and confirming ferroelectric materials, Southern Oregon University

faculty and students are pursuing primarily applied research that is putting southern Oregon on the scientific map. SOU offers undergraduate students rare opportunities to engage in graduate-level investigations under the mentorship of distinguished researchers. Interdisciplinary projects such as the acid mine drainage research conducted by the Biology, Chemistry, and Geology programs exemplify the rich academic community and the synthesis of expertise present at SOU. As its faculty and students engage in vanguard investigations, Southern Oregon University continues to fuel the local economy and knowledge base through dedicated, interdisciplinary research rooted in the region.

Preface

a) **Brief update on institutional changes since the institution's last report**

Southern Oregon University submitted a "Focused Interim Report" in March 2009 (see Appendix). This report directly addressed the five recommendations made by NWCCU in the "Full-Scale Evaluation Committee Report" presented in October 2007: finalize the new mission statement, develop a comprehensive educational assessment plan that results in the improvement of teaching and learning, establish a formal evaluation cycle of temporary and professional faculty, maintain adequate financial reserves to address the variability in operating revenues and expenses, and demonstrate a strategically guided financial planning process.

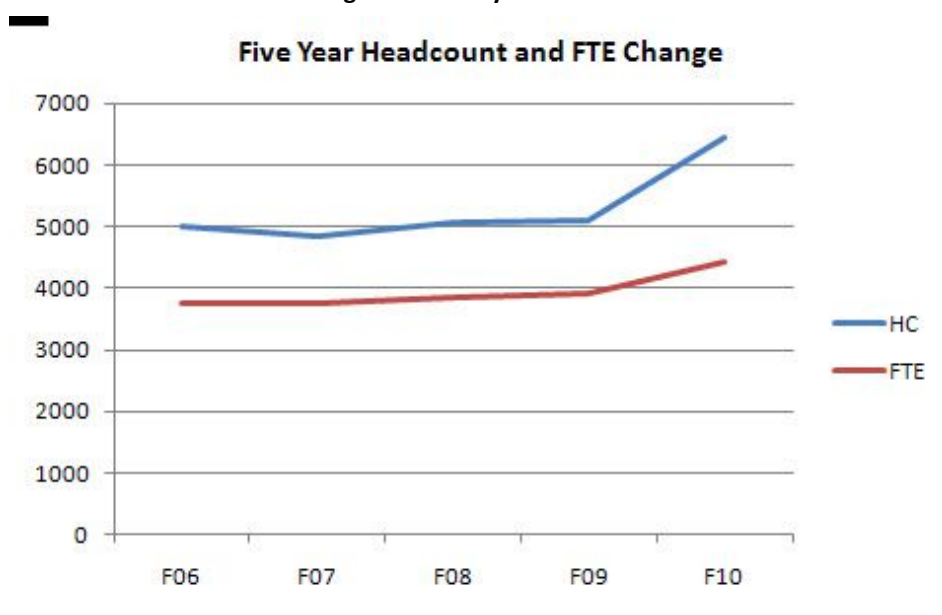
Since writing the 2009 Interim Report, SOU has accomplished the following:

President Mary Cullinan led SOU strategic planning through the completion of the institutional strategic plan. *Building the New SOU: The Strategic Plan for Distinction and Sustainability 2009-2014* provides structure for decision-making, strengthens thematic coherence for area plans, and underscores the University's goals, values, and commitments for five years. Provost James Klein led the completion of the Master Academic Plan (MAP). Aligning with the mission and strategic goals of the campus, the MAP serves as a guide for planning at the School/College and Department level. Student Affairs Vice President Jonathan Eldridge has continued the implementation of the strategic plan for Student Affairs, while Vice President for Development Sylvia Kelley has completed the plan for fundraising. (All plans may be viewed at www.sou.edu/president/strategicplanning.html). These strategic plans provide clear and consistent direction for the SOU community and have resulted in significant recent accomplishments.

Increased Enrollment

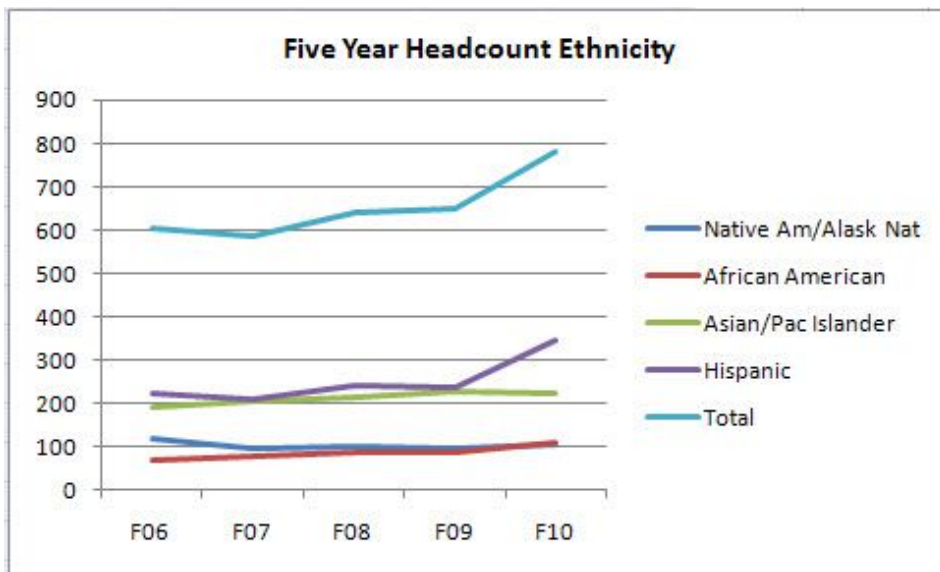
- Increased headcount by nearly 30% and FTE by nearly 18% as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Southern Oregon University Headcount 2006-2010



- Increased diversity in enrollment by 45% between 2009 and 2011 as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Southern Oregon University Five Year Headcount Ethnicity 2006-2010



- Shifted Offices of Admissions, Financial Aid, Registrar and Enrollment Management from Student Affairs to Academic Affairs.
- Increased the number of fully online courses by 27% in the last year (204 courses in 2009-10 to 259 in 2010-11), and added two support staff to the Distance Education Department to assist faculty with the design, implementation and evaluation of distance delivery courses.
- Increased enrollment in online courses by 37% from 2009-10 to 2010-11 as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Online Student Credit Hours by Term (Undergraduate and Graduate)

| | Fall | | Winter | | Spring | | Summer | | AY 09-10 | AY 10-11 | 2012 |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| | 2009 | 2010 | 2010 | 2011 | 2010 | 2011 | 2010 | 2011 | Total | Total | Projected |
| UG SCH | 2,196 | 3,085 | 2,450 | 4,400 | 3,136 | 4,410 | 3,515 | 4,176 | 11,297 | 16,071 | 18,481 |
| GR SCH | 354 | 398 | 417 | 356 | 401 | 455 | 401 | 483 | 1,664 | 1,692 | 1,776 |
| Total | 2,550 | 3,483 | 2,867 | 4,756 | 3,537 | 4,865 | 3,916 | 4,659 | 12,961 | 17,763 | 20,257 |
| Increase | | 36.5% | | 65.8% | | 37.5% | | 18.9% | | 37.0% | 14.0% |

Improved Systems

- Adopted new software to increase efficiency in scheduling campus facilities to accommodate increased enrollment.
- Adopted universal data management system to facilitate the organization, storage, communication and collection of institutional assessment data (TracDat by Nuventive and the accompanying iWebfolio portfolio program).
- Expanded the pedagogical functionality of the online Learning Management System by moving from Blackboard to Moodle for on-campus and distance education courses. The transition also provides full integration with SOU's student information system and online portal, eliminating several daily manual processes.

Enhanced Assessment

- Increased compliance with a formalized and regularly scheduled program review process.
- Developed three institutional capstone rubrics to guide departments in clarifying academic expectations to students and assist programs in monitoring the value-added gains in three foundational institutional outcomes: writing in standard English, critical thinking, and information literacy.
- Continued to administer the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) to measure student learning over time and define the value added by an SOU education.
- Administered the HERI and FSSE to assess faculty perceptions of the workplace, roles and responsibilities.

Increased Faculty & Student Support

- Expanded formal support of adjunct faculty through quarterly workshops and continued use of the Adjunct Faculty Handbook through the Center for Teaching, Learning and Assessment.
- Formalized a new faculty orientation event and new faculty mentoring program.
- Enhanced the "Learning Commons" tutoring center including hiring a Student Services Director and allocating \$25,000 for tutor salaries.
- Extensively updated the graduate student handbook and created a handbook for graduate program coordinators in an effort to standardize policies.
- Redesigned the Associate Provost position to encompass the role of Dean of Graduate Studies.

Stabilized Finances

- Through prudent fiscal management in difficult economic times (including reducing food service losses, increasing sustainable practices in utilities usage campus-wide, and reducing planned renovations of aging facilities) and shared sacrifice, the institution was able to end the 09-10 fiscal year with 7.1% in reserves and finish 2010-11 with 12% in reserves.

b) Response to topics previously requested by the Commission

In March 2009, Southern Oregon University submitted a “Focused Interim Report” to the NWCCU. The report outlined SOU’s swift and deliberate response to the five recommendations made by NWCCU in the fall of 2007.

Recommendation #1

The committee recommended that SOU act quickly to finalize its new mission statement and use the statement to develop an institutional strategic plan addressing resource allocation, program development, and future initiatives of the University (Standard 1.A-Mission and Goals, Standard 1.B – Planning and Effectiveness).

The final version of the mission statement was approved by the Oregon State Board of Higher Education in February 2008 (<http://www.sou.edu/president/mission.html>). Since that time the mission has guided institutional strategic planning.

- The University-wide Strategic Plan, spearheaded by President Cullinan, was completed in October 2009. The Plan outlines goals in four areas for SOU: Academic Distinctiveness and Quality, Commitment to the Arts and Bioregion, Community Catalyst, and Financial Stability. These goals have guided strategic planning in all our units and can be reviewed on the President’s website: <http://www.sou.edu/president/strategicplanning.html>.
- The Master Academic Plan (MAP), initiated in Fall 2008 by Provost Klein, was formally completed in the spring of 2009. The MAP for 2009-2014 can be reviewed on the President’s website: <http://www.sou.edu/president/pdf/MAP%205%20Final%205-27-09.pdf>.
- The key elements of the mission are also clearly evident in SOU’s NWCCU accreditation themes established for Fall 2011: Student Success, Intellectual Growth, and Responsible Global Citizenship.

Recommendation #2

The Commission recommended that SOU develop and implement a comprehensive educational assessment plan and ensure that assessment results are used to improve teaching and learning (Standard 2.B-Educational Program Planning and Assessment, Policy 2.2).

As detailed in the 2009 Interim Report, SOU established systematic methods for designing outcomes-based curricula and instituted a series of related methodologies—curricular mapping, annual learning assessments, and a systematic program review process. With the recent purchase of an institutional data management system (TracDat), accompanying e-portfolio program, and the development of the institutional accreditation themes, the institutional plan for the assessment of student achievement will be further enhanced. In particular, the program review process will be revised to better align with the institutional collection and analysis of student work.

Recommendation #3

The Committee recommended that SOU implement a formal annual evaluation cycle for temporary (adjunct) and professional faculty to provide regular and systematic information on faculty performance (Policy 4.1 –Faculty Evaluation, Standard 4.A.5).

By 2009, the Director of the Center for Teaching and Learning had written an Adjunct Faculty Handbook and was offering quarterly workshops on teaching and learning for adjunct faculty. The handbook included a recommended evaluation form for department chairs to use in assessing the teaching effectiveness of adjunct faculty. The form has been adopted by some departments, while in other cases customized forms that better fit the norms and traditions of the department are in use. Each department chair is responsible for identifying when each adjunct faculty member must be evaluated.

To support department chairs in their supervisory duties, Academic Affairs initiated a series of Chairs' Institutes. Originally held during the summer, the professional development workshops now occur monthly throughout the year.

Recommendation #4

The Committee recommended that SOU maintain financial reserves to address the variability in operating revenues and expenses (Standard 7.B.7 – Adequacy of Financial Reserves).

As the Interim Report was written in the Spring 2009, SOU was still in a retrenchment process and undergoing rapid reorganization. Since then, through prudent fiscal management (including reducing food service losses, increasing sustainable practices in utilities usage campus-wide, and reducing planned renovations of aging facilities) and shared sacrifice (administrative positions were cut; hiring for faculty positions were postponed; and administrators, staff and faculty members universally took furlough days), the institution was able to end the 09-10 fiscal year with 7.1% in reserves and finish 2010-11 with 9% in reserves. These campus reserves of 9% were augmented with maintenance of effort funds from the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act at the end of the 2010-2011 fiscal year to bring overall reserves to 12% for FY 2010-11, well within the guidelines of 5-15% established by the Oregon State Board of Higher Education. NWCCU informed SOU on February 9, 2011, that our progress report regarding Recommendation 4 had been accepted and that the Commission was satisfied progress had been made.

Recommendation #5

The Committee recommended that SOU demonstrate that institutional financial planning is a strategically guided process providing adequate operating and maintenance funds for current and future facilities and equipment needs (Standard 7.A.2 – Financial planning, Standard 8.A.4 – Instructional and Support Facilities, and Standard 8.C.2—Physical Resources Planning).

In response to this recommendation, President Cullinan appointed a Blue Ribbon Task Force to develop a new budget planning model for Southern Oregon University. As a result, SOU now uses the Responsibility Centered Management (RCM) model for budgeting; the college and schools now have a greater degree of control over, understanding of, and accountability for their budgets. Departments now base budgets on contribution-margin guidelines, and central administration focuses more acutely on institutional planning.

Concurrently a campus-wide Budget Committee was established to develop principles and assumptions for annual budget development, to hold hearings from each campus department, and

to make recommendations to the Executive Council on strategic investments. This committee was established in 2007 and is chaired by the Provost with representation by students, staff, faculty, and administration. In the spirit of transparency and in an effort to better communicate how institutional funds are used and maintained, the Vice President of Finance holds regularly scheduled Budget Hearings and Budget Forums open to all campus constituents. Despite the economic downturn, it is clear from our current institutional reserves of 12% that SOU has met this recommendation. Although budgets remain tight due to decreased state support, financial planning is now strategically guided and there are adequate controls to assure that operating and maintenance funds are aligned with institutional goals and sufficient for operational needs.

Chapter One: Mission, Core Themes, and Expectations

Executive Summary of Eligibility Requirements

Eligibility Requirement 2: Authority

Southern Oregon University is authorized to operate as a public institution of higher education under State law. Oregon Revised Statute 352.002(6) identifies Southern Oregon University as one of the seven public institutions of higher education within the Oregon University System governed by the Oregon State Board of Higher Education. Accredited through the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (2007), governed by the University's Executive Council, the school Board of Higher Education and a part of the Oregon University System, Southern Oregon University is authorized to operate and award degrees as a higher education institution.

Eligibility Requirement 3: Mission and Core Themes

The SOU mission statement has been vetted by Faculty Senate and the University Executive Council, and approved by the Oregon State Board of Higher Education (2008). Southern Oregon University's mission communicates the critical role the institution plays regionally, within the Oregon University System, and as a member of COPLAC (Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges); it underscores the aspirations SOU faculty and staff hold for graduates: thoughtful, broadly prepared citizens committed to contributing to the wellness of local, regional and global communities. The campus community is deeply committed to this mission statement; it is the foundation and inspiration for our institutional themes: student success, intellectual growth, and responsible global citizenship.

Standard 1.A - Mission

Mission Statement

*Southern Oregon University is an inclusive campus community dedicated to **student success, intellectual growth, and responsible global citizenship.***

Southern Oregon University is committed to

- *a challenging and practical liberal arts education centered on student learning, accessibility, and civic engagement;*
- *academic programs, partnerships, public service, outreach, sustainable practices, and economic development activities that address regional needs such as health and human services, business, and education; and*
- *outstanding programs that draw on and enrich our unique arts community and bioregion.*

Interpretation of Mission Fulfillment

In 2008, Southern Oregon University began an extensive visioning and strategic planning process that produced a Master Academic Plan, a Strategic Plan, a Marketing and Recruitment Plan, and a Fundraising Plan. As part of this process, a consultant firm was retained to identify themes that could be used to market and brand the institution. The consultants surveyed current students, staff and alumni, as well as prospective students and parents, and identified three themes that reflected the characteristics that distinguish the University from its peers. These include *Connected Learning, Intellectual Creativity, and Sense of Place*. SOU has always envisioned itself as a liberal arts university serving southern Oregon and northern California, but this branding exercise gave birth to a new appellation for SOU—*The Public Liberal Arts University of the West*.

The core values and beliefs expressed in SOU's mission statement were articulated by faculty and staff in 2005 as part of a general education curriculum reform effort led by the Curriculum Realignment Action Committee (CREAC). Specifically, CREAC was formed in fall of 2002 as one of several responses to prior accreditor recommendations for improved institutional research and assessment. During a three-year period, CREAC (and its various subcommittees) created a general education curriculum that established four Foundational Goals: Communication, Critical Thinking, Information Literacy, and Quantitative Reasoning. These goals were then integrated into the Freshman First-Year Experience and all lower and upper division general education courses based on an assessment model of outcome-based proficiencies for student learning. The resulting framework identified target goals, assessment instruments, and timelines for assessing student learning in the first, second and final years of study.

Over the last ten years, SOU has made substantial progress toward creating systemic change in articulating and assessing our values and beliefs surrounding liberal arts learning. Our mission, accreditation themes, and objectives are integral parts of this ongoing inquiry into how well we fulfill our branding promise. We have fashioned our themes and objectives to measure learning outcomes that are consistent with the values of liberal learning generally and congruent with the unique pillars that distinguish SOU from its peers. This inquiry will answer the questions: What

do SOU graduates look like? What do they know? What skills do they possess? Perhaps the best metaphor of how our themes align with our branding promise is to think of the three mission core themes—student success, intellectual growth and responsible global citizenship—as pillars that define the foundations of knowledge expected of an SOU graduate. The three elements of branding -- connected learning, intellectual creativity, and sense of place -- are the elements that not only hold the pillars upright but also define the unique ways in which the SOU experience produces that knowledge.

Definition of Mission Fulfillment

The themes outlined in this report permeate the entire fabric of SOU. They are intentionally woven into the curriculum in the first year program, the University Studies curriculum, and capstone experiences. They are embedded in the learning outcomes of our majors, minors, and certificate programs. We aspire to have all of our students experience “connected” learning through community-based learning courses, internships, practica, and collaborative projects in the community. We work to ensure that our students think in innovative ways using a wide variety of methods and skills to approach problems individually and in teams. We aspire for our students to experience this unique place, its cultural underpinnings, its unique biodiversity, and its commitment to sustainable practices that guide decision making. Whether graduates stay in this region or relocate, they will have skills and knowledge as well as an ethical foundation to solve complex problems. An SOU graduate has a distinctive set of twenty-first century skills, an understanding of how culture affects history and economics, and an appreciation and passion for developing a healthy, just, and sustainable world.

Articulation of an Acceptable Threshold, Extent or Degree of Mission Fulfillment

Since almost forty percent of our students come to us as transfers from other institutions, our definition of mission fulfillment will be that seventy percent of students who complete our undergraduate programs will have these defining characteristics of student achievement consistent with our mission and unique pillars.

Standard 1. B Core Themes

Theme 1: Student Success

SOU students will be prepared for personally rewarding vocations and satisfying personal lives by developing “intellectual and practical skills.”

Objectives and Indicators of Theme One

| Students will be prepared to: | Indicators of Achievement/Evaluation |
|---|---|
| <p>Communicate effectively using Standard American English in written and oral communication.</p> | <p>DIRECT: Collegiate Learning Assessment findings will maintain at 70% or above for value-added gains of SOU education (written).</p> <p>DIRECT: A random sampling of first year, full-time student writing diagnostic assessments compared to a random sampling of exiting seniors’ writing samples will indicate 70% of students meet or exceed senior level writing proficiencies as defined by an institutional writing rubric. The SOU institutional writing rubric is in the design process; we are merging first-year program-level rubrics with capstone rubrics.</p> <p>INDIRECT: Students will self-report the number of opportunities to practice writing on NSSE, (NSSE Benchmark: <i>Level of Academic Challenge [LAC]</i>) and results will be consistent with, or exceed 2009 findings.</p> <p>DIRECT: A random sampling of first year, full-time students’ proficiency in formal oral communication will be compared to a random sampling of graduating students’ exiting proficiencies. 70% of students will meet or exceed senior level oral communication proficiencies as defined by institutional rubrics. The capstone oral presentation rubric is in the revision process to include the full range of development from first year to graduation.</p> |
| <p>Collaborate with others to achieve a common goal.</p> | <p>DIRECT: The continuous development of collaborative skills will be assessed in the first year seminar and at the exit point using a performance task and institutional rubric. Students will self-assess progress and record progress in e-portfolios. SOU faculty are using the AAC&U VALUE rubric to guide the development of performance tasks and the institutional rubric for collaborative skills.</p> <p>INDIRECT: Students will self-report the number of opportunities to collaborate on NSSE, (NSSE Benchmark: <i>Active and Collaborative Learning [ACL]</i>) and results will be consistent with, or exceed 2009 findings.</p> |

Objectives and Indicators of Theme One: Continued

| Students will be prepared to: | Indicators of Achievement/Evaluation |
|---|---|
| <p>Use Critical and Creative thinking to solve abstract and applied problems.</p> | <p>DIRECT: Collegiate Learning Assessment findings will maintain at 70% or above for value-added gains of SOU education (critical thinking).</p> <p>DIRECT: A random sampling of first year, full-time student writing diagnostic assessments will be compared to a random sampling of exit writing samples (capstones). 70% of graduating students meet or exceed senior level logical thinking proficiencies as defined by an institutional deductive reasoning rubric. SOU faculty are currently revising the program-level first-year writing rubric to include the mid-point and exit proficiencies in logical reasoning. AAC&U VALUE rubrics are being referenced throughout the process.</p> <p>DIRECT: As part of each program review, programs will define, design and embed assessment to determine the degree of students' continued growth of critical and creative thinking. Departments will report with 70% of the students meeting or exceeding the target proficiency levels.</p> <p>INDIRECT: Students will self-report the number of opportunities to practice writing on NSSE, (NSSE Benchmark: <i>Level of Academic Challenge [LAC]</i>) and results will be consistent with, or exceed 2009 findings.</p> |
| <p>Access and use information resources effectively and ethically (Information Literacy).</p> | <p>DIRECT: Collegiate Learning Assessment findings will maintain at 70% or above for value-added gains of SOU education (information literacy).</p> <p>DIRECT: First time, full-time students' performance on an institutional assessment of information literacy skills will be compared to exit survey results of graduating seniors to determine value-added growth of students in information literacy. 70% of graduating students will meet or exceed the institutional benchmark for information literacy.</p> |

Rationale for Theme One: Student Success

Southern Oregon University defines “Student Success” as the value-added development of specific “Intellectual and Practical Skills,” (AAC&U, 2007): Written and Oral Communication; Collaborative Skills; Critical and Creative Thinking, and Information Literacy. Referred to as “Foundational Skills” (Curriculum Realignment Committee final Report, 2006) in the SOU University Studies (general education) curriculum, intellectual and practical skills were intentionally designed to pervade the entire liberal arts curriculum.

SOU Foundational Skills are directly aligned to the American Association of Colleges and Universities Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP) Essential Learning outcomes (2007). Oregon is a LEAP State (Peer Review, 2011) and as such, SOU was one of nine beta campuses in AAC&U’s Tri-State Give Students a Compass Partnership. This work fueled SOU faculty’s earlier efforts to integrate Foundational Skills throughout the curriculum and enhanced the communication of the importance of Foundational Skill development as central to degree attainment, workforce preparation, and the development of active, engaged democratic citizens of the world. Designating these Foundational Skills as one of our three accreditation themes is appropriate as it is at the very center of our sense of identity and purpose as an institution.

Theme 2: Intellectual Growth

Students and faculty will extend and refine broad-based general knowledge, and specialized knowledge in one or more specific discipline(s).

Objectives and Indicators of Theme Two

| Students and Faculty will: | Indicators of Achievement/Evaluation |
|---|---|
| Extend knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World through the study of the Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences and Sciences. | <p>DIRECT: Through the use of authentic tasks and aligned rubrics students will complete embedded assessments at entrance, midpoint and exit to demonstrate the continued growth of broad general knowledge in the arts and humanities, social sciences and sciences.</p> <p>DIRECT: Faculty will make direct contributions to the local regional, national and international societies through scholarly activity (number and quality of contributions will be reported annually in the Faculty Professional Activity Report).</p> |
| Integrate and apply advanced knowledge and skills in one (or more) specialized area(s) of study. | <p>DIRECT: Assessment of students’ gained knowledge in a specific (major) discipline will be formally assessed and evaluated by each program. Statistics on students’ gained knowledge will be reported to the institution on a regular schedule. Program level outcome assessments may include content exams, capstone analyses, final projects, portfolios, etc. Departments will demonstrate (through their academic program review) a consistent pattern of academic growth in program outcomes at 70% or better.</p> |

Rationale for Theme Two: Intellectual Growth

SOU faculty named the general education curriculum *University Studies* in order to communicate to faculty, students and other constituents that these outcomes are as critical to degree attainment as the more in-depth study of one or more disciplines. That is to say, general education is not something to “get out of the way” but rather, something to embrace and value. The University Studies curriculum begins with the Foundational Skills (defined as Student Success in this document), and is then followed with academic outcomes in the three broad domains of knowledge: the arts and humanities (intellectual and cultural expression approached through

historical, cultural, and aesthetic investigations and interpretation), the social sciences (those disciplines that examine how individuals, groups, institutions, and societies behave and interact with one another and their environments), and the Sciences (those disciplines that focus on a systemized body of knowledge derived through objective methodologies involving repeatable experimentation, observation, verification, and study). SOU students are required to gain a minimum of 45 credits in these three domains of knowledge, ensuring that students extend and refine their entry knowledge and understanding of human cultures and the physical and natural world.

In addition to the development of broad-based “general knowledge” students are expected to develop, integrate and apply advanced specialized knowledge in one (or more) major area(s) of study in order to attain their degrees. The development of discipline knowledge and skills (program outcomes) will be directly assessed by each program and formally reported to the institution on a regular schedule.

Faculty outcomes are also included in Theme Two. In our role as scholars we must continue to modernize our knowledge and contribute to our major disciplines. Though scholarly activity varies by discipline, it does not vary in its importance to our development as effective teachers and active contributors to the Academy.

Theme 3: Responsible Citizenship

Through academic and student affairs, students will be prepared for personal and social responsibility- local and global.

Objectives and Indicators of Theme Three

| Students will be prepared to: | Indicators of Achievement/Evaluation |
|---|---|
| <p>Apply knowledge, skills and ethical inquiry to practical problems locally and globally.</p> | <p>DIRECT: Collegiate Learning Assessment findings will maintain at 70% or above for value-added gains of SOU education.</p> <p>DIRECT: Prior to graduation (exit) students will perform a problem solving task that requires them to solve a local problem then create an analogy or metaphor for a similar solution on a global level.</p> <p>INDIRECT: Students will self-report on the NSSE the number of opportunities to engage in Enriching Educational Experiences (NSSE Benchmark: <i>Enriching Educational Experiences</i>) and in the number of community-based learning opportunities experienced while enrolled at SOU (NSSE Benchmark: ACL). Results will be consistent with, or exceed 2009 findings.</p> <p>DESCRIPTIVE: Report total number of courses requiring Community-Based Learning; report total number of student credit hours earned annually in CBL courses.</p> |
| <p>Understand and respond responsibly to world views and cultural practices different from one's own.</p> | <p>DIRECT: First-year students will take the standardized and valid Emotional Quotient Inventory to determine entry levels in five composite scales and subscales: intrapersonal skills (self-awareness and self-expression); interpersonal skills (social awareness and interpersonal relationships); Stress Management (emotional management and regulation); Adaptability (change management); and General Mood (self-motivation). This set of students will take the Emotional Quotient Inventory again at graduation to determine the degree of value-added impact on the development of dispositions necessary for effective democratic and global citizenry.</p> <p>INDIRECT: Students will self-report on the NSSE the number of opportunities to engage in Enriching Educational Experiences (NSSE Benchmark: <i>Enriching Educational Experiences</i> [EEE]). Results will be consistent with, or exceed 2009 findings.</p> <p>INDIRECT: The Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) allows institutions to ask nine institutional-specific questions. SOU will add a question to the CLA in 2011 to determine students' perceptions of their understandings of, and ability to respond responsibly to, world views and cultural practices different from their own.</p> |

Rationale for Theme Three: Responsible Citizenship

The SOU community has long valued workforce preparation as a key, but not the sole, outcome of a four-year university degree. The last three outcomes in the faculty-designed University Studies curriculum outline our expectation that students will also develop the dispositions of responsible citizens: an appreciation and acceptance of others and a commitment to solve local and global problems through ethical application of knowledge and skills. While we cannot directly monitor our students' actions post-graduation, we can actively prepare them for these ideals. Community-based learning opportunities are peppered throughout our curriculum; faculty regularly engage in community-service research; and Student Affairs promotes students' development of inter-cultural competence through events and community-service projects. We view our community, our students, our faculty and staff, as "community catalysts" who provide outstanding programs that draw on and enrich our unique arts community and bioregion. Our sense of place and our commitment to intellectual creativity through applied and "connected" learning are the qualities that make SOU unique and inspirational.

Conclusion

Our initial efforts to create core themes resembled a visioning document. As we attended accreditation workshops, our work solidified into recognizable planning themes. In the final stage in this process, we examined the work done at the institutional level in prior years to define learning outcomes for all students. That is the information presented in this First Year Report. The process involved the campus at several points as we worked through the Faculty Senate, the Administrative Councils (especially the Chairs Council), and, in particular, our University Assessment Committee. An Accreditation Steering Committee chaired by Associate Provost Dr. Susan Walsh, our accreditation liaison officer, guided the process, collecting input and refining goals. The report was assembled over the summer months by a subcommittee of the Steering Committee.

Our campus has made excellent progress in developing learning outcomes for our general education program and majors. While some assessment efforts have been equally successful, most notably our assessment of the first year program, other results have been mixed. This document will give us a plan to assess all of our undergraduate learning outcomes in a comprehensive and sustainable way while also enabling assessment of undergraduate and graduate majors. Collecting data into a database architecture using TracDat will allow us to perform institutional assessment not only for an entire program but also for parts of a program, thereby enhancing departmental assessment efforts. Our work so far has already helped us to identify gaps in our stated outcomes and practices. We look forward to learning more about other opportunities for adjustment as we collect more comprehensive data over time.

Although not linear, this process has been fruitful. Having gone through a number of iterations, we are closer to meaningful objectives and indicators that measure our success as *The Public Liberal Arts University of the West*.

Our thanks go to the reviewers of this document and to the support provided by the Commission during this process. We look forward to your feedback for improvement.

Appendix

Focused Interim Report
March, 2009