



July 12, 2024

Dr. Christopher Villa
President
Skagit Valley College
2405 East College Way
Mount Vernon, WA 98273-5899

Dear President Villa:

Attached please find the Spring 2024 Policies, Regulations, and Financial Review (PRFR) Evaluation Committee's review of Skagit Valley College. The attached review documents areas where the institution was found to be in compliance with the NWCCU Standards for Accreditation and where additional opportunities for improvement exist. Please note that the Year Seven Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness (EIE) Evaluation Team will receive a copy of this report, as will the NWCCU Board of Commissioners at your EIE evaluation by the Commission in roughly one year's time.

Please address any areas of needed improvement that the PRFR Evaluation Committee has noted as findings in this report in your EIE self-evaluation. Please feel free to reach out to your NWCCU Staff Liaison if you have further questions.

Type 1: Standards Substantially in Compliance but in Need of Improvement

- Finding Type 1: Spring 2024 Policies, Regulations, and Financial Review - The following standards are areas substantially in compliance but where improvement is needed. (2020 Standard(s) 2.C.4;2.G.3)

Future Evaluations

- Year 7 - Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness Spring 2025
 - Recommendation 1: Spring 2021 Mid-Cycle Review
 - Finding Type 1: Spring 2024 Policies, Regulations, and Financial Review

Thank you for your commitment to the process of peer evaluation and continuous quality improvement. If you have questions about any of the information in this letter, please contact your staff liaison, Dr. Gita Bangera, at gbangera@nwccu.org.

Sincerely,

Aaron Christopher
Vice President for Administration and Finance

cc: Dr. Gabriel Mast, Associate Vice President for Planning and Effectiveness
Ms. Mariko Doerner, Board Chair
Mr. Michael Meotti, Executive Director, Washington Student Achievement Council
Mr. Paul Francis, Executive Director, Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges



Peer Evaluation for: Skagit Valley College

Standard 2: Governance, Resources, and Capacity

The institution articulates its commitment to a structure of governance that is inclusive in its planning and decision-making. Through its planning, operational activities, and allocation of resources, the institution demonstrates a commitment to student learning and achievement in an environment respectful of meaningful discourse.

Standard 2.A.1

The institution demonstrates an effective governance structure, with a board(s) or other governing body(ies) composed predominantly of members with no contractual, employment relationship, or personal financial interest with the institution. Such members shall also possess clearly defined authority, roles, and responsibilities. Institutions that are part of a complex system with multiple boards, a centralized board, or related entities shall have, with respect to such boards, written and clearly defined contractual authority, roles, and responsibilities for all entities. In addition, authority and responsibility between the system and the institution is clearly delineated in a written contract, described on its website and in its public documents, and provides the NWCCU accredited institution with sufficient autonomy to fulfill its mission.

Team Verification:

- Compliant

Evidence:

- Institutional governance policies and procedures Y
- Board's calendar for reviewing institutional and board policies and procedures Y
- Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation referencing governance structure Y

Rationale:

The single district wide governance system under which SVC operates has a publicly accessible website with all relevant information on the profiles of the Board of Trustees, guiding policies, access to meeting dates and agendas, as well as clarity that members are not compensated.

Standard 2.A.2

The institution has an effective system of leadership, staffed by qualified administrators, with appropriate levels of authority, responsibility, and accountability who are charged with planning, organizing, and managing the institution and assessing its achievements and effectiveness.

Team Verification:

- Compliant

Evidence:

- Leadership organizational chart Y
- Curriculum vitae of executive leadership Y

Rationale:

SVC has several new hires in executive leadership positions. The org chart is clear and the CVs indicate that leaders have advanced degrees and relevant experience for the positions they hold.

Standard 2.A.3

The institution employs an appropriately qualified chief executive officer with full-time responsibility to the institution. The chief executive may serve as an ex officio member of the governing board(s) but may not serve as its chair.

Team Verification:

- Compliant

Evidence:

- Curriculum vitae of President/CEO Y

Rationale:

President, Dr. Villa, holds a doctoral degree and extensive prior experience in executive administration of a community college.

Standard 2.A.4

The institution's decision-making structures and processes, which are documented and publicly available, must include provisions for the consideration of the views of faculty, staff, administrators, and students on matters in which each has a direct and reasonable interest.



Team Verification:

- Compliant

Evidence:

- Institutional governance policies and procedures (see 2.A.1) **_Y_**

Rationale:

SVC Policy 2000 clearly outlines governance structures and routine meeting structures included indicate appropriate levels of inclusion of faculty, staff, and student groups.

Standard 2.B.1

Within the context of its mission and values, the institution adheres to the principles of academic freedom and independence that protect its constituencies from inappropriate internal and external influences, pressures, and harassment.

Team Verification:

- Compliant

Evidence:

- Academic freedom policies and procedures (evidence could include samples of negotiated agreements with faculty and/or staff, where appropriate) **_Y_**
- Evidence that the students also have academic freedom **_Y_**

Rationale:

Academic freedom of faculty is part of the CBA article 4, section 12 and in contract language. Academic freedom of students in the Student Code of Conduct Policy 5700 and elsewhere

Standard 2.B.2

Within the context of its mission and values, the institution defines and actively promotes an environment that supports independent thought in the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge. It affirms the freedom of faculty, staff, administrators, and students to share their scholarship and reasoned conclusions with others. While the institution and individuals within the institution may hold to a particular personal, social, or religious philosophy, its constituencies are intellectually free to test and examine all knowledge and theories, thought, reason, and perspectives of truth. Individuals within the institution allow others the freedom to do the same.

Team Verification:

- Compliant

Rationale:

Similar to 2.B.1., SVC has evidence that it complies with this standard.

Standard 2.C.1

The institution's transfer-of-credit policy maintains the integrity of its programs and facilitates the efficient mobility of students desirous of the completion of their educational credits, credentials, or degrees in furtherance of their academic goals.

Team Verification:

Compliant

Evidence:

- Transfer of credit policies and procedures **_Y_**

Rationale:

Transfer of credit policies and procedures are clear. SVC provides links to external evaluation services where appropriate, as well as provides several options and services to transfer credits to assist students in furthering their educational goals. These are available in the catalog, as well as on their transfer credit websites.

Standard 2.C.2

The institution's policies and procedures related to student rights and responsibilities should include, but not be limited to, provisions related to academic honesty, conduct, appeals, grievances, and accommodations for persons with disabilities.

Team Verification:

- Compliant

Evidence:

Documentation of student's rights and responsibilities policies and procedures, which include:

- Academic honesty **_Y_**
- Conduct **_Y_**
- Appeals, grievances **_Y_**



- Accommodations for persons with disabilities **_Y_**

Rationale:

Appropriate policies and procedures for academic integrity, conduct, appeals, grievances, and accommodations are available. Forms are clear and in accessible in fillable pdf format.

Standard 2.C.3

The institution's academic and administrative policies and procedures should include admission and placement policies that guide the enrollment of students in courses and programs through an evaluation of prerequisite knowledge, skills, and abilities to ensure a reasonable probability of student success at a level commensurate with the institution's expectations. Such policies should also include a policy regarding continuation in and termination from its educational programs, including its appeal and re-admission policy.

Team Verification:

- Compliant

Evidence:

- Policies and procedures for recruiting, admitting, and placing students **_Y_**
- Policies/procedures related to continuation and termination from educational programs including appeal process and readmission policies/procedures **_Y_**

Rationale:

SVC admissions website and catalog clearly indicate where the institute has open admission policy and for which programs there is selective admission criteria. SVC has an Academic Standards Policy (for continuation and dismissal) and a clear academic reinstatement policy.

Standard 2.C.4

The institution's policies and procedures regarding the secure retention of student records must include provisions related to confidentiality, release, and the reliable backup and retrievability of such records.

Team Verification:

Type 1 Finding

Evidence:

- Policies/procedures regarding secure retention of student records, (i.e., back-up, confidentiality, release, protection from cybersecurity issues or other emergencies) **_Y_**

Rationale:

The listing on the Washingtons State Records and Retention Schedule is recent, detailed, and clear. The reviewers did not find evidence for SVC's policy/practice related to reliable data backup and retrieval.

Standard 2.D.1

The institution represents itself clearly, accurately, and consistently through its announcements, statements, and publications. It communicates its academic intentions, programs, and services to students and to the public and demonstrates that its academic programs can be completed in a timely fashion. It regularly reviews its publications to ensure accuracy and integrity in all representations about its mission, programs, and services.

Team Verification:

- Compliant

Evidence:

- Policies/procedures for reviewing published materials (print or websites) that assures institutional integrity **_Y_**

Rationale:

SVC has robust branding guidelines that are used on their websites, as well as pdf reports, and other materials. Review and quality checks occur at different levels, with overall responsibility resting with the executive director of strategic marketing and communications.

Standard 2.D.2

The institution advocates, subscribes to, and exemplifies high ethical standards in its management and operations, including in its dealings with the public, NWCCU, and external organizations, including the fair and equitable treatment of students, faculty, administrators, staff, and other stakeholders and constituencies. The institution ensures that complaints and grievances are addressed in a fair, equitable, and timely manner.

Team Verification:

- Compliant

Evidence:

- Policies/procedures for reviewing internal and external complaints and grievances **_Y_**

Rationale:

PRFR report includes links for policies on ethics, non-discrimination, Title IX, and several relevant links for reporting misconduct, complaints, and incidences. Complaints are lodged through the SVC incident reporting site and tracked using Maxient. The institute has generated training materials



for employee orientation. They have also shared additional materials with a list of trainings that are offered, the frequency of requirement, and a record of employees who have completed the training.

Standard 2.D.3

The institution adheres to clearly defined policies that prohibit conflicts of interest on the part of members of the governing board(s), administration, faculty, and staff.

Team Verification:

- Compliant

Evidence:

- Policies/procedures prohibiting conflict of interests among employees and board members **_Y_**

Rationale:

Ethics policy and training is in place. Reviewers found that HR's policy 3090 (p.g 64) includes a section on conflict of interest, and notes the need to avoid a conflict. For those employees who were hired prior to the policy, they leave the determination on resolving this at the supervisor level. Reviewers could not find a link to the conflict of interest form.

Standard 2.E.1

The institution utilizes relevant audit processes and regular reporting to demonstrate financial stability, including sufficient cash flow and reserves to achieve and fulfill its mission

Team Verification:

- Compliant

Evidence:

- Policies/procedures that articulate the oversight and management of financial resources **_Y_**
- Latest external financial audit including management letter **_Y_**
- Cash flow balance sheets **_Y_**
- Audited financial statements **_Y_**
- Tuition and fees, educational, and auxiliary revenue for undergraduate and graduate enrollments **_Y_**
- Significant contracts/grants **_Y_**
- Endowment and giving reports **_Y_**
- Investment revenue **_Y_**

Rationale:

The additional financial audit report provided by the institute provides evidence of strong internal controls to manage the overall budgets. SVC has seen significant enrollment decline with commensurate reduction in tuition dollars. They have managed the tuition revenue losses primarily with reductions in operating expenses. There are capital gains and a sound reserve balance that is higher than the mandated fund reserve guideline.

Standard 2.E.2

Financial planning includes meaningful opportunities for participation by stakeholders and ensures appropriate available funds, realistic development of financial resources, and comprehensive risk management to ensure short term financial health and long-term financial stability and sustainability.

Team Verification:

- Compliant

Evidence:

- Policies / procedures for planning and monitoring of operating and capital budgets, reserves, investments, fundraising, cash management, debt management, transfers and borrowing between funds **_Y_**
- Sample of meeting agendas, minutes, and/or other documentation as evidence of meaningful opportunities for participation by stakeholders **_N_**

Rationale:

BoR policy for financial health (EF-1) is in place. Stakeholder input is through internal management processes and reviewing budget requests from units.

Standard 2.E.3

Financial resources are managed transparently in accordance with policies approved by the institution's governing board(s), governance structure(s), and applicable state and federal laws.

Team Verification:

- Compliant



Evidence:

- Description of internal financial controls **_Y_**
- Board approved financial policies, state financial policies, or system financial policies **_Y_**

Rationale:

SVC has the overarching SVC EF-1 Fiscal Health policy and several other policies for financial operations and controls, including those for purchasing, accounting, travel, equipment etc.

Standard 2.F.1

Faculty, staff, and administrators are apprised of their conditions of employment, work assignments, rights and responsibilities, and criteria and procedures for evaluation, retention, promotion, and termination.

Team Verification:

- Compliant

Evidence:

- Human resource policies / procedures **_Y_**
- Policies/procedures related to teaching, scholarship, service, and artistic creation **_Y_**
- Policies/procedures for apprising employees of working conditions, rights and responsibilities, evaluation, retention, promotion, and termination **_Y_**

Rationale:

Relevant information is available on the HR website, faculty and staff CBAs, faculty handbook and communication on these are happening during the time of hire, orientation, and onwards through web portals, emails, and other avenues. Performance evaluation processes are in place with evaluation templates accessible for use.

Standard 2.F.2

The institution provides faculty, staff, and administrators with appropriate opportunities and support for professional growth and development.

Team Verification:

- Compliant

Evidence:

- Employee professional development policies/procedures **_Y_**

Rationale:

Mandatory trainings for all employees are in place. Supervisor training exists and is currently being standardized. Professional development opportunities are available internally and external opportunities are supported (CBA Articles 7 & 9).

Standard 2.F.3

Consistent with its mission, programs, and services, the institution employs faculty, staff, and administrators sufficient in role, number, and qualifications to achieve its organizational responsibilities, educational objectives, establish and oversee academic policies, and ensure the integrity and continuity of its academic programs.

Team Verification:

- Compliant

Evidence:

- Documentation about engagement and responsibilities specified for faculty and staff, as appropriate **_N_**
- Personnel hiring policy/procedures **_Y_**
- Academic organizational chart **_Y_**
- Administrator/staff /faculty evaluation policies/procedures **_Y_**

Rationale:

Appropriate HR policies and processes are in place.

Standard 2.F.4

Faculty, staff, and administrators are evaluated regularly and systematically in alignment with institutional mission and goals, educational objectives, and policies and procedures. Evaluations are based on written criteria that are published, easily accessible, and clearly communicated. Evaluations are applied equitably, fairly, and consistently in relation to responsibilities and duties. Personnel are assessed for effectiveness and are provided feedback and encouragement for improvement.



Team Verification:

Compliant

Evidence:

- Administrator/staff/faculty evaluation policies/procedures **_Y_**

Rationale:

CBA mandated evaluation processes are in place for both faculty and staff with meaningful additions put in place from recent negotiations. This includes reflection and building a professional development plan.

Standard 2.G.1

Consistent with the nature of its educational programs and methods of delivery, and with a particular focus on equity and closure of equity gaps in achievement, the institution creates and maintains effective learning environments with appropriate programs and services to support student learning and success.

Team Verification:

- Compliant

Evidence:

- Listing of programs and services supporting student learning needs **_Y_**

Rationale:

Strong student support services are available or all students with additional services promoting equity for select LatinX students and TRIO students.

Standard 2.G.2

The institution publishes in a catalog, or provides in a manner available to students and other stakeholders, current and accurate information that includes: institutional mission; admission requirements and procedures; grading policy; information on academic programs and courses, including degree and program completion requirements, expected learning outcomes, required course sequences, and projected timelines to completion based on normal student progress and the frequency of course offerings; names, titles, degrees held, and conferring institutions for administrators and full-time faculty; rules and regulations for conduct, rights, and responsibilities; tuition, fees, and other program costs; refund policies and procedures for students who withdraw from enrollment; opportunities and requirements for financial aid; and the academic calendar.

Team Verification:

- Compliant

Evidence:

Catalog (and/or other publications) that provides information regarding:

- Institutional mission **_Y_**
- Admission requirements and procedures **_Y_**
- Grading policy **_Y_**
- Information on academic programs and courses, including degree and program completion requirements, expected learning outcomes, required course sequences, and projected timelines to completion **_Y_**
- Names, titles, degrees held, and conferring institutions for administrators and full-time faculty **_Y_**
- Rules and regulations for conduct, rights, and responsibilities **_Y_**
- Tuition, fees, and other program costs **_Y_**
- Refund policies and procedures for students who withdraw from enrollment **_Y_**
- Opportunities and requirements for financial aid **_Y_**
- The academic calendar **_Y_**

Rationale:

The institute has an accessible and informative catalog with relevant information on academic content and policies.

Standard 2.G.3

Publications and other written materials that describe educational programs include accurate information on national and/or state legal eligibility requirements for licensure or entry into an occupation or profession for which education and training are offered. Descriptions of unique requirements for employment and advancement in the occupation or profession shall be included in such materials.

Team Verification:

- Type 1 Finding

Evidence:

Samples of publications and other written materials that describe:

- Accurate information on national and/or state legal eligibility requirements for licensure or entry into an occupation or profession for which education and training are offered **_N_**



- Descriptions of unique requirements for employment and advancement in the occupation or profession shall be included in such materials **_N_**

Rationale:

Reviewers found that only two programs listed that licensure would be awarded. For these programs the licensure requirements were included. Reviewers did not see a complete listing of other programs that lead to or do not lead to licensure. Information on whether the licensure was transferable more broadly was also missing.

Standard 2.G.4

The institution provides an effective and accountable program of financial aid consistent with its mission, student needs, and institutional resources. Information regarding the categories of financial assistance (such as scholarships, grants, and loans) is published and made available to prospective and enrolled students.

Team Verification:

- Compliant

Evidence:

- Published financial aid policies/procedures including information about categories of financial assistance **_Y_**
- Information to students regarding repayment obligations **_Y_**
- Policies / procedures for monitoring student loan programs **_Y_**

Rationale:

SVC Financial Aid website is a one-stop shop for all relevant information. The FAQs on this site are particularly useful.

Standard 2.G.5

Students receiving financial assistance are informed of any repayment obligations. The institution regularly monitors its student loan programs and publicizes the institution’s loan default rate on its website.

Team Verification:

- Compliant

Evidence:

- Published financial aid policies/procedures including information about categories of financial assistance **_Y_**
- Information to students regarding repayment obligations **_Y_**
- Policies / procedures for monitoring student loan programs **_Y_**
- Loan default rate published on website **_Y_**

Rationale:

SVC Financial Aid policy (5600) is overseen by SVC student services and student relevant information guided by this policy is available on the financial aid website.

Standard 2.G.6

The institution designs, maintains, and evaluates a systematic and effective program of academic advisement to support student development and success. Personnel responsible for advising students are knowledgeable of the curriculum, program and graduation requirements, and are adequately prepared to successfully fulfill their responsibilities. Advising requirements and responsibilities of advisors are defined, published, and made available to students.

Team Verification:

- Compliant

Evidence:

- Description of advising program, staffing, and advising publications (Student handbook or Catalog; links to webpages – please note specific pages or areas) **_Y_**
- Systematic evaluation of advising **_Y_**
- Professional development policies / procedures for advisors **_Y_**

Rationale:

Several student support services are in place with every student receiving at least two to three mandatory advising checks. Regular advisor community meetings exist. Catalog clearly lists these services and access information.

Standard 2.G.7

The institution maintains an effective identity verification process for students, including those enrolled in distance education courses and programs, to establish that the student enrolled in such a course or program is the same person whose achievements are evaluated and credentialed. The institution ensures that the identity verification process for distance education students protects student privacy and that students are informed, in writing at the time of enrollment, of current and projected charges associated with the identity verification process.



Team Verification:

- Compliant

Evidence:

- Policies/procedures for ensuring the student who registers in a distance education course/program is the same student who participates in the course and receives credit Y
- Policies/procedures make it clear that these processes protect student privacy Y
- Notification to students at the time of registration of any additional charges associated with verification procedures Y
- Academic policies/procedures for instructors to implement requirements for *regular and substantive interaction* in distance education courses/programs Y

Rationale:

SVC has verification process through ctcLink ID and there are no costs to students. RSI processes have been initiated.

Standard 2.H.1

Consistent with its mission, the institution employs qualified personnel and provides access to library and information resources with a level of currency, depth, and breadth sufficient to support and sustain the institution's mission, programs, and services.

Team Verification:

- Compliant

Evidence:

- Procedures for assessing adequacy of library collections Y
- Library planning committee and procedures for planning and collection development Y
- Library instruction plan; policies/procedures related to the use of library and information resources Y
- Library staffing information; policies/procedures that explains faculty/library partnership for assuring library and information resources are integrated into the learning process Y

Rationale:

Compliant.

Standard 2.I.1

Consistent with its mission, the institution creates and maintains physical facilities and technology infrastructure that are accessible, safe, secure, and sufficient in quantity and quality to ensure healthful learning and working environments that support and sustain the institution's mission, academic programs, and services.

Team Verification:

- Compliant

Evidence:

Facilities master plan, including:

- Equipment replacement policies/procedures Y
- Procedures for assessing sufficiency of physical facilities Y
- Policies and procedures for ensuring accessible, safe, and secure facilities N
- Policies/procedures for the use, storage, and disposal of hazardous waste Y
- Technology master plan and planning processes N

Rationale:

The SVC Facilities Master Plan is appropriate for the scale of the organization. SVC safety manual include handling hazardous waste.

Concluding Comments

The institute submitted a clear and well-structured PRFR report. We noted the need for making more complete information available for programs that lead to licensure, and to continue the progress on providing regular and substantive interactions