

Assurance Argument

Maricopa Community Colleges-South Mountain Community College - AZ

Review date: 2/10/2020

1 - Mission

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

1.A - Core Component 1.A

The institution's mission is broadly understood within the institution and guides its operations.

1. The mission statement is developed through a process suited to the nature and culture of the institution and is adopted by the governing board.
2. The institution's academic programs, student support services, and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission.
3. The institution's planning and budgeting priorities align with and support the mission. (This sub-component may be addressed by reference to the response to Criterion 5.C.1.)

Argument

1.A.1.

The [vision and mission](#) statements of South Mountain Community College (SMCC) are the guide for all employees and the collaborative framework for all operations. The vision serves as the inspiration and future focus of the organization. The college vision states:

“South Mountain Community College educates minds, transforms lives, touches hearts, and builds community.”

The broad, yet focused mission of SMCC recognizes the multifaceted areas the institution must address in order to effectively respond to the various needs of the community. The mission states:

“South Mountain Community College provides quality higher education for our diverse community. We create a caring teaching and learning environment that fosters student development and supports productive citizenship in an increasingly global and technological society. Our purpose is to meet these needs by offering: (1) General education courses; (2) Transfer programs; (3) Occupational education and career development; (4) Continuing education; (5) Developmental studies and English as a second language; (6) Cultural, civic and social events; and (6) Academic support and student services.”

Additionally, SMCC has five values which guide program development, decision-making and employee actions. The values are:

- **COLLABORATION:** We are inclusive in our relationships with colleagues, departments and community, and respectful of their ideas.
- **COMMUNITY:** We serve our community by recognizing our interdependence, celebrating our history, honoring our diverse cultures, and building our future.
- **EXCELLENCE:** We model exemplary teaching, learning, service and leadership through continuous improvement, creativity and innovation.

- **INTEGRITY:** We are accountable to the communities we serve and are truthful, sincere, transparent and responsible for our actions.
- **WELLBEING:** We are a college community that encourages and develops social, physical, career, community and financial wellbeing.

The current mission statement was developed in 2003 through a process inclusive of SMCC and the community. Using the [Appreciative Inquiry Model](#), the vision, mission and values were reviewed in 2012 and 2016 through an [extensive process](#) involving faculty, staff, students and the local community. Ultimately, the vision and mission statements created in 2003 were reaffirmed as they still reflected the commitment, purpose and direction of SMCC. However, the [values](#) were updated in 2012 to better reflect the current culture of the organization. For example, the addition of wellbeing as a value supported the need to take a more holistic approach to supporting [employees](#). South Mountain Community College's vision, mission, and values are supported by the [Maricopa County Community College Governing Board](#) and align with the [mission of the Maricopa County Community College District \(MCCCD\)](#).

1.A.2.

The academic programs, student support services and enrollment profile at SMCC are in alignment with our mission. The core of SMCC's mission includes a focus on providing quality higher education for our diverse community. This is evidenced through the signature academic and occupational programs such as the [Storytelling Institute](#), [Computer & Information Technology](#), and [Behavioral Science & Human Services](#). The quality of programs is also reflected by the successful [course completion rates of students in college-level courses](#), and the increasing number of [graduates](#) and [awards](#). This is also evidenced by the success students actualize after attending our college. SMCC's programs also align with the mission by reflecting the diversity of the communities we serve, which include Hispanic, African-American and Native American populations. Programs such as the [Bilingual Nursing Fellowship Program](#) (BNFP), a partnership with Phoenix College and Arizona State University (ASU), provide engaging learning experiences that allow students to achieve their academic goals while honoring the diversity that is uniquely SMCC.

The college also supports the mission by creating caring teaching and learning environments that foster student development and support productive citizenship in an increasingly global and technological society. The [strategic plan](#) includes a direction that focuses exclusively on teaching and learning, ensuring that this remains a primary focus of the institution with a commitment to allocating the necessary resources to support these efforts. Within the strategic plan there is also an institutional priority (5.3) which focuses on "creating and sustaining a technological environment that fosters exemplary learning experiences." The mission is further supported by the [Center for Teaching and Learning](#) (CTL) which provides support to faculty and staff to enhance the quality teaching and learning that occurs at all levels of the organization. [Phi Theta Kappa](#), the [Democracy Wall Project](#), and [Sustainability Club](#) are examples of the co-curricular activities that aim to cultivate productive citizens in an increasingly global and technological society.

Completion of general education requirements and university transfer are integral to the mission. As part of the MCCCD, SMCC curriculum contains the [Arizona General Education Curriculum](#) (AGEC) which includes 35 to 37 credit hours that transfer seamlessly to the three Arizona public universities. Due to the close proximity, the vast majority of SMCC transfer and general education students attend Arizona State University (ASU). Students attending ASU also benefit from the [Maricopa-ASU Pathway Program](#) (MAPP) which guarantees admissions and in-state tuition for

our students. This program also tracks academic progress using a personalized online tracker called Pathway Tracker. Likewise, SMCC has a [partnership with Northern Arizona University](#) (NAU) whereby students can complete three of the four-year bachelor degree requirements with SMCC and transfer to specific in-person or online degree programs. SMCC also has [articulation agreements](#) with numerous higher education institutions around the country, promoting transfer opportunities beyond Arizona.

In addition to general education and transfer opportunities, SMCC is committed to workforce development and entrepreneurship to support the mission. SMCC students can earn a degree, certificate or license in more than 80 different [occupational programs](#) which include [CISCO Networking, Programming and Mobile Development](#), [Network and Cybersecurity](#), [Administration of Justice](#), [Storytelling Institute](#), and [Social Media Marketing](#). To further align with the mission, SMCC has a nationally recognized [Collegiate DECA](#) student club that prepares emerging leaders and entrepreneurs in marketing, finance, hospitality and management around the globe. The commitment to fulfilling the mission through occupational education is further supported by quality faculty, state-of-the-art classrooms, dynamic learning and career development opportunities.

In support of the mission, SMCC created the [Community Entrepreneurship Center \(CEC\)](#). The CEC supports SMCC students, community members and businesses in developing small businesses and entrepreneurs in the South Phoenix area. The building was remodeled to provide working spaces and technology that foster individual and small group brainstorming, meetings, and events needed for emerging and experienced business owners. The CEC functions on student interest and community involvement with a strong emphasis on community internships, events, business partnerships, and formal mentorships all overseen by SMCC faculty and staff.

Recognizing the diverse needs of the communities we serve, [continuing education](#) is also an important component of the institutional mission and offers a variety of courses to achieve this purpose. Previous and current courses aimed at developing the entire individual and their personal interests include exercise fitness, foreign languages, and music. Continuing education also provides the necessary resources for individuals to remain current or develop new professional skills such as computing and small business management.

The model developed by SMCC to effectively serve developmental education and English as a Second Language (ESL) students is paramount to the mission. The [Foundations Academy](#) consists of exemplary faculty and staff committed to the success of these students. Evidence of this success is shown in the [developmental course success rates](#), [subsequent success rates in college level courses](#), conference presentations, and [national recognitions](#). The work of staff and faculty in this area has been supported as a result of a [Title III Grant](#) which largely focused on facilities, infrastructure and technology designed to improve developmental education student experience and success. The outcomes from this grant further solidified the commitment to ensuring that all students succeed at SMCC. The Title III Grant officially concluded and the Foundations Academy will be disbanded in Spring 2020. However, the valuable work of the faculty and staff will be embedded, where appropriate, in college activities.

Serving as a hub for the community, SMCC hosts cultural, civic and social events to achieve the mission. Events and experiences hosted by SMCC include [Music Under the Stars](#), an afternoon of free music for the community; [Stew and Stories](#), a cultural event honoring Native American Heritage Month; a partnership with [Tools 4 School](#), which helps distribute free backpacks and school supplies to local area residents in need; and a collaboration with [St. Mary's Food Bank](#) to help provide free food to the community. The college also has partnerships with Arizona State University and other

organizations to present key topics on race, gender and democracy such as the [Race and Democracy Speaker Series](#). South Mountain Community College also has a city of [Phoenix Public Library](#) located on the property. This unique partnership has expanded the college capacity to host events that leverage SMCC faculty, staff, students and the community. The various events hosted provide ongoing evidence of our steadfast commitment to the mission and include [Celebrating Banned Books](#), [Children Walk for Peace](#), and the [Campus Vote Project](#). In October, 2018 the library and college hosted a [TedX Talk](#), with the theme of “Voices,” and welcomed local and national speakers who spoke on a wide range of topics including immigration, health and wellness, imposter syndrome, divorce, and beekeeping.

Student support services are also abundant at SMCC, with a focus on achieving our mission by providing supplemental support to learning that occurs within the classroom and engaging learning experiences outside the classroom. The [Learning Resource Center](#) provides free, quality tutoring in a variety of academic disciplines. Having a public library on campus provides more academic resources and services than the traditional community college library. The college also offers a variety of volunteer and service-learning opportunities and encourages active student engagement in taking advantage of these opportunities. To demonstrate the commitment to serving students, the Student Development area recently developed and adopted [customer service standards](#) and expedited enrollment services by using a system called [QLess](#). This system helps communicate with students via text and phone calls to wait times in line. The mission is also supported by [testing services](#) (on and off site), robust [student governance](#) opportunities, an expanding veterans’ services area, and [transfer fairs](#). Support services are also evidenced through the extensive [academic and need-based scholarships](#) available to students each semester.

An important change that is helping shape a new streamlined student experience is the [Guided Pathways](#) model. The college is also enhancing the advising structure to develop a new and improved model that is based on national best practices. Two additional components of this process will include the development of [Fields of Interest \(FOI\)](#), which include areas such as Applied Technology, Computer and Information Technology, Culture and Society, Education, STEM, and Visual and Performing Arts. This initiative will help students match their interests and career goals into a range of classes that will complement each other even if the student’s interest migrates from their original intended goal. The college’s My360 experience also helps match student interest and career goals. At SMCC, the [My360](#) experience is a strengths-based process that helps students identify their core strengths and career interests with the idea of matching those to programs where the student can succeed.

Finally, all of the programs, services and experiences align with our [enrollment profile](#). South Mountain Community College is federally designated as both a Minority-Serving Institution and a Hispanic-Serving Institution, with significant gains being made toward securing Native American-Serving Institution status as well. Overall, 77% of the current student population of SMCC identify as minority. Our percentage of first-generation college students is 70%. Our students are 57% females, 40% male with the largest age demographic ranging from 20-24 (26%). Most of our students are considered “in-county” and matriculate to SMCC from one of the three primary local high schools (South Mountain, Cesar Chavez and Betty Fairfax). Currently more than three quarters of SMCC students attend part-time. This collective student profile reflects the community SMCC serves and the diversity that is core to the mission.

1.A.3.

[Strategic planning](#) at South Mountain Community College aligns with the mission of the

organization. The Strategic Directions of the plan serve as broad areas of focus and are:

- Teaching and Learning
- Student Success and Completion
- Community Partnerships and Workforce Development
- Employee and Organizational Excellence
- Organizational Effectiveness

The [integrated strategic planning and budgeting process](#) has resulted in the development of [action](#) (operational) and [enrollment plans](#) that focus on all aspects of the mission for the purpose of driving student and organizational success with demonstrated results. To ensure that planning and budgeting support the mission, SMCC has developed an annual integrated action planning and budget development process which is coordinated by the Planning, Research & Development and Budget departments. Each fall semester, employees attend [workshops](#) in which the goals for each department and division are assessed and updated. New annual action plans are then developed and financial resources to support the new action plans are requested. All action plans are required to include at least one strategy (e.g. continuous improvement, enrollment, retention) identified by the Executive Leadership each year. This area of focus is determined by reviewing internal and external data trends to identify important and impactful areas to SMCC. All strategies within the action plan must also directly align with one or more priorities of the strategic plan. This ensures direct and continuous alignment between planning, budgeting priorities and the mission.

As additional evidence that the planning and budget priorities align with the mission, the institution created the [Students Transformed to Achieving Radiant Success \(STARS\)](#) Scholarship Campaign. In 2014, the college embarked on the 4th STARS Scholarship Campaign. Over the course of three five-year campaigns (in 1998, 2003 and 2008), more than \$200,000 has been pledged and contributed by our very own faculty and staff. To date, more than 200 students have been awarded \$100,000 in scholarships since the funds reached maturity.

Sources

- ACO_AdministrationofJustice_2019_1A2
- ACO_ArizonaGeneralEducationCurriculum_2018_1A2
- ACO_BehavioralScienceandHumanServices_2019_1A2
- ACO_CISCONetworking_2018_1A2
- ACO_ComputerandTechnology_2019_1A2
- ACO_FieldsofInterest_2019_1A2
- ACO_GuidedPathways_2019_1A2
- ACO_LearningResourceCenter_2019_1A2
- ACO_MaricopaASUMAPP_2019_1A2
- ACO_My360_2018_1A2
- ACO_Network_CyberSecurity_2018_1A2
- ACO_OccupationalPrograms_2019_1A2
- ACO_ProgrammingandMobileDevelopment_2019_1A2
- ACO_SocialMedia_2018_1A2
- ACO_StorytellingInstitute_2019_1A2
- AWR_NationalRecognitionsBellwether_2017_1A2
- CMY_ContinuingEducation_2019_1A2

- CMY_STARSScholarship_2019_1A3
- ENR_EnrollmentProfile_2019_1A2
- EVT_MusicUndertheStars_2015_1A2
- EVT_StewardStories_2019_1A2
- FCL_QLess_2019_1A2
- FIN_AcademicandNeedBasedScholarships_2019_1A2
- FIN_ActionPlans_2018_1A3
- INO_CommunityEntrepreneurshipCenter_2019_1A2
- INO_CustomerServiceTraining_2017_1A2
- INO_FoundationsAcademy_2018_1A2
- INO_TitleIIIGrantAwardNotification_2014_1A2
- ORG_AppreciativeInquiry_2016_1A1
- ORG_EmployeeWellness_2019_1A1
- ORG_ExtensiveProcess_2019_1A1
- ORG_MCCCDGoverningBoard_2019_1A1
- ORG_MCCCDMission_2005_1A1
- ORG_ValuesUpdate_2012_1A1
- ORG_VisionMission_2019_1A1
- PAR_ArticulationAgreements_2019_1A2
- PAR_BNFP_2019_1A2
- PAR_CampusVoteProject_2018_1A2
- PAR_CelebratingBannedBooks_2014_1A2
- PAR_ChildrenWalkforPeace_2012_1A2
- PAR_DemocracyWallProject_2018_1A2
- PAR_NorthernArizonaUniversityPartnership_2019_1A2
- PAR_PhoenixPublicLibrary_2019_1A2
- PAR_RaceandDemocracySeries_2018_1A2
- PAR_StMarysMobilePantry_2018_1A2
- PAR_TEDx_2018_1A2
- PAR_Tools4Schools_2018_1A2
- PLN_IntegratedStrategicPlanningBudgetingProcess_2019_1A3
- PLN_StrategicEnrollmentManagementPlan_2016_1A3
- PLN_StrategicPlan_2016_1A3
- PLN_StrategicPlanDirectionsPriorities_2019_1A2
- PLN_Workshops_2014_1A3
- SEA_CollegiateDECA_2019_1A2
- SEA_PTK_2019_1A2
- SEA_StudentGovernance_2019_1A2
- SEA_SustainabilityClub_2019_1A2
- SEA_Transferfairs_2016_1A2
- SOC_CourseCompletionRates_2019_1A2
- SOC_DevelopmentalSuccessRates_2018_1A2
- SOC_NumberofGraduates_2019_1A2
- SOC_SMCCAwards_2019_1A2
- SOC_SubsequentCollegeCourseSuccess_2018_1A2
- STS_Testingservices_2019_1A2
- TRN_CTL_2019_1A2

1.B - Core Component 1.B

The mission is articulated publicly.

1. The institution clearly articulates its mission through one or more public documents, such as statements of purpose, vision, values, goals, plans, or institutional priorities.
2. The mission document or documents are current and explain the extent of the institution's emphasis on the various aspects of its mission, such as instruction, scholarship, research, application of research, creative works, clinical service, public service, economic development, and religious or cultural purpose.
3. The mission document or documents identify the nature, scope, and intended constituents of the higher education programs and services the institution provides.

Argument

1.B.1.

South Mountain Community College clearly articulates its vision and mission through multiple public documents which are accessible to students, faculty, staff and the community. Vision and mission documents appear on the [college website](#) and are printed in the [college catalog](#), [strategic plan](#) and [Annual Report](#). As part of the on boarding process, vision and mission documents are provided to new employees in welcome packets distributed at mandatory orientation. Vision and mission documents are also included in materials such as the [student handbook](#) which is included in the college catalog. These documents are also included on [meeting agendas](#) serving as a constant reminder of our purpose and commitment. The college has also created small vision, mission, and [values cards](#) which employees and students can attach to their ID lanyards. The college also acknowledges employees for displaying the [values](#) by celebrating them with a bag of chocolates. In addition, the vision and mission are displayed in classrooms, [workspaces](#), conference rooms, and a [mural](#).

1.B.2.

As discussed in 1.A, the mission statement is current and reflects the institution's emphasis on providing quality teaching and learning, serving our diverse community, and preparing students for the global and technological society. While the mission itself has not changed since 2003, a formal process to review the mission as part of the integrated strategic planning and budgeting process has been adopted. The mission has been reviewed for currency and relevance in 2012 and 2016. These documents are scheduled to be reviewed again in 2020 and 2024.

1.B.3.

SMCC mission documents are comprehensive and provide clarity regarding our identity, purpose, programs, services and the communities we serve. The mission clearly articulates our primary aim of providing quality teaching and learning to our diverse community. The mission also communicates the desire of all SMCC employees which is to create caring teaching and learning environments that develop holistic students. By design, the mission seeks to bridge SMCC and our intended constituents. The broad nature, scope, and intended constituents of the mission is also identified and

supported by the vision and values statements which further articulate emphasis on transforming lives through collaboration, community, integrity, excellence and well-being.

Sources

- COM_CollegeWebsite_2019_1B1
- ENR_CollegeCatalog_2020_1B1
- MKT_PCACAgenda_2018_1B1
- ORG_AnnualReport_2018_1B1
- ORG_Mural_2019_1B1
- ORG_Values_2018_1B1
- ORG_ValuesCard_2018_1B1
- ORG_Workspaces_2019_1B1
- PLN_StrategicPlan_2016_1B1
- POL_StudentHandbook_2018_1B1

1.C - Core Component 1.C

The institution understands the relationship between its mission and the diversity of society.

1. The institution addresses its role in a multicultural society.
2. The institution's processes and activities reflect attention to human diversity as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.

Argument

1.C.1.

Recognizing the value multiculturalism adds to the higher education environment, SMCC addresses this role in several ways. First, the mission statement speaks directly to the necessity of serving our diverse community. In addition, SMCC has created an institutional priority (3.3) which focuses on serving the community by offering programs, services and resources that meet the community's needs. The college also offers a variety of programs that address our multicultural society such as [Study Abroad Programs](#) and [International Education Services](#).

The institution also addresses this role by acknowledging and supporting the student population which represents diversity in disability status, race, ethnicity, age, international status, sexual orientation, veteran status, gender identities, religious affiliation, cultural background, and political orientation. These special populations and services include:

[English as a Second Language](#): helps students improve in English language, literacy and academic skills.

[Disability Resources and Services](#): coordinates the implementation of reasonable accommodations for qualifying students with disabilities for the purpose of providing a quality post-secondary educational experience.

[TRiO](#): provides a learning community and strong academic support system to low-income individuals, first-generation college students and individuals with disabilities.

[Hoop of Learning](#): provides a high school to college bridge program tailored to meet the academic and cultural needs of American Indian students.

[Achieving a College Education \(ACE\)](#): represents a scholarship program helping high school students earn college credit and learn valuable academic, social and personal skills for current and future success.

[Veterans Services](#): acts as a liaison between military-affiliated students and eligible dependents and the Department of Veteran Affairs for the purposes of certifying veteran educational benefits.

The college commitment to its multicultural role also extends to seeking external funding to support major initiatives. The college currently has been identified as a Hispanic Serving Institution, as determined by the Higher Education Act and the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities

(HACU). These federal designations have allowed SMCC to apply for and receive Title III (Strengthening Institutions) and Title V (Hispanic Serving) grants which have expanded the institutions capacity to address its role in a multicultural society. The Bilingual Nursing Program reflects the commitment to serving the local community. This program ties the nationwide need for nursing with the additional need of a multilingual society.

The college also works proactively to develop and enhance the services provided to our local Native American communities. In 2017, SMCC held listening sessions with the Pasqua Yaqui tribe and the Town of Guadalupe to better understand the evolving needs of the tribal community and the potential areas of partnership for SMCC. These listening sessions resulted in the creation of an [action plan](#) with targeted strategies for subsequent years. Additionally, since 2012 SMCC has participated in monthly meetings with the Gila River Indian Community to design partnerships, programs and services that benefit the tribal and larger local communities such as the [Phlebotomy Program](#). In this way, SMCC ensures Student Development and Academic Innovation work together to engage diverse communities.

1.C.2.

South Mountain Community College addresses its role in a multicultural society by having processes and activities that reflect attention to the human diversity of the constituencies it serves. The college includes a statement on [Affirmative Action, Equal Employment Opportunity and Non-Discrimination](#) on all college collateral. This statement is inclusive of all staff and communicates the value of diversity to all internal and external stakeholders.

Faculty and staff also undergo regular training on outreach and [diversity](#) as well as inclusive instructional practices. For example, all SMCC faculty and staff are invited to participate in Disability Resources and Services training in order to improve knowledge of the college's services by connecting instructors to student support services. As part of MCCC, employees also are encouraged to participate in [Maximizing Our Strengths as an Inclusive Community \(MOSAIC\)](#) a 24-hour training that "creates service oriented, respectful, inclusive and equitable environments that engage students, staff and the Maricopa County Community." SMCC Veterans Services strives to ensure each student has adequate support from knowledgeable staff on what challenges they may face. On October 24, 2018 SMCC hosted a [Green Zone Training](#) session which helped educate faculty and staff about potential classroom issues and challenges for veterans and service members. In addition, current students have the opportunity to speak to and get the perspective of current work study students that have graduated and transferred to ASU. Veterans Services also refers students to appropriate resources for housing and other living needs, and the office continues to grow its network of organizations to provide additional services.

As part of the AGEC curriculum, students are required to complete courses that meet the requirement for [Cultural Diversity in the U.S. \(C\)](#), [Global Awareness \(G\)](#) or [Historical Awareness \(H\)](#). The Cultural Diversity in the U.S. requirement is designed to promote awareness and appreciation for cultural diversity within the contemporary United States. The Global Awareness courses address the need to understand the values, perspectives, and social processes of cultures other than those of the United States. The Historical Awareness Area option in the requirements aims to develop a knowledge of the past that can be useful in shaping the present and future. At SMCC, more than 40 courses satisfy these requirements which provide students with a variety of options to engage in curriculum that focuses on diversity.

The college recruitment and marketing efforts also reflect attention to diversity. Recruitment efforts

are targeted to ensure diverse representation in our overall student population. [Marketing collateral](#) is developed using diverse representation, languages and target audiences. Located in a metropolitan, urban area, SMCC is also committed to attracting and retaining employees whose diversity reflects that of our students and community.

South Mountain Community College also has numerous [student organizations](#) that support our diverse campus and community needs. All of these organizations have SMCC employees as advisors which facilitates and strengthens the relationship between students and staff. The organizations and scope include:

Black Student Union: *promotes activities of common interest, as well as cultural and educational benefits, for all students.*

Circle of Nations: *supports American Indian students in reaching their educational goals; developing leadership skills; and promoting cultural awareness by fostering relationships among clubs, campuses, the Maricopa Community College District, and the college community.*

MEChA: *instills within Chicano students a sense of pride and awareness of their heritage and culture.*

Sustainability Club: *educates students about sustainable living, health, communities, businesses, and environments.*

Think South Mountain: *encourages club members, SMCC students and the greater South Mountain community through open conversations with people of all viewpoints and walks of life.*

South Pride: *supports gay, bisexual, lesbian, transgender, and questioning community along with their support systems while fostering a place where beliefs and values are welcomed and respected.*

The office of Student Life and Leadership maintains a well-populated [calendar of events](#) hosted by and drawing attention to these diverse cohorts. It works with faculty, staff, and the PR and Marketing department to advertise events to further integrate the community's diversity with the college's student and employee population. Many of these events are a series of activities that include cultural food, traditions and guest speakers to support heritage months such as Black History, Women's History, Native American History, and Hispanic Heritage.

As one of the five priorities of SMCC's recently-developed Academic Master Plan, SMCC is also working to create a [formal structure](#) to support work around equity. This proposal contains a plethora of strategies to understand and implement an equity initiative that will have a significant impact on students and employees. The research thus far was shared recently to obtain feedback from SMCC councils about how the college might work to support equitable outcomes for our students and to establish an approach to support this work moving forward. Ultimately, the goal of the Equity Initiative is to use a self-study to identify and remediate institutional barriers ensuring all students receive an equitable learning experience at South Mountain Community College.

In addition, the SMCC Dean of Planning Research and Development serves as co-chair of a district-wide equity task force led by the Institutional Research Council. The primary goal of this task force is to establish a framework for which future conversations, practices, and research that can inform the goal of enhancing existing efforts to close equity gaps throughout the District. Using existing best

practice models, the research team is examining performance metrics such as course completion and graduation rates for a variety of student demographics. Both visual dashboards and [written reports](#) will be provided highlighting the results as part of various district initiatives such as the [National Center for Inquiry and Improvement](#) (NCII).

Sources

- ACO_ACE_2019_1C1
- ACO_AGERequirements_2019_1C2
- ACO_EnglishSecondLanguage_2019_1C1
- ACO_GuadalupeActionPlan_2017_1C1
- ACO_HoopofLearning_2019_1C1
- ACO_InternationalEducationServices_2019_1C1
- ACO_PhlebotomyProgram_2019_1C1
- ACO_StudyAbroadPrograms_1C1
- COM_CalendarofEvents_2019_1C2
- COM_MarketingCollateral_2019_1C2
- CPE_DRSAccommodations_2018_1C1
- ORG_DistrictEquityTaskForce_2019_1C2
- ORG_SMCCEquityInitiative_2019_1C2
- ORG_WrittenReports_2019_1C2
- POL_NonDiscrimination_2019_1C2
- SEA_StudentOrganizations_2016_1C2
- STS_TRIO_2019_1C1
- STS_VeteransServices_2019_1C1
- TRN_Diversity_2019_1C2
- TRN_GreenZoneTraining_2018_1C2
- TRN_MOSAIC_2019_1C2

1.D - Core Component 1.D

The institution's mission demonstrates commitment to the public good.

1. Actions and decisions reflect an understanding that in its educational role the institution serves the public, not solely the institution, and thus entails a public obligation.
2. The institution's educational responsibilities take primacy over other purposes, such as generating financial returns for investors, contributing to a related or parent organization, or supporting external interests.
3. The institution engages with its identified external constituencies and communities of interest and responds to their needs as its mission and capacity allow.

Argument

1.D.1.

The actions and decisions of South Mountain Community College continually reflect an understanding that, in its educational role, the institution proudly embraces the important obligation of serving the public. For nearly 40 years, SMCC has served as a hub for the community not only through its academic offerings, but also through its community events and activities. The college not only understands the duty to and role of serving the public, but also embraces the opportunity to be an open-access institution dedicated to providing learning experiences that transform the lives of our students and community.

The [Shared Governance Model](#) is responsible for ensuring that decisions and initiatives are communicated and supported throughout the organization. Comprised of representatives from all areas of the organization, this model ensures that all actions align with the strategic plan and reflect the public obligation that has been entrusted to SMCC. At a district level, policies have been developed and implemented to ensure public stewardship, organizational ethics and professional conduct for all employees. These policies are further expanded to maintain high levels of internal controls to ensure that we meet our obligations to our community and the public. Ultimately, the district's [Administrative Regulations](#) hold us to the standard of serving and protecting the public above and beyond the institution.

1.D.2.

South Mountain Community College's educational responsibilities take primacy over other purposes. As an open-access institution, SMCC is committed to providing a quality education at an affordable [tuition rate](#). The tuition rate for SMCC students is significantly less than neighboring public and private academic institutions. In addition, a majority of the [college budget](#) is allocated to the Learning and Student Development areas which reinforce our primary purpose of learning and support services. The college also offers reduced facility rental fees to support events that align with the mission and needs of the community.

As an entity of the Maricopa Community College District, SMCC is a political subdivision of the State of Arizona ([Arizona Revised Statutes Title 15, Chapter 12, Article 1](#)). In this structure, SMCC does not generate financial returns for investors, contribute to a related or parent organization, or

support external interests. Governing Board members of the Maricopa County Community College District are elected officials representing the public. Their duty is to ensure that the actions of SMCC and district reflect the public interests.

1.D.3.

South Mountain Community College engages with its identified external constituencies and communities to assess and respond to their needs. The [President's Community Advisory Council \(PCAC\)](#), is a dedicated group of community members from various sectors who meet regularly to receive college updates, provide input on institutional priorities, and leverage community connections.

There is also deliberate alignment with local business, corporate workforce initiatives and Career and Technical Education needs. The college strategic plan reinforces this commitment with a direction dedicated to Community Partnerships and Workforce Development. Within this strategic direction there are three institutional priorities that guide the work of SMCC. This work has created a variety of unique partnerships that meets the communities' needs. In 2018, SMCC partnered with [Galvanize, Inc.](#), a Denver-based data science and engineering school on a Web Development Immersive program, which allows students to quickly earn both academic credits but also marketable skills for quick entry into the workforce. Many academic programs, including IT and Engineering, also have advisory boards which bring in area business people to provide insight and feedback into current trends and needs from the job market. The college is also scheduled to implement [three new stackable credentials](#) for the construction industry.

The college is also deeply involved with numerous initiatives throughout the academic year, which generate wide-reaching community collaborations. Each month employees are encouraged to volunteer with the [St. Mary's Food Bank](#) who hosts an event on campus that provides food boxes to the community. In addition, employees and students have the opportunity to volunteer with [St. Vincent De Paul](#) to prepare food for homeless individuals in the community. The college is also a key supporter of the [United Way Campaign](#). In 2018, SMCC was recognized as the college with the largest increase in participants when compared to the other colleges within MCCC. In addition, the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services also hosts an annual event on campus which [celebrates annual Fiesta of Independence with a naturalization ceremony](#) for the community. Another example of the institution's commitment to engaging with external constituencies is through [Project Connect](#). This one-day event hosts more than 30 human service providers on campus to provide resources such as food, clothing, identification documents, vital records, haircuts, housing information and wellness checks.

South Mountain Community College also conducts visits to area high schools to hear from students and school leadership on what SMCC can do to serve families and communities. The college also has a dedicated facility on campus which houses the [Arizona Agribusiness & Equine Center \(AAEC\) Charter High School](#). This partnership provides educational learning for high school juniors and seniors on the SMCC campus and creates opportunities to seamless transfer to the college upon graduation. Finally, SMCC has [two off-site locations](#) in the town of Guadalupe and the city of Laveen. In support of the mission, these two sites offer courses that reflect the immediate needs of those communities. The sites are embedded within the community and serve as a visual reminder of the SMCC presence and the support the college seeks to provide as a premier learning choice.

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1.S - Criterion 1 - Summary

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

Summary

Summary

The vision, mission, and values of South Mountain Community College are collectively understood and guide long-term and daily operations. These documents drive the creation and maintenance of exemplary programs and services designed to meet the needs of the college's diverse constituencies. These guiding documents align with those of MCCC and are approved by the Governing Board.

The programs and services of SMCC reflect the university transfer, workforce preparation, developmental education, ESL, student success, community and global engagement mission goals. The comprehensive offerings of university transfer degrees, partnerships, workforce certificates and degrees, support services, and co-curricular activities demonstrate the college's embodiment of the mission, vision and values.

The college's vision, mission, and values statements are clearly and publicly documented in official publications, but are also prominently displayed in public places, such as classrooms, offices and online. Most of all, they are demonstrated as part of the college culture through employee and student actions. South Mountain Community College programs and services reflect an understanding of its responsibility to human diversity and public good. Academic, service, and co-curricular programs as well as employee professional development opportunities include activities that develop an understanding of diversity and provide service to the local community.

Sources

There are no sources.

2 - Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

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

2.A - Core Component 2.A

The institution operates with integrity in its financial, academic, personnel, and auxiliary functions; it establishes and follows policies and processes for fair and ethical behavior on the part of its governing board, administration, faculty, and staff.

Argument

2.A

South Mountain Community College operates with financial, academic, and personnel integrity in all the primary and auxiliary operations. In addition, SMCC complies with all federal, state and local requirements that govern higher education institutions. The current policies, processes and practices clearly demonstrate that all actions by SMCC are embedded in integrity. The [Administrative Regulations](#), [Governing Board Policies](#) and [Personnel Policy Manuals](#) serve as the primary sources of governance and ensure integrity in college functions as well as ethical behavior by employees. Procedures for review and revision are defined and managed by the [Office of Public Stewardship](#). All policies are made available via the district and college websites.

Financial Integrity

The Maricopa County Community College District (MCCCD) is responsible for creating the fiscal policies for all ten colleges including SMCC. Operating with fiscal integrity is paramount to SMCC and is evidenced by being designated for excellence in financial reporting by the [Government Finance Officers Association](#) for the past 26 years. Financial governance includes regulatory processes for sales, services, official functions, acquisition of goods, property handling, cash handling, travel, gifts, grants, capital and auxiliary funds. These areas of financial governance are included in [Administrative Regulations Section 1](#).

The Vice President of Organizational Effectiveness and Technology is responsible for ensuring financial integrity at SMCC. In partnership with MCCCD, SMCC ensures accurate [financial accounting](#) by monitoring operational spending to ensure ethical and fiscal responsibility for the organization. Establishing and maintaining internal controls is also a key component of the commitment to financial integrity. The college has established comprehensive checks and balances which include an [organizational structure](#) that separates fiscal roles and responsibilities. Additionally, SMCC adheres to clearly defined cash-handling processes which maintain financial integrity for all monetary related transactions of SMCC. The college also has comprehensive business credit card ([ProCard](#)) [policies](#) which govern employee spending and supervisor approvals for spending college financial resources. Not only is SMCC committed to following policies that promote financial integrity, but the organization has adopted [comprehensive training](#) to ensure that all employees understand and comply with the regulations designed to safeguard the financial integrity

of the organization.

Additional evidence of the commitment to financial integrity is demonstrated through the business operations related to students. As directed by the [Higher Education Act](#) and other regulations, SMCC acts with financial integrity with regard to the [distribution of financial aid](#). The college ensures that all eligibility documentation have been collected and thoroughly reviewed while following a rigorous [verification process](#). In addition, SMCC has established internal controls which require confirmation of course enrollment prior to financial aid disbursement. Student performance is also continuously monitored to ensure that students receiving financial aid maintain grade point averages, attendance standards and other measures of academic success.

Recognizing that financial integrity of the organization extends to students, SMCC is also dedicated to promoting student awareness of their financial responsibilities, particularly with regard to financial loans. Toward that end, SMCC has developed [strategic efforts](#) after two years of high default rates on student loans that have significantly reduced the SMCC default rate. In cohort year 2016, the draft rate was 20.6%, which represented a decrease from the previous two-year period (33.3%). This was accomplished through [financial literacy workshops](#) for students, face to face [loan-entrance counseling](#) for all new students who choose to borrow, and by incorporating [financial literacy information in curricula](#) for College Success, Math, Reading and English courses. The college has been selected as a top 10 [Bellwether](#) finalist in the area of Governance and Finance for this work and will compete on February 3, 2020 for the top award.

Academic Integrity

South Mountain Community College complies with all academic integrity policies and practices established for the colleges by the Governing Board. The [Administrative Regulations Section 2](#) outline policies related to academic calendars, admissions requirements, scholastic standards, college environment, student rights and responsibilities, hazing prevention, and sign language interpreter. This section also provides regulations regarding students with disabilities, Veterans Services, and parking regulations.

The Vice President of Learning is responsible for ensuring academic integrity throughout SMCC. The college monitors all aspects of the academic operations and has well-established processes to support academic integrity such as the reporting of enrollment irregularities ([Administrative Regulations 3.7](#)). Examples might include residential or adjunct faculty members enrolling in courses they instruct; employees enrolling in multiple courses taught at the same time that are not open-entry/open-exit courses; enrollment in multiple courses taught that overlap in time and that are not open-entry/open-exit courses; employees enrolling in a course taught by a relative; or employees enrolling in a course for the sole purpose of making it “go” (i.e., not be canceled).”

As an institution dedicated to “providing quality higher education that creates learning environments to foster student development,” academic integrity is a fundamental framework of SMCC. [The Center for Curriculum and Transfer Articulation](#) ensures academic integrity in the development and revision of all curricula by creating clear program goals and ensuring that all students meet these goals. Academic integrity is operationalized at the college-level where faculty are the subject matter experts responsible for developing course content that engages students in dynamic learning experiences.

The [college catalog](#) is produced annually and also upholds the academic integrity of the institution. This document serves as an additional resource for employees, students and the community and

clearly publishes the policies and practices that reinforce the academic standards of the institution. The catalog contains graduation information and degree requirements and also includes detailed information on common policies, scholastic standards, and academic misconduct.

The MCCCDC [Student Code of Conduct](#) holds students to the highest academic and conduct standards. The student conduct process at SMCC is administered through the Vice President of Student Development, and where applicable, through a [student conduct board](#). This board is comprised of students, staff and faculty who are trained annually to address situations which may occur due to plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct. These policies are available online at the MCCCDC website, the SMCC website, the Course Catalog and Student Handbook. This helps to ensure that the student population is well-informed of their rights and responsibilities.

With academic integrity at the forefront of SMCC operations, SMCC has established processes in place for early alert in the areas of academics and conduct. South Mountain Community College utilizes [Symplicity](#) student conduct software which allows instructors and administrators to recognize students needing additional support. The Symplicity student code-of-conduct referral system provides college staff with a software-based solution to identify and effectively respond to students who need support in the classroom or on the college campus. A cross-functional team is responsible for interacting with students for the purpose of promoting student success and adhering to academic standards.

The college also works diligently to serve the best interests of students with regard to scheduling of courses, offering of programs, and utilization of course materials. In support of [Maricopa Millions](#), the academic divisions have been active in the development of Online Educational Resources (OER) which are designed to save students millions of dollars in textbook costs while maintaining the highest academic integrity standards. The college is undertaking the development of [Guided Pathways](#): course pathways designed to help students avoid taking courses that are not necessary to a degree or are not transferable. The academic integrity of the organization is further exemplified through the regulations governing [copyright practices](#). All employees of SMCC are educated on the acceptable use of academic materials. These regulations are located on the MCCCDC website, the SMCC website, and are posted in the public library.

Personnel Integrity

[Administrative Regulations 6.7](#), the [Staff Employee Manual](#) and the [Residential Faculty Policy \(RFP\) Appendix H](#) manual provided by the district address personnel integrity. In addition, [Administrative Regulations 6.4](#) outline SMCC and district responsibilities regarding background checks. Through these policies, SMCC ensures that employment practices follow state and federal law. These policies govern standard processes for discrimination, sexual harassment, resolution of grievances, and conflict management. All policies are designed to promote responsible and ethical best practices in the work environment. The Human Resources Office, which reports directly to the Office of the President, works in partnership with MCCCDC Human Resources to uphold integrity in all personnel matters.

SMCC observes [EEO regulations](#) in the hiring of all employees while following all MCCCDC standards to ensure a qualified pool of candidates for each position, a diverse body for each hiring committee, and a fair assessment of each potential candidate. All permanent positions follow standard hiring processes – such as the use of [interview scoring rubrics](#) – to ensure consistency and equity in the recruitment of new staff. For the hiring of adjunct faculty, division chairs utilize [rubrics](#) that fairly assess each candidate, and provide documentation of such assessment.

Beyond standard policies and regulations, SMCC has a robust system in place for [employee evaluation](#). The effective management of employee performance is essential in ensuring that all staff operate with the highest integrity standards guided by policies that uphold the organization while furthering the mission of the institution. The MCCCCD provides performance management tools that allow for the development of professional growth plans, corrective action, and regular documentation of work performance. Employee performance reviews also include sections of the MCCCCD Administrative Regulations to reinforce the required personnel integrity of the organization. The college also has a comprehensive [Faculty Evaluation Plan \(FEP\)](#) which is conducted twice a year in the first two years of probationary status; and once during subsequent years until faculty have surpassed five years of teaching. In addition, adjunct faculty are [evaluated](#) every semester for their first three semesters.

The [employee recognition program](#) includes college-level recognition by coworkers (e.g., Pillar, Summit Award), as well as participation in MCCCCD and national awards such as the Maricopa Community Colleges Innovation of the Year Award, the Aspen Award, and National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development (NISOD) Excellence Award. The college has a long-standing tradition of receiving various [recognition awards](#) for employees who exemplify the integrity that stands as a core value of SMCC.

Auxiliary Integrity

At SMCC, the bookstore, food services, printing services, and receiving are outsourced to [external vendors](#). These vendors are selected via a [standardized bid process](#) through the MCCCCD purchasing department, usually on rolling ten-year contracts. The operations of these contracted vendors are managed in partnership with College Business Services. Regular communications with the managers of these areas are conducted to discuss issues and improve services to the community.

Fair and Ethical Behavior

As a member of MCCCCD, the college adheres to the policies and regulations adopted for fair and ethical behavior on the part of its governing board, administration, faculty, and staff. In 2006, and as a result of the recommendations from a [Blue Ribbon Panel](#) appointed by the former Chancellor, the district developed new regulations designed to enhance internal controls and improve organizational efficiency. Currently, employees of SMCC are required to complete [acknowledgments and disclosures](#), which include regulations on travel, drug and alcohol abuse, security, privacy, driver training and public stewardship. In addition, employees who have access to and maintain student information must participate in annual training modules outlining the federal requirements of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Employees must also participate in comprehensive sexual harassment training to guarantee staff are acting in accordance with the highest ethical standards.

The [Shared Governance Model](#) provides further evidence of established processes that promote fair and ethical behavior by administration, faculty and staff. In pursuit of academic excellence and student success, the SMCC Shared Governance identifies and explores various opportunities to advance the mission. This model is comprised of four councils, Shared Governance, Learning, Student Development, and Organizational Effectiveness and Technology that are organized to ensure that administration, faculty, staff, and students are actively involved in the operational activities that support integrity such as planning, facilities, personnel and decision-making processes.

In the 2017-2018 fiscal year, South Mountain Community College, created and implemented a

[Facilities Reservation webpage](#), which contains information about the facilities scheduling processes for both internal and external users. The implementation of this enhanced process further underscores the ethical behavior that is paramount to SMCC. To further support integrity through facilities operations, SMCC adheres to the [established facilities rental rates and guidelines](#) established by the MCCCDC Facilities Services department. In addition, SMCC is included in the system distribution list where the 25Live system administrators have ongoing communications related to the 25Live online scheduling system, processes, rental rates, and system updates to ensure that SMCC maintains alignment with policies and regulations governing the ethical use of public resources.

In September 2018, HLC received a [complaint from the MCCCDC Faculty Association](#) that claimed the MCCCDC Governing Board acted without integrity and was out of compliance with Core Component 2.A. HLC summarized the claims in a [letter to the MCCCDC Chancellor](#) in October 2018. After reviewing the response to the complaint submitted by MCCCDC Chancellor, HLC determined that a special area focus would be included in the GateWay Community College Comprehensive Evaluation. The special area of focus would assess if the new structures put in place after the MCCCDC Governing Board eliminated the faculty meet and confer process comply with Core Component 2.A.

The Governing Board recognizes its obligation to train new members and to ensure existing members keep in mind principles of law and good governance by which they must abide. All members of the Governing Board received [training](#) in Arizona's Open Meeting and Public Records laws, principles of MCCCDC governance, Policy Governance, avoiding conflicts of interest, and the Board members Code of Conduct. In February 2018, [additional training](#) included Open Meeting and Public Records law, Ethics and Good Governance. In response to concerns resulting in a special area of focus, the Governing Board received training from [Dr. Barbara Gellman-Danley, HLC President on May 20, 2019](#). The training covered [The Legacy and Operations of an Effective Board](#). MCCCDC recognizes the importance of ongoing training for Governing Board members to ensure they fulfill their responsibilities with integrity, fairness and within the law.

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2.B - Core Component 2.B

The institution presents itself clearly and completely to its students and to the public with regard to its programs, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, control, and accreditation relationships.

Argument

2.B

The college utilizes several methods to communicate information to students and the public that ensure transparency and a continued awareness of the functions core to the institution. The variety in approaches to communicate information about SMCC is purposeful and strives to reach our students and the public through their preferred communication method. The [college website](#) serves as the most comprehensive and accessible mechanism to communicate information. Recognizing that online technology has become an integral part of the higher education experience, SMCC works diligently to maintain a web presence that is both effective and accurate. The college has recently migrated the website from Wordpress to Drupal to enhance the user experience. Currently, students and the public can access information about academic programs, occupational certificates, and admission requirements. The college website also includes a [personnel directory](#) that identifies all employees and the corresponding contact information. The directory also contains [bios](#) for executive leadership and faculty. A list of [current courses taught](#) by residential faculty is also provided for all internal and external stakeholders. This directory is accessible to students and the public and provides a means to communicate with all employees of SMCC.

The SMCC website also provides consistent and accurate information regarding program costs and fees. Information about student work opportunities and resources to pay for college is also included on the website. The [Net Price Calculator](#) is a tool designed to help students estimate costs to attend any of the MCCC colleges or Skill Centers annually. This broad estimate is based on the cost of attendance and the financial aid that would be provided to full-time, first-time degree and/or certificate seeking undergraduate students. Other federally required disclosures are displayed on the website, such as [campus security reports](#), and [student diversity, retention, graduation, and transfer rates reports](#). Detailed information on [how programs relate to the job market](#) is also provided via the website.

Print media serves as another means to present information clearly to students and the public. The [Annual Report](#) is a document produced each year which is shared with the internal and external community to highlight the major accomplishments of the institution. In addition, SMCC produces “[rack cards](#)” which are program specific marketing collateral used by faculty and staff to promote SMCC. The college also actively uses [local newspapers](#), [billboards](#) and other messaging avenues to present clear information about SMCC. For example, SMCC uses newspaper advertisements to highlight key registration dates, course offerings and campus events.

The college also uses social media channels, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube to communicate directly with students and the community. Recently the district unveiled its mobile app, called [MyInfo](#). This tool provides access to personalized information, including class schedules, books, grades, financial aid, and scholarships. This mobile-friendly application supplies the critical

information needed for continued success and engagement on campus.

As an open access institution, SMCC utilizes in-person contact as an additional means to present itself clearly to students and the public. Employees of SMCC conduct frequent [campus tours](#) which are designed to introduce prospective students to the campus and provide beneficial resources that inform their decision to attend SMCC. The college also hosts a variety of events that provide students with the opportunity to experience the SMCC campus and receive information about SMCC. An example of these types of events is the SMCC [Cougar Day](#) which invites graduating seniors from area high schools to attend an all-day event that inspires, motivates and promotes college exploration. Recognizing the important role of students, [Cougar Ambassadors](#) are student leaders who participate in a variety of in-person college activities. All employees and students undergo extensive training to ensure that the information presented is clear and consistent.

Effective communication plays a critical role in the college's ability to present itself clearly to students and the public. In 2014, SMCC created a [Communications Taskforce](#) which consisted of three sub-teams to assess the current state, investigate best practices and make recommendations for future processes. More specifically, the sub-teams focused on real time communications, print, electronic, and social media. A key recommendation from this taskforce was enhancements to the Welcome Center which now provides clear and consistent information to students and the public that is based on exceptional [customer service standards](#) adopted by SMCC. Another recommendation from the taskforce included the standardization of electronic and print media content such as [agendas](#), [email communication headers](#), [letterhead](#), [flyers](#), and [presentations](#). Internally, this provided consistency in many of the documents created by employees and established greater consistency in messaging to students and the public.

In the Fall of 2018, a new PR and Marketing Manager was hired to expand the role of college communications across a wide spectrum of internal and external audiences, and by early 2019 a team of three was in place in the department. The expertise and work of this team will be instrumental in further solidifying the institutional commitment to clear articulation. The college Planning, Research and Development (PRD) Department also supports the institution's efforts to present itself clearly to students and the public by providing [data](#) about college activities and student performance. This information includes student demographics, course performance, local high school information, and transfer data. This information is available to students and the public. Information about [accreditation](#) and status can be found on the website. This information is also included in other college documents such as the catalog and student handbook. The display of this information in a variety of formats is yet another example of SMCC efforts to present all relevant information to students and the public.

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2.C - Core Component 2.C

The governing board of the institution is sufficiently autonomous to make decisions in the best interest of the institution and to assure its integrity.

1. The governing board's deliberations reflect priorities to preserve and enhance the institution.
2. The governing board reviews and considers the reasonable and relevant interests of the institution's internal and external constituencies during its decision-making deliberations.
3. The governing board preserves its independence from undue influence on the part of donors, elected officials, ownership interests or other external parties when such influence would not be in the best interest of the institution.
4. The governing board delegates day-to-day management of the institution to the administration and expects the faculty to oversee academic matters.

Argument

2.C.1

The MCCC [Governing Board \(Board\)](#) consists of seven elected officials. Five members represent distinct geographical locations within Maricopa County and two members serve as at-large members, representing the entire county. The Board members each serve four-year staggered terms to ensure continuity in governance and operations for the MCCC. Although the composition of the Governing Board consists of seven individuals, the Governing Board only acts as a collective body in accordance with state law. "As a public body, the board makes decisions only by taking legal action which is defined as a collective decision, commitment, or promise made by a public body pursuant to the constitution, the public body's charter, bylaws or specified scope of appointment and the laws of this state ([ARS 38-431\[6\]](#))." The Governing Board acts autonomously, represents residents of the county, upholds the vision, mission and values of the Maricopa County Community College District, and facilitates positive outcomes for the entire organization.

Arizona Revised Statutes ([ARS 15-1444](#)) outline the general duties and powers of the Governing Board which provide the framework for autonomous decision making that enhances the MCCC and SMCC. Board policies are regularly reviewed and updated as needed. In March 2018, the policies were modified with an amendment to [4.12](#) to ensure that the Board "will consciously invest in its ability to govern competently and wisely." The broad scope of work includes oversight of budget, bond issuance and curricula. Evidence to support the Board's commitment to make decisions in the best interest of the institution include the recent reduction in tuition despite national trends of increasing tuition within higher education. This decision reinforces the values of SMCC which is to maintain affordable tuition for residents within Maricopa County. Additional evidence of decisions reflecting priorities to preserve and enhance the institution is demonstrated through the Governing Board's approval of substantial expenditures to improve student success and enhancements to college facilities. More specifically, the Board has approved nearly 26 million dollars to support the [Transformation Initiative](#).

Public [notice of meetings](#), [meeting agendas](#), and [meeting minutes](#) provide transparency of operations and evidence that the Governing Board's actions consistently reflect priorities to preserve and enhance the institution. As required by law, notice of all public meetings are posted on the MCCC

website and distributed via email to all employees. In 2018-2019 some constituents were dismayed by standing meeting times being changed from month to month; however, these moves were conducted in accordance with policy statute. Under the current 2019-2020 Board Chair, the meetings have returned to the regular schedule.

2.C.2.

The Governing Board is committed to making decisions that reflect the best interests of the MCCC and SMCC. As such, the Governing Board adheres to policies designed to ensure that all relevant interests are considered during decision-making processes. [Board policy \(4.2\)](#) encourages the diversity of viewpoints. This section also states that “the Board will keep well-informed about relevant global and local educational trends and other issues, by actively gathering information and attendance at appropriate workshops and conferences to fulfill its role.” In addition, [Board Policy \(4.7\)](#) states that the Board will devote time and energy to hearing from a spectrum of residents.”

This commitment is further exemplified in [Board Policy \(4.5\)](#) which encourages the public ([Citizens Interim](#)), students and employees to present to the Board. The protocol for constituents to address the Board is published on the District website and explained at each meeting prior to Citizen Interim. In accordance with [Arizona Open Meeting Law](#), Arizona Revised Statute 38-431.02, the Board does not propose, deliberate or act on general issues raised during this portion of the agenda. Instead, issues requiring action are placed on subsequent agendas to allow the necessary time to collect and review all pertinent information prior to making an informed decision.

After approximately two years of uncertainty related to internal constituencies, the 2019-2020 Board initiated the [Faculty Administration Collaboration Team \(FACT\)](#), reinstating the Faculty Association as the official representative body for residential faculty and acknowledging the Adjunct Faculty Association’s role in shared governance. The FACT is composed of three residential faculty members, three adjunct faculty members, and two college presidents tasked with reviewing current residential and adjunct faculty agreements and practices with the perspective of improving student success. The Board also contracted with [Collaborative Brain Trust Consultancy](#) to conduct employee feedback in support of reestablishing staff employee groups.

The Governing Board also approves the [District Strategic Plan](#) and establishes [key metrics](#) to benchmark college and district success. These metrics are reviewed annually by the Governing Board through the [Monitoring Report](#). The strategic plan and key metrics represent two critical internal resources that assist the Board with monitoring operations and outcomes to ensure that decisions are informed and benefit SMCC and the MCCC.

There are a variety of other processes that aim to ensure that the Governing Board is well informed on constituencies’ interests. Governing Board members attend community events to remain current on local demands. Members of the Board also periodically visit college campuses to better understand student needs and key college initiatives. In addition, the Governing Board members consult with various college and MCCC councils (Financial Aid and Capital Development) to better understand operational activities. Maintaining a connection with operational Councils is an additional way the Governing Board considers pertinent interests in order to make decisions. Finally, every Board member has a [biography](#) and contact information available on the Governing Board page of the MCCC website and constituents are encouraged to contact Board members to further promote the continued collection of information to aid the Governing Board in making well-informed decisions.

The college also provides the Governing Board with ongoing information regarding college

activities. Students and staff frequently provide presentations at Governing Board meetings. In addition, SMCC completes an annual report which highlights accomplishments and future directions for the upcoming year. The college must also work with the Governing Board to obtain support for certain facilities and resource considerations in support of the mission and student success.

2.C.3.

As elected officials, the Governing Board exercises independence from undue influence that is not in the best interest of the institution. [Board Policy \(4.1\)](#) identifies a governing value which is to “work collectively and responsibly” to benefit students and the community. The Governing Board Policy (4.2) provides additional evidence of how the Governing Board preserves independence from undue influence. Specifically, this section states, the Board will govern lawfully, in a manner that is nonpartisan with an emphasis on integrity and truthfulness in all its activities and practices. This section also states that the board will operate in all ways mindful of its civic trusteeship obligation to those who own the organization, the residents of Maricopa County. To further strengthen the importance of this aspect of Governing Board roles, the section also states that the Board will conduct itself in a manner that complies with all relevant laws and regulations.

Clear policy also exists outlining the balance between obtaining relevant information from stakeholders and preventing undue influence. The policy states that the Board may use the expertise of individual members to enhance the board's understanding of issues but will not substitute such expertise for the judgment of the Board. The expectations of the Governing Board are further clarified in [Board Policy \(4.2\)](#). This section speaks to the necessity of accountability and the importance of the stewardship to uphold the trust of the Maricopa County residents. This section also details the comprehensive processes in the event of policy violations. Similar to all MCCCCD employees, the Governing Board is also subject to all regulations related to the [Gifts, Gratuities, and Unrelated Compensation](#).

2.C.4.

Upon adoption of the [Maricopa Governance](#) in 1996, the Governing Board transferred certain policies to the Chancellor. These former Board policies are now called [Administrative Regulations](#) and cover issues related to Students, Instruction, Fiscal Management, Auxiliary Services, Non-Discrimination, and Board Resources. Administrative Regulations are used by the Chancellor in managing the day to day operations of the Maricopa County Community College District (MCCCCD). Administrative Regulations are amended, adopted or deleted as necessary and are subject to a formal approval process. The Governing Board delegates day-to-day management of the institution to the administration and expects faculty to oversee academic matters. Board Policy (4.2) establishes a “clear distinction between Board and Chancellor roles.”

The President serves on the [Chancellor’s Executive Council](#) which provides leadership for the operational activities of each college and the district office. The Chancellor of the MCCCCD delegates authority to President, Dr. Shari Olson, who is responsible for ensuring that all policies are appropriately followed and enforced. The SMCC president and administrators are responsible for oversight and day-to-day management of all college-related activities related to the success of students, staff, and faculty. This collaborative and collective work is evidenced through the various college councils, committees and task forces that champion the important work of the institution. This collaboration is also supported by regular community involvement in partnerships, councils, and development opportunities.

At SMCC, the delegation of day-to-day management is further operationalized by faculty who oversee academic matters. [The Faculty Association](#) and the [Faculty Senate](#) are instrumental in ensuring the oversight of academic matters. The Residential Faculty Policies also provide guidance for faculty representation on academic matters. In addition, the Instructional Councils provide continuous communication among faculty regarding courses and instructional programs. This process ensures that faculty play an integral role in academic matters through input in organizational matters and the curriculum process. The college Shared Governance model also requires that faculty serve as council members to ensure faculty representation and oversight in academic matters.

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2.D - Core Component 2.D

The institution is committed to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning.

Argument

2.D

South Mountain Community College believes that faculty and intellectual expression are the cornerstones of higher education. As such, academic freedom is an essential principle in the SMCC community among faculty, administration and students. Within the [Residential Faculty Policy \(RFP\) Manual, Section 3.1](#), faculty are entitled to instructional freedom and exercise this freedom when determining course subjects, discussions, and delivery platforms. More specifically, this section clearly illustrates that “faculty will determine curriculum and relevant subject matter for courses, recommend the appropriate pedagogy, textbooks, and other materials relevant to teaching their subject.” The college also recognizes that freedom of expression extends beyond the classroom. Faculty are encouraged to freedom of expression as citizens and public employees and this expression cannot be censored or subject to disciplinary actions. This freedom of expression includes all activities conducted by SMCC and the MCCCDC. Academic freedom is also evidenced by faculty involvement in independent research, publications, presentations, and sabbaticals.

To further support the importance of academic freedom within SMCC, all faculty adhere to additional regulations outlined in the Residential Faculty Policy ([Appendix H](#)) that have been adopted from the American Association of University Professors. These guidelines reinforce the instrumental role that faculty play in the pursuit of higher education and detail the accountability measures associated with this position within the organization. Students’ responsibilities regarding academic freedom are also made available to the students in the Student Planner, the website, and in the classroom.

The institution’s commitment to academic freedom is evidenced in additional policies within the administrative regulations. The section [Gifts, Gratuities and Unrelated Compensation](#) specifically states that the policy cannot be interpreted in a way that conflicts with academic freedom. [Policies governing sexual harassment](#) also contain language that these regulations are subject to constitutionally protected speech and the principles of academic freedom. Additional evidence is provided within the [Technology Resource Standards](#) section which “recognizes that the free exchange of opinions and ideas is essential to academic freedom, and the advancement of educational, research, service, operational, and management purposes, is furthered by making these resources accessible.” The tenants of academic freedom also extend to [social media](#).

South Mountain Community College encourages open dialogue and forums for faculty, staff, students, and community members. Some examples include: [Honors Forums](#), [Banned Books Celebrations](#), [Student Workshops](#), [President’s Community Advisory Council \(PCAC\)](#) and [Election-Related Events](#). These events are actively promoted and encourage staff, students and community participation to demonstrate the commitment to academic freedom.

The college also puts great effort and resources in promoting opportunities and events that encourage

free expression; such promotion includes flyers and posters for diversity events on campus, membership in various student clubs and celebration of cultures (LGBTQ, Black History, Hispanic Heritage, Native American, and Phi Theta Kappa). Freedom of expression is also strongly expressed by student leaders who serve on shared Governance Councils.

Sources

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2.E - Core Component 2.E

The institution's policies and procedures call for responsible acquisition, discovery and application of knowledge by its faculty, students and staff.

1. The institution provides effective oversight and support services to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice conducted by its faculty, staff, and students.
2. Students are offered guidance in the ethical use of information resources.
3. The institution has and enforces policies on academic honesty and integrity.

Argument

2.E.1

South Mountain Community College provides effective oversight and support services to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice conducted by its faculty, staff, and students. To ensure that this practice is upheld throughout the institution, SMCC adheres to the Administrative Regulations governing Institutional Review Board. [Section 3.8](#) states the value that the MCCC and SMCC places on research and grant projects as an institution of higher education. This section also provides information regarding the Institutional Review Board which follows administrative regulations to protect the organization while conducting research with human subject participants. The Institutional Review Board is [operationalized at SMCC](#) with dedicated staff and process to oversee the research activities occurring at SMCC.

The South Mountain Community Library – created in partnership with the City of Phoenix – is available for use by students, staff, faculty, and the community seven days a week. All stakeholders are informed of this accessibility through the [library website](#), new-student orientation, and course syllabi. The library has five librarians on site to assist students and faculty with information resources. Additionally, librarians partner with the Counseling Division to speak on research methods to first-year students in student success courses. Guidelines and procedures for the Computer Commons help students navigate technology and systems as they apply to research. For example, the Cisco Lab provides assistance with course work and lab equipment. All SMCC computers require a unique login to ensure that SMCC resources are being used only for work and research related to college business as part of the technology usage standards.

2.E.2

[Course syllabi](#) provide statements regarding academic misconduct and plagiarism as well as identify possible sanctioning opportunities for faculty. The courses – through Canvas, SMCC's Learning Management System – regularly utilize the [Turnitin](#) tool to identify possible instances of plagiarism. In other courses, [Respondus Lockdown](#) is used to protect against academic misconduct for in-person courses. The college also uses the [Respondus Lockdown + Monitoring](#) tool to protect against online academic misconduct.

The college [writing center](#) also provides support to SMCC students. This academic resource assists students with mastery of written assignments. A key component of this mastery is the ability to uphold academic integrity by avoiding plagiarism, fabrication and falsification. Students are also

provided with extensive resources to facilitate appropriate citation using MLA, APA and other required literary documentation.

2.E.3

The college catalog (Student Conduct Code), college website, New Student Orientation, and MCCCCD regulations all inform students of their rights and responsibilities. These documents and processes clarify disciplinary probation/suspension and disciplinary removal from class, due to academic misconduct such as plagiarizing, threatening actions or verbal threatening, violation of college regulations/policies, and use of college computers in violation of Technology Resource Standards. The above-cited documents and processes also guide students on the academic grievance process.

Sources

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- ACO_Turnitin_2019_2E2
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2.S - Criterion 2 - Summary

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

Summary

Summary

South Mountain Community College operates with integrity in financial, academic, personnel, and auxiliary functions; it establishes and follows fair and ethical policies and processes for its governing board, administration, faculty, and staff. SMCC is committed to academic, professional, and personal integrity and conduct, freedom of expression, and teaching and learning.

The Governing Board purpose and function aligns with SMCC. Board policy, processes, and decisions demonstrate accountability to its constituencies. Further, all processes and policies ensure stakeholders are considered in decision making.

Presenting complete and accurate information is crucial to SMCC; transparency is paramount in both print and online formats. Communication occurs through a variety of publicly available resources, and processes exist to ensure accurate information is presented to the community along with evidence of public stewardship, accountability and ethical and responsible conduct.

Sources

There are no sources.

3 - Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support

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

3.A - Core Component 3.A

The institution's degree programs are appropriate to higher education.

1. Courses and programs are current and require levels of performance by students appropriate to the degree or certificate awarded.
2. The institution articulates and differentiates learning goals for undergraduate, graduate, post-baccalaureate, post-graduate, and certificate programs.
3. The institution's program quality and learning goals are consistent across all modes of delivery and all locations (on the main campus, at additional locations, by distance delivery, as dual credit, through contractual or consortial arrangements, or any other modality).

Argument

3.A.1.

Over the course of a six-month period, internal and external stakeholders participated in a series of planning and steering sessions designed to provide both direction and focus to our academic enterprise. The result of this process was the creation of an [academic master plan](#) with three guiding principles: student-centered, faculty-focused, and community-conscious. This plan is one of the ways in which SMCC ensures that courses and programs are current and require appropriate levels of performance by students in alignment with the degrees and certificates awarded by the institution.

South Mountain Community College (SMCC) is an award-winning institution that provides an exceptional community college education. The [first institutional priority](#) of the college strategic plan is to "Provide courses, instructional styles, student experiences, and methods of assessment necessary for the holistic development of students." To that end, SMCC [awards](#) 18 different Associate in Arts degrees, 6 different Associates in Science degrees, 22 different Associate in Science degrees, 3 transfer pathways (Arizona General Education Curriculum or AGECE A, B, S), 3 academic certificates, and 53 occupational certificates of completion.

Student achievement is monitored to ensure that appropriate levels of performance exist for the degree or certificate awarded. More specifically, students engage in a variety of pedagogical modalities appropriate to the discipline designed to provide experiential learning and opportunities for discovery. For example, all programs require students to analyze and evaluate problems, works, or texts and to apply and synthesize their developing knowledge and skills through assignments, design projects, and other assessment measures. Students who have completed degrees and certificates at SMCC graduate with [various awards and recognitions](#) and are prepared for further education or immediate employment.

The Maricopa County Community College District (MCCCD) [Curriculum Procedures Handbook](#) is a

primary source of information regarding approved curriculum standards and processes. This handbook serves as the curriculum framework for all faculty and staff and ensures that all programs are current and adhere to the highest possible quality standards. The handbook provides specific information about the development of curriculum proposals, the processes that move the proposal through various approval stages, and other related procedures.

All courses and programs are developed and monitored to ensure content is current and reflects academic rigor and community needs. This process occurs through [Instructional Councils \(ICs\)](#) which are established in discipline-specific faculty groups that are responsible for creating and revising curriculum. The work of Instructional Councils fosters quality academic programs through a faculty-initiated process. As such, this work is instrumental to the diversity and relevancy of curriculum at SMCC and the entire MCCCDC. The commitment to ensuring the relevancy and quality of academic programs is also evidenced through [community advisory boards](#). These advisory boards also ensure that the courses and programs offered at SMCC are current and reflect the highest academic standards.

3.A.2.

The Associate Degrees awarded at SMCC require between 60-68 credit hours. The college currently offers an Associate in Arts (AA), Associate in Applied Science (AAS), Associate in Arts-Elementary Education (AAEE), Associate in Fine Arts (AAFA), Associate in Science (AS), Associate in General Studies (AGS), an Associate in Business, General Requirements (ABUS-GR), and an Associate in Business, Special Requirements (ABUS-SR). In 2018-2019, SMCC [awarded 542 degrees](#).

In addition, SMCC offers the [Arizona General Education Curriculum \(AGEC\)](#) requirements which ensures the seamless transfer to the in-state public universities. Students attending ASU also benefit from the [Maricopa-ASU Pathway Program \(MAPP\)](#) which guarantees admissions and in-state tuition for our students. Likewise, SMCC has a [partnership with Northern Arizona University \(NAU\)](#) whereby students can complete three of the four-year bachelor's degree requirements with SMCC and transfer to specific in-person or online degree programs. Students at SMCC can also receive certificates in Early Childhood Education and Applied Human Behavior through the NAU partnership. The college has a NAU site on campus to better facilitate the transition of SMCC students to the university. SMCC also has [articulation agreements](#) with more than 22 local institutions of higher education, and more than 60 from higher education institutions around the country, promoting transfer opportunities beyond the state of Arizona. In 2018-2019, SMCC [awarded 365 AGEC certifications](#).

Additionally, SMCC awards both Academic Certificates and Certificates of Completion. Credit requirements range from 6.5 credit hours for [Real Estate Pre-License](#) to 16-45 credit hours for [Mobile Apps Programming](#). The certificate offerings at SMCC are regularly enhanced and expanded to reflect the changing community demands. In 2018-2019, [SMCC awarded 109 certificates](#).

The requirements and descriptions of all programs are available to the public on the MCCCDC [Center for Curriculum & Transfer Articulation website](#), the [SMCC college website](#), and the [SMCC annual catalog](#). Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) are articulated by the MCCCDC and developed by the MCCCDC Instructional Councils which include representatives from all ten sister colleges. The [PLOs](#) establish consistency and quality in academic standards for the entire MCCCDC. This information also clearly communicates to the public the requirements and expectations for all courses and programs at SMCC.

3.A.3.

SMCC offers courses at [three separate campus locations](#): Main, Guadalupe, and Laveen. SMCC also offers dual credit courses at designated area high schools. Regardless of location or modality, all courses offered by SMCC share competencies, requirements, credit hours, and grading standards.

Campus Locations

The main campus of SMCC on 24th street in South Phoenix hosts most of the institution's on-ground courses. SMCC offers a selection of general education and certificate courses at the Guadalupe Center, located 4.2 miles from the main campus within the limits of the Pascua Yaqui Indian Reservation. SMCC also offers evening classes in the neighboring town of Laveen, which is approximately 8.7 miles from the main campus, in space rented at Betty Fairfax High School. Program consistency for all locations and modalities is evidenced by [standard course competencies](#). In addition, all faculty are hired utilizing the same criteria and must meet the qualifications such as education level and number of discipline-specific credits earned to teach which are verified through [background checks](#) and transcript analysis.

eLearning Offerings

SMCC offers a variety of [hybrid and online courses](#). The number of classes offered in alternative modalities has been increasing in response to community demands for dynamic learning environments. The college provided [550 eLearning offerings in the 2018 – 2019](#) year, including college level General Education requirements as well as specialized electives and occupational courses. Hybrid offerings at SMCC meet face-to-face a predetermined number of times, depending on the course competencies, and all eLearning offerings require that students use the [Canvas](#) Learning Management System or discipline specific tools such as [MathAS](#).

Recognizing the potential challenges of online and hybrid teaching, faculty who teach in these modalities must participate in additional training to ensure quality across all modes of delivery. The SMCC [Online Learning Module](#) is a mandatory training course that engages instructors in self-evaluations and assessment by a team of highly-trained eLearning faculty. All eLearning courses are assessed using the [SOAR \(SMCC Online Assessment Rubric\)](#) developed by the eLearning Committee, which includes representative administrators and faculty from every division. This ensures that eLearning offerings are optimized to meet the same academic and curricular standards as traditional face-to-face classes. All distance learning courses are guided by the comprehensive, [multi-year plan](#) which was developed in 2015 to provide a framework for best practices for online and hybrid courses.

Dual Credit

SMCC has been offering [Dual Enrollment](#), for more than fifteen years. These transferable college-level courses are offered at local high schools and taught by qualified high school instructors. Current [in-county tuition](#) is only \$85 per credit hour which is more affordable than public or private colleges and universities. Qualifying students may also receive tuition assistance based on financial need. Currently, there are 11 high schools in dual enrollment partnerships with SMCC offering 127 sections for dual credit. In the 2018-2019 academic year, there were [36 unique dual enrollment classes](#) from freshman composition to Child Development.

Sources

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3.B - Core Component 3.B

The institution demonstrates that the exercise of intellectual inquiry and the acquisition, application, and integration of broad learning and skills are integral to its educational programs.

1. The general education program is appropriate to the mission, educational offerings, and degree levels of the institution.
2. The institution articulates the purposes, content, and intended learning outcomes of its undergraduate general education requirements. The program of general education is grounded in a philosophy or framework developed by the institution or adopted from an established framework. It imparts broad knowledge and intellectual concepts to students and develops skills and attitudes that the institution believes every college-educated person should possess.
3. Every degree program offered by the institution engages students in collecting, analyzing, and communicating information; in mastering modes of inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments.
4. The education offered by the institution recognizes the human and cultural diversity of the world in which students live and work.
5. The faculty and students contribute to scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge to the extent appropriate to their programs and the institution's mission.

Argument

3.B.1.

General Education is represented in the [mission statement](#). The general-education program at MCCC – contained in the [Arizona General Education Certificate \(AGEC\)](#) – is fully aligned with the university general-studies requirements of the three public universities. Within the AGEC, course requirements are identified with [general studies designations](#). The general studies designations are aligned with ASU's model and are governed by the [ASU General Studies Council](#). These designations include Literacy and Critical Inquiry (L), Mathematical Studies (MA, CS), Humanities and Fine Arts (HU), Social and Behavioral Sciences (SB), Natural Sciences (SQ, SG), Cultural Diversity in the United States, Global Awareness (G), and Historical Awareness (H). The various course designations support the college philosophy and practice that general education must be inclusive of a diverse and liberal education.

The AGEC certificate consists of 35 to 37 credit hours that seamlessly transfer to any in-state public university. SMCC offers three different AGEC options for students planning to transfer: (1) AGEC A satisfies liberal arts degree requirements and a portion of the Associate of Arts degree; (2) AGEC B satisfies Business degree requirements and a portion of the Associates of Business degree offered at SMCC and (3) AGEC C satisfies Mathematics and Mathematics-based science degree requirements. A slight modification to the AGEC C is the AGEC S, which fulfills much of the Associates of Science degree. In addition, the college also offers an Associate of General Studies (AGS). Collectively, these credentials provide students with a variety of general educational options. All degree and certificate options and requirements are available via the [MCCC Center for Curriculum & Transfer Articulation \(CCTA\)](#).

3.B.2.

The purpose and content of general education are clearly communicated via the college website and catalog. In addition, students are strongly encouraged to work with college advisors to ensure that both purpose and content are clearly understood. Intended learning outcomes for general education are coordinated by the college [iTeachSmart](#). iTeachSMART is a campus initiative that was created to foster assessment of student learning outcomes at the course, program, and institutional levels. Faculty-driven and faculty-chaired, iTeachSMART helps academic divisions, departments, and faculty define and assess student learning outcomes (SLOs). The five institutional (general education) outcomes for the college are:

Critical and Creative Thinking: Students will be able to generate and evaluate knowledge, clarify concepts and ideas, seek possibilities, consider alternatives that are unique and effective, reflect, and solve problems. Students will:

- Examine possibilities carefully, fairly, and constructively.
- Focus thoughts and actions by organizing and analyzing possibilities, refine and develop the most promising possibilities, rank the options, and choose certain options.
- Search for meaningful new connections by generating many unusual, original, and varied possibilities, as well as details that expand or enrich possibilities.
- Synthesize diverse sources of information to design original work that shows evaluation of evidence and creative problem solving skills.

Information Literacy: Students will be able to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and effectively communicate the needed information in various formats. Students will:

- Assess information efficiently and effectively using a wide variety of sources.
- Evaluate information critically and competently (relevance, quality, authoritativeness, and credibility).
- Use information accurately and creatively for the issue at hand.
- Access and use information ethically and legally.

Oral and Written Communication: Students will be able to develop and deliver presentations, both in the written and oral format, using appropriate technology to engage and inform target audiences. Students will:

- Create presentations that are clear, well-organized, straightforward, and concise.
- Use appropriate vocabulary, grammar and tone of voice for the audience.
- Present oneself professionally in person using nonverbal signals such as eye contact, body language and appropriate dress.

Quantitative Literacy: Student will be able to reason and solve quantitative problems from a wide array of authentic contexts and everyday life situations. Students will:

- Understand and create arguments supported by quantitative evidence.
- Model a real-life situation mathematically and recognize the limits of that model.
- Communicate reasoning clearly in a variety of formats using words, mathematical equations, tables, and graphs as appropriate.
- Interpret mathematical models and draw inferences from them.

The “[SMCC Experience](#)” is focused on student life, success, engagement, well-being, and helping the

student identify and achieve their personal, educational, and career goals. While the SMCC Experience includes academics, its influence extends to every aspect of the institution – from the grounds and learning environment the student encounters when they first step foot on campus to the graduation ceremony.

3.B.3.

All SMCC course, certificate, and degree offerings align with our Mission, Vision, and Values, which provide the framework for our philosophy of “educating minds.” Quality and rigor standards are established by the AGECEC and maintained through ongoing assessment.

All degree programs at SMCC engage students in developing a variety of skill sets that fully prepare them for dynamic and changing environments. Not only is SMCC committed to providing this skill set to students, faculty utilize innovative teaching and learning experiences to accomplish this goal. The iTeachSmart team also assists with creating or obtaining [assessment instruments](#) to measure the students’ achievement of the outcomes, and then using the resulting data to develop and implement a plan for improving student success. The guiding team reports to the Vice President of Learning and invites active participation from all employee groups as well as student representatives. This initiative is explained in more detail in Criterion Four.

Pathways Quality Initiative

At SMCC, the [Pathways Quality Initiative](#) is an additional project focused on ensuring that students leave the campus more knowledgeable and prepared for employment or higher-level learning. The Pathways Quality Initiative has merged with the MCCCDC Guided Pathways Transformation Project. The Pathways Quality Initiative was the SMCC selected HLC QI project designed with three goals:

- Development of clear program pathways to completion for all programs at the college
- Development of strategic schedules
- Alignment of the instructional budget to schedule production

The project has evolved over three years. Alignment of the budget to schedule production has been completed, and work on pathways and strategic schedules continues. The latter projects are now continuing in coordination with the Maricopa District Transformation and Guided Pathways Project. Ultimately the Pathways Quality Initiative further demonstrates the college commitment to general education and seeks to improve the overall program by increasing completion rates, providing enhanced scheduling, and optimizing college resources. Recently, the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) accepted the college’s Quality Initiative Report Guiding Pathways and Strategic Scheduling and confirmed SMCC’s “genuine effort” on this project.

Guided Pathways

In 2017, MCCCDC began redesigning its programs to support student success. [Guided Pathways](#) is an evidence-based, comprehensive redesign informed by [Completion by Design](#), [Complete College America](#), [Community College Research Center](#), and the [American Association of Community Colleges \(AACC\)](#). Guided Pathways promotes early career exploration through Fields of Interest (FOI), self-fulfillment, carefully sequenced courses, predictable schedules, recognizable milestones, and ongoing integrated support services. The American Association of Community College (AACC) identifies four essential practices to support Guided Pathways:

1. Clarify the path
2. Helps students get on a path
3. Help students stay on the path
4. Ensure students are learning

To clarify the path, SMCC faculty along with MCCCDC have been collaborating in the [Pathway Mapping Process](#) that details the scope and sequence of course requirements for each degree path to a transfer path or career path. These teams are in the process of creating Program Maps for more than 200 degree programs that will unify the Maricopa District's degree offerings. To help students get on a path, SMCC has successfully [implemented changes in course placement](#) and [strategically embedded student supports](#) using [Multiple Measures](#). To help students stay on a path, the college is providing proactive advising and experiential, co-curricular learning experiences to help students engage in their chosen degree paths. To ensure learning, the college is engaging in a course-by-course; program-by-program, student learning outcome assessment activities through iTeach Smart. SMCC also uses nationally normed studies, including [Noel Levitz](#), [CCSSE](#), and [SENSE](#).

3.B.4.

As a Hispanic and minority serving institution, SMCC is one of the most demographically and culturally diverse institutions in the state. It reflects and celebrates this diversity by way of course offerings such as [PSY132 - Psychology and Culture](#), [HIS109 - Mexican-American History and Culture](#), and [ENH112 - Chicano Literature](#). Students seeking degrees and most certificates are required to take at least one course that satisfies the AGEC core requirement of Cultural Diversity in the United States and one course that satisfies either [Historical or Global Awareness](#).

Performances, showcases, and presentations are always designed to appeal to people with diverse backgrounds and perspectives. For example, [theatrical productions](#) aim to practice multicultural and gender-neutral casting, and plays are chosen to represent a cross-section of topics each semester, such as immigration, identity, sexual orientation, and veteran affairs. The music department produces a variety of annual music performances, ranging from [Handel's Messiah](#) to the open-air festival [Music Under the Stars](#), which appeal to diverse populations.

This commitment extends beyond the classroom and is reflected in student club organizations, community partnerships, and co-curricular activities. As such, students and staff [participate in diverse and cultural events](#) at SMCC, the nine sister colleges, and the District Office. The college is also an integral part of the diverse cultural landscape of the area. In 2018, College Choice ranked SMCC 11th among the [top 50 best community colleges](#) in the United States. Across the institution, human and cultural diversity are widely celebrated, and a diverse education is particularly accessible. The following programs provide additional support to the value that SMCC places on human and cultural diversity.

[Bilingual Nursing Fellowship Program \(BNFP\)](#): This program addresses the critical shortage of Registered Nurses in Arizona who can communicate with Spanish-speaking patients. Selection into the program is through a competitive process. Once accepted, fellows complete their General Education coursework toward the completion of an Associate in Applied Science degree in Nursing and then transfer to one of our sister colleges to complete their nursing coursework. The program offers each fellow extensive academic support and mentoring, and fellows must pass the HESI exam, which indicates their academic preparation, before beginning their nursing coursework.

Storytelling: Founded by SMCC faculty in 1994, the [Storytelling Institute](#) is a unique program

offering an academic curriculum in oral tradition college coursework, academic certificates in storytelling, and an annual calendar of innovative events for the community. With more than 45 Storytelling courses, including The Art of Storytelling and Multicultural Folktales, program participants gain a deep understanding of and extensive experience in applying the elements of effective storytelling. Great storytellers are great communicators and effective leaders. Recently the Storytelling program has been working with the charter high school on campus, the Arizona Agribusiness and Equine Center (AAEC), to incorporate storytelling into a student's repertoire as early as their freshman year of high school. Five full sections of HUM 292 The Art of Storytelling have been opened for this cohort, more than 100 students taking the class each year.

Achieving a College Education (ACE) Program: [ACE](#) is a nationally recognized program designed to support high school students' pathway to the university. Successful ACE students earn 24 college credits by the time they graduate high school. Program students also qualify for scholarships and achievement awards, take part in special events, and receive special recognition upon graduation.

American Indian Student Center: The American Indian Student Center is a multicultural program that encompasses a culturally-relevant approach to foster outreach and retention of American Indian students by establishing and coordinating programs/activities including: Outreach, Support Services, and Student-Centered Programs.

Honors Program: The [MCCCD Honors Program](#) was established in 1981 and provides opportunities for all recent high school graduates and continuing students who meet the eligibility criteria to engage in stimulating and challenging classes and intellectual activities throughout the semester. Honors Program students also qualify for scholarships and achievement awards, take part in special events, and receive special recognition upon graduation.

Hoop of Learning: The [Hoop of Learning](#) is a scholarship based, high school-to-college bridge program for American Indian students in high school. It gives students the opportunity to earn college credits while still attending high school. The Hoop program helps students navigate the college enrollment processes and provides them with support services to ensure academic success.

International Education: As part of the [Study Abroad program](#), each year students have an opportunity to participate in a summer study abroad program as part of the Maricopa District. In 2018, there were 8 programs travelling to 7 different countries. SMCC has a scholarship program to support students who are interested in this experience. In addition, SMCC is home to an active international student population and offers international student support services, including student recruitment through [Study USA](#), community involvement with [Promise Arizona](#), and support with visas and other paperwork requirements for maintaining eligibility to study in the US. The [International Friends Club](#) gives students opportunities to support each other and share their diverse cultures with the wider college community. In 2012- 2013, a group of exchange students and faculty from Beijing Teachers' College in Mainland China came to SMCC for a three-week long immersive academic exchange. During the summer, SMCC students and staff participate in the MCCCD Global Leadership Retreat, which brings together 100 students from all ten colleges to develop global leadership skills. The college also coordinates an [International Education Services Office](#) with the goal to: (1) promote global awareness among students, faculty and staff; (2) advise the college community about college issues related to various services needed by international students and visitors; and (3) assist in the development of study abroad opportunities for students and staff.

[TRiO STEP:](#) This program was established at SMCC in 2005 through a grant from the U.S.

Department of Education. STEP provides an academic support system for at-risk students who aspire to transfer to university. Each year, the program supports 160 students who are limited income, first-generation, and/or disabled by providing access to tutoring, one-on-one academic advising, workshops (career, transfer, and personal development), and other resources.

[Upward Bound](#): SMCC's Upward Bound Program was established in 2007 through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education's TRIO program for first-generation, low-income high school students. This program supports at-risk high school students' transition to college.

[Veterans Services](#): SMCC is a Veteran's Partner Organization and a 2018 Military Advanced Education and Transition Top College. The mission of Veterans Services at South Mountain Community College is to act as a liaison between veteran students and the Department of Veterans Affairs. The office serves as the primary contact in assisting veterans with completing the necessary paperwork to ensure proper VA educational entitlements, registration assistance, educational benefits information, academic advisement, and referrals to campus resources such as tutoring, personal and career counseling, disability services and financial aid. There is also a Veterans Club on campus, which supports veterans with lifestyle management to promote professional and civic achievement.

[Diversity Committee](#): The SMCC Diversity Committee supports student-focused diversity programming, such as Black History Month, Hispanic Heritage Month, the Lunar New Year, Native American Heritage Month, Women's History Month, and several other shorter observances for Pride Week. This group serves as a resource to "diversity across the curriculum" projects, works with librarians to develop diversity-related collections, and coordinates with the District Office to bring cultural heritage workshops and events, featured speakers, performances, cuisine, and mentoring opportunities to SMCC.

MCCCD Diversity Professional Development Opportunities: Through the Maricopa Center for Learning and Innovation (MCLI), the faculty, administrators, staff, and students of SMCC participate in districtwide educational programming that provides intellectually stimulating learning opportunities. Professional development experiences throughout the year include [global forums](#), [safe space training](#), [Mosaic](#), and [symposiums](#). These provide an interactive and dynamic opportunity for faculty, students, and community members to converse about issues relative to diversity and global perspectives.

3.B.5.

SMCC faculty and students participate in scholarship and creative work to discover and promote knowledge. Many of our faculty [engage in research](#), publish in scholarly journals, and [present at national and international conferences](#). Students have frequent opportunities to participate in internships, performing arts productions, and academic competitions. In addition, students from SMCC win competitive achievement awards during their participation in on-campus groups and clubs, such as [DECA Collegiate](#) and [PTK](#).

Performing Arts: The Performing Arts at SMCC provides students and faculty many opportunities to showcase the application and synthesis of skills as demonstrated during performances. Some of these opportunities have included [Music Under the Stars](#), [Return to the African Village](#), theater productions, and the [Elemental Cultural Arts Festival](#), held at the Phoenix Art Museum. The performing arts provide a rich variety of experiences that support the college mission and are led by exemplary faculty/staff committed to serving the community.

Community Entrepreneur Center: SMCC students have several opportunities to develop their entrepreneurial acumen with the aid of the Community Entrepreneur Center, which includes coursework, mentoring, and “The Big Pitch,” which allows students to compete for more than \$22,500 in outside sponsorships, and support the ASU Poder Program, a grant funded entrepreneurship program for MCCCCD students.

Student Showcases: Each year, SMCC students have a wide range of opportunities to contribute in the form of Honors, clubs, and artistic competitions. symposiums, and showcases, including Phi Theta Kappa; Hermanas STEM workshops; *The South Mountain Review*, a student publication; Artists of Promise Art Show; The MCCCCD Creative Writing Competition; DECA; and other club-based competitions.

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3.C - Core Component 3.C

The institution has the faculty and staff needed for effective, high-quality programs and student services.

1. The institution has sufficient numbers and continuity of faculty members to carry out both the classroom and the non-classroom roles of faculty, including oversight of the curriculum and expectations for student performance; establishment of academic credentials for instructional staff; involvement in assessment of student learning.
2. All instructors are appropriately qualified, including those in dual credit, contractual, and consortial programs.
3. Instructors are evaluated regularly in accordance with established institutional policies and procedures.
4. The institution has processes and resources for assuring that instructors are current in their disciplines and adept in their teaching roles; it supports their professional development.
5. Instructors are accessible for student inquiry.
6. Staff members providing student support services, such as tutoring, financial aid advising, academic advising, and co-curricular activities, are appropriately qualified, trained, and supported in their professional development.

Argument

3.C.1.

Teaching and Learning is one of the five directions included in the [college strategic plan](#). When developing the current strategic plan, the college was purposeful to include teaching and learning as a core areas of focus. SMCC employs 61 full-time residential faculty, 9 full-time service faculty, and 338 adjunct faculty members. The student to faculty ratio is 19:1 (IPEDS). The low student-to-faculty ratio allows SMCC faculty to provide students with personalized education and individual attention.

Oversight of curriculum and expectations for student performance are determined at the district level by the MCCC Instructional Councils for each discipline. However, representation on each of these councils requires participation from each college, thus ensuring that the mission of SMCC is fully included in the development of all curriculum. At the college level, faculty serve on the [Curriculum Committee](#), which is the starting point to develop, modify or eliminate programs before progressing to the District Instructional Council. The Curriculum Committee is currently focusing efforts on the Fields of Interests initiative and will reconvene in Fall 2020.

Residential faculty also serve as faculty coordinators, which ensure the effectiveness of programs, courses, and curriculum. Faculty coordinators also engage adjunct faculty and ensure that best practices are shared and adopted across programs. Additionally, each division chair at SMCC engages in oversight of faculty and faculty within each discipline are involved in the assessment of student learning using shared SLOs.

In addition, faculty also participate in critical work beyond the classroom. Faculty are widely represented in various college committees that are instrumental to daily operations such as [Shared Governance Council](#) and the [Institutional Review Board](#). The quality of SMCC faculty is also

evidenced by their participation in district-wide initiatives such as Guided Pathways. Faculty also serve as [club advisors](#) for student organizations, mentor students, and coordinate a variety of activities that support learning opportunities.

3.C.2.

Faculty qualifications are set by the MCCCCD Instructional Councils, taking into consideration the HLC and other accrediting body requirements. All [SMCC instructors must meet those qualifications which include both degree level and minimum graduate credit hours](#). As a result of new credential requirements, all faculty were assessed by the division chairs and the Vice President of Learning during the 2014-2015 Academic Year. Faculty who did not meet the new requirements were supported in the process of earning additional graduate credits to meet those standards. The credentials of all subsequent hires are carefully screened for requirements. Faculty are also required to complete *EDU250 Teaching and Learning in the Community College* or a course equivalent within the first two years of teaching.

3.C.3.

There are well established institutional and MCCCCD policies in place for evaluating both residential and adjunct faculty. Residential (full-time) faculty are probationary for their first five years. The Vice President for Teaching and Learning and the respective division chairs [evaluate probationary faculty](#) in the classroom each semester for the first three years, then annually for the final two years. Adjunct (part-time) faculty are at-will employees. The respective [division chairs evaluate adjunct faculty](#) in the classroom each semester for the first three semesters using the same criteria as is used to evaluate residential faculty. The evaluations focus on learning environment, delivery of content, and student feedback. Faculty review these evaluations with their chairs and then sign them. Signed evaluation forms are filed with Human Resources.

Probationary faculty must complete an [Individual Development Plan](#) for their first five years. The IDP includes normal job duties; accomplishments; professional growth; service; Vice President of Learning, chair, and student evaluations; peer mentor observations; and assessment. The IDPs are evaluated by the PAR/PARC committee using a detailed rubric, and then the committee makes recommendations for renewals. Following the fifth year, the probationary faculty member becomes appointive. Appointive faculty complete a self-study called a FEP every three years. FEPs are reviewed by the Vice President for Teaching and Learning.

Additionally, all SMCC faculty are invited to participate in [formative and summative assessments](#) of their teaching each semester through the iTeachSMART initiative. During the fifth week of instruction, faculty distribute surveys in class to assess the students' experiences and make modifications as needed. Faculty then report their findings to iTeachSMART. Similarly, at the end of the semester, faculty survey students and draft a summative assessment report indicating their plan to improve the courses each faculty member teaches.

3.C.4.

Professional development is a priority at SMCC and is listed among our Institutional Priorities: “1.2 Enhance teaching and learning through faculty and staff development” and 4.1 “Create orientation, training, and learning opportunities that advance accountability, innovation and inquiry.” Peer mentors and the faculty developer help faculty identify opportunities for professional development to advance both the institution and the individual. Conference attendance is encouraged through

funding provided by both the District Office and the SMCC President's Office.

The college also has a number of resources available to faculty to help in their professional development including:

- [South Mountain Community Library](#): The SMCL houses a professional development collection of more than 300 items covering topics from curriculum design to organizational leadership skills. All faculty members have access to scholarly subscription databases and library services including interlibrary loan and research support. Faculty can request library materials purchases.
- [Center for Teaching and Learning](#): Collaborating with the SMCL, the CTL provides professional development for both faculty and staff through assistance and training on a variety of tools and resources, including the LMS, Adobe Connect, and other programs. Faculty Developers organize workshops on a wide range of topics such as Cooperative Learning to Grant Writing.
- [Faculty Professional Growth](#): Residential Faculty are encouraged to engage in ongoing professional development to foster instructional excellence and expertise with a generous stipend per academic year to fund professional growth. Faculty must apply for FPG funds through their campus FPG representative, division chairs, the Vice President of Learning, and the College President. Additionally, faculty are encouraged to participate in a variety of growth programs including Maricopa Excellence in Teaching, Learning Grants, Maricopa Summer Institute, Maricopa Institute for Learning Research Fellowship and Maricopa Study Abroad.
- [Adjunct Faculty Professional Growth](#): Adjunct Faculty Professional Growth is administered by the Maricopa Center for Learning and Innovation. Adjunct faculty have access to professional growth stipends based upon the number of credits taught. Faculty apply for AFPG funds through their campus AFPG representative and the MCLi. In addition, outstanding adjunct faculty are nominated by division chairs to attend the Adjunct Faculty Academy, hosted by GateWay Community College, and attended by faculty district wide. The Adjunct Faculty Academy is a partnership between Phoenix College, South Mountain Community College, and GateWay Community College faculty and faculty developers. Expert faculty and instructional designers lead one of five training sessions:
 - Class organization strategies
 - Classroom management, active learning, and engagement
 - Assessment and evaluation
 - Technology and innovation
 - Micro-Teaches and Mini Lectures

Participants are awarded a stipend for their contributions to the five sessions and are also introduced to a variety of educational tools.

- [Sabbaticals](#): Funded through the District Office, a sabbatical leave is an opportunity for residential faculty members who have worked seven years or longer to broaden or deepen educational interests, to explore new areas, or examine instructional methods to enhance the mission of the college. A sabbatical leave gives faculty a respite from their normal duties to provide them an opportunity to grow professionally. The goal of a sabbatical leave project is to engage faculty in the areas of study, research, travel, work experience, or other creative

activity, and to contribute to the institution upon his/her return to the college.

3.C.5.

SMCC faculty are highly accessible for student engagement and inquiry as evidenced by the CCSSE reports over the past ten years, which indicate that SMCC consistently exceeds the National Benchmark in [student-faculty engagement](#).

Residential faculty are responsible for holding a minimum of five scheduled academic support hours, and most are available to students for many more hours each week. Faculty post their schedules on syllabi, online, and at their doors so that the information is publicly accessible. Adjunct faculty are not required to hold office hours; however, most of them do. Many divisions and buildings have space dedicated to adjunct faculty so they can provide students with one-on-one support. Additionally, adjunct faculty provide students with contact information and assist students directly before and after their scheduled classes. In addition to face-to-face interaction, students can access faculty virtually through phone, email, Learning Management Systems (LMS), and tools such as Adobe Connect.

3.C.6.

All SMCC staff members are qualified within their positions and participate in [ongoing professional development](#) through annual staff retreats, workshops, and attendance at local and national conferences. Staff members must adhere to position-specific qualifications outlined by the MCCCCD hiring guidelines. In addition, many positions require [skills testing and/or work samples](#) to demonstrate qualifications.

As part of the Maricopa County Community College District, SMCC staff are provided a variety of [professional development opportunities](#) at the college and district level. The leadership of SMCC is committed to maintaining a diverse and qualified staff, and the college [invests in staff by paying for professional development](#) in areas that support leadership, college initiatives, and job performance. In addition, staff may apply for professional development financial resources to further education or attend job-relevant training opportunities. Currently, staff may apply for \$4,000 each fiscal year.

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3.D - Core Component 3.D

The institution provides support for student learning and effective teaching.

1. The institution provides student support services suited to the needs of its student populations.
2. The institution provides for learning support and preparatory instruction to address the academic needs of its students. It has a process for directing entering students to courses and programs for which the students are adequately prepared.
3. The institution provides academic advising suited to its programs and the needs of its students.
4. The institution provides to students and instructors the infrastructure and resources necessary to support effective teaching and learning (technological infrastructure, scientific laboratories, libraries, performance spaces, clinical practice sites, museum collections, as appropriate to the institution's offerings).
5. The institution provides to students guidance in the effective use of research and information resources.

Argument

3.D.1.

The [New Student Orientation \(NSO\)](#) proves support for learning by ensuring that new students are prepared to successfully navigate higher education. NSO is designed to provide students with the information, resources, and tools necessary to make a successful transition to college. This includes recognizing departments and services that can assist students in achieving success, identifying best practices for success in the classroom, explaining the importance of setting and monitoring educational, personal, and career goals, articulating how to establish connections with other students, faculty, and staff at the college, recognizing financial literacy as an important component of current and future success, and identifying technology applications and resources essential to your experience as a student.

A key building block for students at SMCC is the [College Success Course \(CPD150\)](#). This is a three-credit course taught by Counseling faculty. The course focuses on student success, personal growth, skill development, educational excellence, and career development. Recognizing the important role that these factors play in the support to students, a cross-divisional team has developed a highly coordinated student experience integrated into all CPD150 student success courses. The [My360 student experience](#) begins with all CPD150 students taking their My360 assessments (StrengthsFinder™, a career interest inventory, and the Myers Briggs Type Indicator) within the first two weeks of class. Once the assessments are complete, students meet with a Counselor to review their results and identify career areas of interest to explore. In addition to the assigned counseling session for career exploration, all CPD150 students have a required advising assignment to co-create an educational plan to completion with an Academic Advisor. Finally, students select a [volunteer faculty/staff Success Coach](#) and meet at least three times to go over student directed goal setting, Strengths development, and future planning.

South Mountain Community College is committed to ensuring that all students are provided with equal access to learning. The [Disability Resources and Services \(DRS\)](#) Office is an important part of this effort. The mission of our DRS Office is to provide qualified, self-identifying students with

disabilities equal access to a quality post-secondary educational experience by administering reasonable accommodations as needed; foster and establish linkages, disability awareness, and collaboration between students, faculty/staff, and other college and community resources/services; and develop potential campus and community resources that will provide opportunities to strengthen student academic and vocational success.

Student support is a key element of the student experience and is also reflected through academic support. [Tutoring](#) at South Mountain consists of 26 staff members and is offered Monday through Friday around campus in varying subjects and disciplines to better meet the academic needs of our student population. Tutoring is a drop-in service to offer greater flexibility for those seeking support while also maximizing tutor availability. Multiple subjects (math, chemistry, biology, accountancy, English, reading etc.) at our college are accommodated in the tutoring centers with a concerted effort in supporting our developmental courses in math and English. Using research on best practices for assisting learning in higher education, tutors at SMCC are a mixture of peer (current students), near peer (students attending another college or local university), staff, and faculty. Each tutor is trained and certified through the [College Reading and Learning Association \(CRLA\)](#), which requires eight hours of initial instruction and guidance followed by ongoing coaching, and review in content area. Staff are encouraged to attend and present at the CRLA, National Tutoring Association, Association of Colleges for Tutoring & Learning Assistance, and Association for the Tutoring Profession conferences.

The college also provides a variety of specialized services to support the diverse and unique needs of students. These include:

- [MEChA](#): MEChA encourages Chicano/students (and all ethnicities) to continue and pursue their education through involvement in cultural and social issues affecting the Hispanic community and participation in social activities.
- [Male Empowerment Network \(M.E.N.\)](#): The Male Empowerment Network (MEN) is designed to improve the retention and degree completion rates of its male students of color, through mentoring and participation in social activities.
- [Women Rising](#): The Women Rising Program is designed to support female students with opportunities and connections to leadership, empowerment, and sisterhood.
- [Financial Literacy](#): SMCC supports students in their journey to learn money management. The college offers Financial Literacy support services to students, including FAFSA Workshops, Scholarship Workshops, and a four-week series of Financial Literacy Workshops taught by financial professionals to help students develop the tools to avoid incurring student loan debt and improve their financial futures.
- [SMCC Counseling Center](#): The SMCC Counseling Center offers free and confidential services to help students, faculty, and staff overcome problems, past or present, and gain self-understanding and direction. These services include individual and group counseling, educational programs, consultations, and referrals. Additionally, counseling faculty teach [CPD 150: Strategies for College Success](#), a course focused on increasing student success through college orientation and personal growth, study skills development, and educational and career planning. This course is mandatory for all new-to-college students.
- [Testing Services](#): The SMCC Testing Services offers placement testing and support for all

students. Placement test preparation services are available free of charge, including WritePlacer and Accuplacer practice exams, free “Boot Camps,” online access to EdReady resource materials through a paid subscription to NROC, and tutoring access.

- [St. Mary’s Food Bank Gabriel’s Pantry](#): To address the food insecurity many students experience, SMCC provides bimonthly free food distribution through a partnership with St. Mary’s Food Bank to all students and community members. Additionally, registered students have access to Gabriel’s Pantry. Supported by the donations of faculty and staff, Gabriel’s Pantry provides non-perishable food items to students free of charge. Recognizing the increasing role that food and housing insecurities play in learning, the college has recently established a taskforce to enhance the services provided to students to support the successful navigation of challenges hindering academic success and personal development.

3.D.2.

SMCC is committed to the success of all students, regardless of their income level or academic preparedness. To meet their needs, SMCC offers [Multiple Measures](#) for placement, and numerous developmental instructional offerings, embedded tutors, and other support services. All initiatives are coordinated through the Foundations Academy.

Recognized as a [Bellwether finalist](#) in 2015 and 2017, the SMCC Foundations Academy is a cross-campus group of faculty and student support staff who work together to improve developmental students’ academic success by innovating teaching, learning, and student support services. The group focuses on assessment, engagement, alternative formats for instruction, [OERs \(Open Educational Resources\)](#), academic support services, student development and Learning Environments.

3.D.3.

Currently, there are 7 full-time advisors. Academic advisors assist students with creating an educational plan that meets degree requirements, encourage students to maintain satisfactory academic progress (SAP), provide general college policy information and resources related to credit transferability to universities, and refer students to other resources on campus including financial aid, counseling, enrollment services, and tutoring. The advisors attend weekly team meetings and trainings. They participate in professional development opportunities, which include national conferences, such as the annual NACADA Conference, to remain current and deliver timely information to students, faculty, and staff. They are actively involved in campus task forces and committees to receive updates and gain knowledge beneficial to student success, retention, and completion. The college Director of Career and Educational Planning Services is a member of the Maricopa District Academic Advising Council (DAAC).

Specialized advising support is also available in other areas of campus including ACE, TRIO, athletics, the Fine Arts, Veterans Services, and the My Career (mCLCTL) Division. Faculty members are encouraged, but not required to offer advising support. There are faculty members in each division who offer advising in their content areas.

3.D.4.

SMCC has an extensive infrastructure to support effective teaching and learning as part of our Strategic Priority 5.3 “Create and sustain a technological environment that fosters exemplary learning experiences.” Student learning is supported by modern classrooms configured with

instructor workstation computers, document cameras, and overhead projectors. Classrooms are designed with the needs of the discipline in mind. Most classrooms are configured with student computers and other technology to facilitate dynamic learning.

Every building on campus provides WiFi internet access for staff and students through the use of 120 wireless access points. This wireless access throughout campus provides the necessary connectivity to support student owned devices or BYOD resources.

The campus operates various open computer labs to support student needs outside of the classroom environment. A Computer Commons is available six days a week with 91 Windows-based PC computers and six iMac systems. The South Mountain Community Library also provides 105 Windows-based PC computers, which are available seven days a week. Additional computers are available to students in the Learning Resource Center and the MyCareer lab.

Students studying computer programming learn in discipline specific state-of-the-art spaces, such as [The Multimedia Programming Lab](#), which hosts 16 PCs and 16 Mac computers organized into quads that link to four HDTVs to allow for student collaboration; and the Cisco lab, which has more than 80 pieces of routing, switching, and security equipment dedicated solely to student learning.

The Engineering program has a new, [state-of-the-art lab facility](#) supporting concepts that have been taught in class, as well as providing opportunities for students, faculty, and staff to design, fabricate, and test innovative projects in a supportive environment. Electrical and Mechanical concepts are supported in the lecture/lab space, which houses full electrical, electronic, and a growing inventory of mechanical test equipment. Design, fabrication and testing is done through access to equipment used for 3D printing design and scanning, laser cutting and etching, vinyl cutting, full electrical and electronics testing, composite material mixing, casting and molding, industrial sewing, programmable CNC milling including precision milling, and a full inventory of industrial grade hand and power tools. Students have the freedom to design, fabricate, and test practically anything they imagine creating for their personal interests and course applications.

SMCC is currently in the second year of a multi-year process to update all lab classrooms. At present, there are laboratory classroom spaces in the Physical Science building, Life Sciences building, and the North Campus Complex (NCC) building. The Physical Science building has several classrooms that have been recently updated. Over the next three years, additional lab classrooms will be built resulting in eight total: five biology, two chemistry, and one flexible space in the NCC building.

The [Performing Arts Center \(PAC\)](#) is divided into three major buildings that join to create an outdoor arts amphitheater. The facility houses the college's art, music, dance, and storytelling classes. The 43,000 square foot performance hall contains a 350-seat theater, 100-seat studio theater, 75-seat dance studio, scenery and costume shops, dressing room, make-up room, and green room, as well as faculty offices and multipurpose classrooms, and the landscaped amphitheatre is fully functional and able to accommodate outdoor gatherings, performances, and special events. This community landmark offers the community an opportunity to share the remarkable talents of our students and cultivate a love for the arts.

Similarly, the [South Mountain Community Library](#) is a beautiful community landmark, winning ten design awards between 2012 and 2013. The library is the result of a partnership between the Phoenix Public Library and the South Mountain Community College. Funded by a Citizens Bond 2006 and a MCCC Bond 2004, the library opened in 2011. It features a children's story room, teen space, patio space, group study rooms, and more than 100 public access computers. The joint library has a

collection of resources for both academic research and general interest.

3.D.5.

The South Mountain Community Library provides information literacy and library instruction appropriate to SMCC faculty research, student research, and community needs. Library instruction can be customized to include How to Use OneSearch (Discovery tool), How to Use Citation Management Tools, How to Use Databases, How to Find Digital Content (Images, videos, audio files, etc.), How to Find Library Items (Books, DVDs, Journals, etc.), Avoiding Plagiarism, Evaluating Sources & Search Strategies, Library Tours, and Specialized Instruction. For example, library staff discussed the art, production, and impact of children's picture books with the Children's Literature Class. The session was a precursor to a project where students select and evaluate picture books from the SMCC/City of Phoenix library collection. [Paws 4 a Study Break](#), with the Library's canine study buddies (therapy dogs), every semester right before Finals Week, to help students minimize stress; including healthy snacks and last-minute research and citation help.

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3.E - Core Component 3.E

The institution fulfills the claims it makes for an enriched educational environment.

1. Co-curricular programs are suited to the institution's mission and contribute to the educational experience of its students.
2. The institution demonstrates any claims it makes about contributions to its students' educational experience by virtue of aspects of its mission, such as research, community engagement, service learning, religious or spiritual purpose, and economic development.

Argument

3.E

SMCC faculty and staff are actively engaged in creating enriched educational environment in keeping with our Mission Statement: "South Mountain Community College provides quality higher education for our diverse community. We create a caring teaching and learning environment that fosters student development and supports productive citizenship in an increasingly global and technological society.

3.E.1.

The co-curricular activities, programs, and learning experiences that complement student learning are appropriate to the college's mission in terms of direct contributions toward student success. Strategic Priority 2: Student Success and Completion outlines five priorities to meet this goal. [The Sustainability Program](#) was founded in response to the Maricopa Priorities Program Review recommendations. The Sustainability Program addresses industry and student needs in the 21st century workforce, is interdisciplinary, and builds strong academic expertise along one of five significant pillars of sustainability. As students complete coursework toward the Sustainability Certificate, they develop critical thinking skills as they assess how to minimize unintended consequences and enhance mutually productive relationships between people and nature. The five pillars are organized into specialized tracks, including land use and human transformations of the Earth, competition for water and other natural resources from the Earth systems, political and economic treatment of the Earth, coupled human-environment interactions, and entrepreneurship for transforming ideas for sustainable products/services into viable businesses.

The athletic program at SMCC includes golf, baseball, softball, soccer, basketball, and volleyball. All athletic programs are governed by the National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA). Athletes at SMCC are provided with the opportunity to excel inside and outside of the classroom. The college has a history of strong athletic performance with multiple national [titles](#) and [rankings](#). Student athletes also demonstrate excellence in the classroom with exemplary [grade point averages](#). Recognizing the value of co-curricular activities, SMCC student athletes also participate in a variety of [community service](#) opportunities which further underscore the importance of learning through different experiences.

Twice a year, SMCC conducts a [student venture pitch](#). Students give a three-minute elevator-style pitch to a panel of judges and entrepreneurs. There are seven prize winners. The \$2,000 prize pool

for each semester is sponsored by our community partner, MariSol Federal Credit Union. Additional co-curricular activities are focused on retention and Field of Interest engagement, including Cougar Day, [I Will Graduate](#), [University Transfer Fair](#), [Engineering Day](#), [STEAM Events](#), and the [Sustainability Earth Week Symposium](#). In addition, many co-curricular activities are coordinated through the Student Life and Leadership Office where students are encouraged to maximize their college experience by enjoying activities outside the classroom. The Office of Student Life and Leadership supports programs that build community and develop leaders, such as Student Government.

3.E.2.

The college mission and strategic priorities affirm our commitment to students' educational experience and community engagement. Our accomplished faculty and students participate in scholarly research; for example, the National Science Foundation (NSF) selected a South Mountain Community College Engineering student to attend a summer Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU) at the Center for Sustainable Nanotechnology in New Haven, CT, to conduct research on how nano materials impact our agricultural systems.

SMCC fulfills its commitment to community engagement through ongoing community service projects including feeding the homeless at Andre House, partnerships with St. Mary's Food Bank, and the United Way Project Connect, Make a Difference Day, and MLK Day of Service.

SMCC has a strong economic impact on the regional economy through contributions to local job formation as well as increased earning opportunities for graduates. Students and the community experience significant social benefits as a result of the educational experiences provided by SMCC. SMCC offers a variety of services to area employers and is an excellent source for diversity recruitment.

Sources

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3.S - Criterion 3 - Summary

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

Summary

Summary

South Mountain Community College provides a high-quality postsecondary education. Our culture of continuous assessment and improvement is coupled with attention to community and student needs. Our general education programs focus on core competencies and we assure the quality of our programs and courses through internal self-study and adherence to MCCCDC policies and Articulation Agreements. Our occupational programs are designed in conjunction with industry input and expertise.

We provide students with appropriate, challenging courses to help prepare them personally and professionally for the futures they envision for themselves. We offer and require courses to help them develop 21st century skills, such as information literacy and critical thinking with appropriate technology infrastructure, scientific laboratories, libraries, and performing arts spaces. We support student learning through wrap-around services including tutoring, counseling, and need-based services.

Professional credentials for all faculty and staff are clearly articulated and integral to hiring. Faculty and Staff are engaged in ongoing professional development through a variety of modalities. Faculty and staff are evaluated with established institutional and district procedures. Faculty are involved in the development of curriculum and the assessment of student learning in the classroom and Classified Staff are engaged in the development and assessment of student experiences through the annual Strategic Planning Activities. We actively promote enriching learning experiences through International and Intercultural experiences, internship experiences, and community collaboration projects.

Sources

There are no sources.

4 - Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

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

4.A - Core Component 4.A

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs.

1. The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews.
2. The institution evaluates all the credit that it transcripts, including what it awards for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning, or relies on the evaluation of responsible third parties.
3. The institution has policies that assure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer.
4. The institution maintains and exercises authority over the prerequisites for courses, rigor of courses, expectations for student learning, access to learning resources, and faculty qualifications for all its programs, including dual credit programs. It assures that its dual credit courses or programs for high school students are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement to its higher education curriculum.
5. The institution maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes.
6. The institution evaluates the success of its graduates. The institution assures that the degree or certificate programs it represents as preparation for advanced study or employment accomplish these purposes. For all programs, the institution looks to indicators it deems appropriate to its mission, such as employment rates, admission rates to advanced degree programs, and participation rates in fellowships, internships, and special programs (e.g., Peace Corps and Americorps).

Argument

4.A.1.

The [SMCC Program Review model](#) reflects a commitment to continuous improvement, aligns with the college mission and supports the strategic goals of the organization. The current program review model has been in place since the 2016-2017 academic year and is inclusive of instructional/non-instructional programs and services. However, the current model is an adapted version of the MCCCDD Program Review ([Maricopa Priorities](#)) which included all programs and services throughout the district in 2013-2014. Currently, all programs and services at SMCC have completed [two program review cycles](#) since the last accreditation.

The revised program review process clearly identifies a cycle of evaluation for all college programs and services. Participation in a program review/self-assessment every three years allows an examination of instructional programs as well as our non-instructional programs and services in areas such as program demand, links to college, mission, history, internal & external demands,

quality of inputs and processes, quality of outcomes, stewardship of public resources, organizational analysis, and opportunity analysis.

The areas participating in program review for a designated cycle identify program review authors for each program or service. Authors use [program review templates](#), [program review rubrics](#), SMCC data and or other benchmark information to complete a review of their instructional, non-instructional programs and/or services. Authors collaborate with their respective division chair, departmental manager, dean, associate vice presidents and/or vice presidents for feedback. Revised program reviews are reviewed by the Vice President of Learning, the Vice President of Student Development, or the Vice President of Organizational Effectiveness and Technology before submitting the program reviews to their identified Program Review Board for evaluation and recommendations.

A [program review panel](#) for each program and/or service is established which may include vice presidents, Deans, faculty, staff, and external subject matter to assess the program reviews and make recommendations. As part of the continuous improvement process, all applicable recommendations are included in the [annual action planning process](#) to ensure alignment with the college strategic plan.

4.A.2.

The Maricopa District maintains and exercises authority over the colleges' approach to [Credit for Prior Learning \(CPL\)](#) via [Administrative Regulation 2.2.4](#). The Admissions and Records area at SMCC enacts those guidelines for all students wishing to have experiential learning activities assessed for possible inclusion in their transcripts. The guidelines and process are included in the catalogue. That said, students may not be awarded more than 30 credit hours for prior learning, which may be reached by a combination of Articulated Programs, Credit by Evaluation, College-level Equivalency Exams, military training, and International Baccalaureate diplomas or certificates. Depending on the type of credit the student is seeking, the relevant program director or academic chair is designated as the administrator and assessor. Assessments of equivalency and competency may take the form of exams, performance-based testing, or a portfolio of the student's work. In all cases, credit for prior learning is reviewed on a case-by-case basis to ensure that all credits granted by SMCC are of high value and standardized quality.

In 2018, South Mountain, working with district Workforce Development, forged a partnership with [Galvanize coding school](#) to accept its full stack web development graduates into our Business certificate and/or associate degree programs with an opportunity to earn up to twelve cross-walked credits through prior learning assessment.

4.A.3.

The Maricopa County Community College District (MCCCD) has [uniform policies](#) for all of the colleges governing the acceptance and use of transfer credits. Official transcripts may be required for admittance to some programs, of which it is the student's responsibility to ensure the college receives the necessary documentation. The District-wide regulation regarding transfer credit is part of the SMCC catalogue for all students to review and consider. Information is also available to students via the District-wide portal called [MyMaricopa](#) where all student information and self-service functions are housed.

Once received, the SMCC Admissions and Records staff, which is highly experienced and knowledgeable about both the District's regulations and transfer practices, evaluates the credits in

collaboration with department chairs, program directors, academic administrators, and Instructional Councils to ensure the process is comprehensive and thorough, especially as it relates to the various [articulation and transfer agreements](#) SMCC holds with in-state universities and dozens of other four-year institutions.

4.A.4.

Every college in the MCCCCD including SMCC follows an [established process for curriculum development, assessment, articulation, and review](#). While the way courses are taught is up to the individual authority of the instructor, the prerequisites and competencies for all courses have numerous layers of external and internal audits. First, courses are proposed by an individual faculty member or a team of faculty in a given discipline. There is a District Curriculum Committee made up of representatives from every college – both faculty and administrative. Upon proposing a new course, the faculty member presents the proposal first to the division chair and the [Curriculum Development Facilitator \(CDF\)](#) for review. The CDF requests to have the course and/or program added to the [Campus Curriculum Committee agenda](#) (meets the second Wednesday of each month) to discuss and obtain the committee's approval to move forward with the proposal. Once the faculty content lead provides a draft of the proposal, the Curriculum Technician enters the proposal into [Academic Curriculum Review and Evaluation System \(ACRES\)](#) New course proposals must also be reviewed and vetted by the relevant Instructional Council, which often reviews that prerequisites, if any, are appropriate, that competencies are suitable given the level of the course, that core content designations are accurate, and even that a need exists in the current climate for the course. After revisions and review among faculty and administrative experts, the proposal progresses to the Dean of Academic Affairs (known at SMCC as the Dean of Academic Innovation) and then to the Vice President of Academic Affairs (at SMCC, the Vice President of Learning) to determine the new course's position in the college's schedule and program. All of this is outlined in the [Curriculum Procedures Handbook](#), which explains the process, standards, and contains the forms and steps required by the District. The competencies and suggested outline for every course offered by SMCC can be found on the district's [CCTA website](#).

One of the ways SMCC ensures course rigor is universal and consistent is through the use of [common syllabi, common exams and assessment activities](#). This information is available to faculty via departmental and program sites in Canvas (SMCC's Learning Management System). There, instructors are also expected to find course Student Learning Outcomes and assessment activities that have been vetted by the college's Program Review and Assessment committee known as [iTeachSMART](#). Following its participation in the HLC Academy for Assessment of Student Learning, the iTeachSMART team used the exit roundtable opportunity to revamp and develop a [five-year plan](#) to not only achieve the intended twenty courses, but to lead the campus in writing Student Learning Outcomes for all our 400+ courses. Assessment and the development of learning outcomes was so important to SMCC this initiative was included in the [2012-2015 Strategic Plan](#) to ensure institution-wide focus and support. A plan was also established to recruit and train assessment champions in each division was created and as well as forms for gathering data in a three-phase approach:

- 1.) Identifying three course-level Student Learning Outcomes (cSLOs);
- 2.) Creating or adopting instruments to measure one of the three cSLOs each year;
- 3.) Improving the course and/or modifying the cSLO or assessment instrument as dictated by the results

From there, SMCC mapped the cSLOs to our iSLOs (institutional) and utilize the cSLOs in the program review process and eventually identified pSLOs (program-level). At the 2018 HLC annual conference, SMCC presented a [poster session](#) on our assessment activities following the Assessment Academy. An [app](#) was developed in house to provide cSLOs for each course and to map them to the institutional Student Learning Outcomes (iSLOs, aka gen ed outcomes). The app helps faculty easily locate the course learning outcomes for all their courses. Each course learning outcome is mapped to one or more institutional outcomes.

Grade norming workshops and regular review of textbooks and assessment activities are a standard part of the academic year at SMCC, with faculty coming together periodically to ensure that while teaching practices and daily activities may vary from course to course, all students are able to produce or achieve at a consistent level at the end of each course.

Some of the services SMCC provides to guarantee student learning include [online tutoring](#) in select courses, [face-to-face on-site tutoring](#) six days per week, an [on-campus Computer Commons lab](#) that is open extended hours, and Library resources that are available in person, via phone, and online. The [South Mountain Community Library](#) is unique in that it is a partnership between the college and the City of Phoenix, co-managed and staffed by both entities. The result is greater resources, extended operation hours, and diverse events that cater to all generations.

A [student success course](#), CPD150 is required of all first-year students who are new to college and have declared an intent to transfer to a four-year institution. Besides covering study skills, and campus resources, students take the [Gallup Strengths](#), and [Myers-Briggs](#), to better understand themselves and explore potential fit for career and program field of study. Students are also required to meet with an advisor and a counselor. Many of these students are also mentored by volunteer staff and faculty, who undergo training to serve as a [student success coach](#). Statistically, students who successfully completed the CPD150 course are more likely to [persist](#) to subsequent semesters.

Furthermore, all full-time faculty at SMCC are required to hold at least five hours of [office hours](#) each week in order to be available to students, and adjunct faculty, while not required to hold a set number of office hours, have several private office spaces across the main campus where they are encouraged to meet with students, conduct college business, and work privately to support the learning environment.

South Mountain offers various cohort learning opportunities in the course schedule. [The Foundations Academy](#) provides potential cohort opportunities for the college's developmental students. Organized cohort programs include [TRIO](#), [Male Empowerment Network \(M.E.N.\)](#), [Women Rising](#), [Achieving a College Education \(ACE\)](#), and [Hoop of Learning](#). Some occupational programs also offer cohort experiences.

Faculty Qualifications Resources that support student learning are maintained at the college level, both in terms of physical resources and support services. Support services include Advising, Academic and Career Counseling, Financial Aid, Counseling services, Library services, Testing and Placement services, and both in-person and online tutoring services. Physical resources such as up-to-date science and [Engineering labs](#), current technology in all classrooms, accessible classrooms, leisure spaces and study spaces are all overseen and maintained by the Organizational Effectiveness and Technology area of the college.

Faculty qualifications at SMCC and across the MCCCDC are aligned with the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) requirements for accredited institutions. In some programs and disciplines,

additional qualifications are required, such as licensures, continuing education credit, and secondary areas of expertise and qualifications. All of these [guidelines](#) are available for public and employee review on the SMCC website as well as the MCCCDC website. Faculty must complete an [e-learning training course](#) and self-assess their course design prior to teaching online or in a hybrid format. Likewise, any faculty providing instruction in our “Achieving a College Education” (ACE) program must first participate in the [ACE Faculty Academy training](#).

In addition, all high school faculty who teach courses that earn dual credit (usually referred to as Dual Enrollment by SMCC and the MCCCDC) are required to meet the same minimum and additional qualifications as SMCC faculty. Dual enrollment is addressed more fully in Criterion 3, but a quick summary reiterates that while taught by high school instructors in a high school setting, SMCC and the MCCCDC adhere to strict standards related to the course competencies, core content areas, expectations for rigor and production of student work. College officials from both the faculty and administrative areas conduct regular reviews of teaching materials and the classroom setting itself to ensure the quality of instruction is on par with typical collegiate teaching and learning. Courses which may be offered for Dual Enrollment are decided by the Instructional Councils.

4.A.5.

Specialized accreditation is not required for programs at SMCC. However, the institution monitors all programs to ensure compliance with all local, state and federal requirements.

4.A.6.

For all programs, the institution looks to indicators it deems appropriate to its mission, such as [employment rates](#) and [participation rates in fellowships, internships, and special programs](#) (e.g., Peace Corps and AmeriCorps).

As one of the colleges in the MCCCDC, SMCC tracks and assesses graduate indicators as set forth by the [Governing Board Outcomes and Metrics](#). The main categories therein include University Transfer and General Education, Workforce and Economic Development, Developmental Education, and Community Development and Civic and Global Engagement. The data provided by each college, including SMCC, to prove adherence to these outcomes include course completion rates, number of certificates and awards, licensure/certification rates, transfer data, student demographics, and college environmental scans distributed to both students and employees.

For the 2018-2019 academic year, faculty at SMCC are working on SLOs for the [Fields of Interest](#), which has been an ongoing effort on behalf of the faculty and continues currently. Faculty meet on a regular basis to vet the proposed student learning outcomes (SLOs) for each career division.

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4.B - Core Component 4.B

The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning.

1. The institution has clearly stated goals for student learning and effective processes for assessment of student learning and achievement of learning goals.
2. The institution assesses achievement of the learning outcomes that it claims for its curricular and co-curricular programs.
3. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.
4. The institution's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty and other instructional staff members.

Argument

4.B.1.

Course Outcome Assessment

Assessment is evidenced by a variety of activities. Faculty ensure that [syllabi clearly outline course competencies](#) and cSLOS. [Academic Program Review](#) examine cSLOs and pSOs. Faculty reiterate cSLO projects along with assessment activities and analysis of results to support continuous improvement. General education (Institutional) SLOs include Critical and Creative Thinking, Quantitative Analysis, Information Literacy, and Oral and Written Communication. Course student learning outcomes are mapped to iSLOs. Finally, the iTeachSMART team is working on [focusing on one iSLO each year](#) – promoting, conducting assessment activities and evaluating student achievement and faculty utilize both [formative and summative assessments](#).

Faculty have developed [course student learning outcomes](#) for each course using the iTeachSMART to track the competency. Faculty design an assessment activity for one or more of the SLO's and implement the activity to find the competency of each student based on the outcome. Based on the results of the assessment activity faculty may respond by improving the next assessment activity (revising of curriculum material or projects) in order to achieve better student understanding of the SLO. Faculty are asked to [curriculum map](#) the SLO to the institutional general Education Outcome in the iTeachSMART worksheet.

The program review is utilized to make improvements in each program. Programs at SMCC are a sequence of prescribed courses that lead to an officially recognized associate degree or certificate. An example of this would be our AAS degree in Biology. Upon successfully completing the courses (curriculum) and meeting other graduation requirements, a student will be awarded an associate's degree.

SMCC has made the deliberate choice to make academic assessment a faculty developed and faculty driven initiative. The goal is to create a positive, productive culture of assessment at the college that supports faculty teaching and student learning- to that end faculty engage in formative and summative assessment. During the 5th week of the semester a notice is sent out to all faculty to capture the data regarding student success. Faculty are asked to do a quick survey with students to

find out what is helping them to be successful and what changes if any would help them be more successful in the course. Faculty then review the responses and make any adjustments if necessary. Summative assessment is completed and a variety of ways, general education courses tend to utilize common summative assessment techniques such as a common question on the final exam. In English courses all students complete a writing final utilizing a common rubric to analyze students' performance. Student performance data is collected and analyzed for improvement. Other programs utilize a variety of summative assessment techniques such as final projects, final exams, portfolios or reflection piece which showcases students' cumulative experiences in a course.

Academic Program Review: SMCC continues to progress in the area of program review. Program review at SMCC is a sequence of prescribed courses that leads to an officially recognized associate degree or certificate. An example of this would be our AAS degree in Biology. Upon successfully completing the courses (curriculum) and meeting other graduation requirements, a student will be awarded an associate degree.

The program review is utilized to make improvements in each program. The program review is a cyclical process commencing in 2016, all programs began a three-year cycle of review. Program review reflects SMCC commitment to continuous improvement and the alignment of our instructional and non-instructional programs and services to our mission and strategic plan. More specifically, recommendations from program reviews are incorporated into the annual action (operational) planning process to ensure that activities are monitored, completed and provided the necessary resources.

A program review rubric was designed to review the elements of institutional measures such as alignment with college mission, demand for the programs, completion rates, quality outcomes, goals and objectives of program, program resources and plans for growth and improvement. Workforce trends were designed as an element of assessment for our occupational programs. The final component of the review is an action plan which helps guide the next three years of the program.

4.B.2.

Achievement of Curricular Programs: Each division provides a matrix of SLO by course in order for each class within the division to then develop and implement the assessment activity or common final project to analyze the results of the assessment activity and develop a response (revise curriculum, revise pedagogical approach, revise assessment activity or celebrate student success). The faculty work together with their respective RFP to develop the next assessment activity designed to improve student learning (may be a new activity or a revision of the previous activity).

The most recent evolution of the assessment cycle resulted in a shift to the examination of student's ability to apply what they learned about revision and peer review through development of a common revision assignment in the English classes. This became the [assessment tool for both ENG 101 and ENG102](#), addressing the cSLOs corresponding to students' ability to self-evaluate and revise their own work. Initial evaluation of this assessment tool last year suggested that it was a successful assignment, but the evaluation rubric might need revision and retesting.

Co-Curricular and Student Life: The goal of [Student Life & Leadership](#) is to motivate students to enhance their learning experiences through participation in leadership, service, recreational, wellness and cultural activities. SMCC builds connections between academic, co-curricular and extra-curricular programs to enhance student learning and development. Student Life and Leadership is committed to creating quality opportunities for learning; we continually evaluate and assess our

learning outcomes effectiveness at the end of each academic year.

At SMCC Student Life components are reflected in areas such as [Service Learning](#), [Honors](#), the [M.E.N. program](#), and [Women Rising](#). Student Life also hosts multiple internal & external outreach events and programs that are tailored to the individual populations as well as the total student groups such as:

- Women's History Month History,
- Make a Difference Day
- Lunar New Year
- MLK Day of Service,
- Blood Drives, Spring Fest, Earth Day
- African American History Month
- Native American History Month
- Hispanic History Month, LGBTQ Month
- Community Vendor Days

Collaborating with faculty, staff, and students in the planning, marketing, and financing of campus student engagement activities provides inclusiveness, lifelong learning opportunities, dialogue among students, cultural awareness and the free exchange of ideas

There has been a steady increase in workload for the past 3-5 years, in large part due to the growth of SMCC's efforts and initiatives to increase student engagement, persistence, and retention. The Student Life office has created and sponsored the following initiatives:

- Growth of student clubs and programs
- Gabriel Daily Student Food Pantry
- Andre House, St. Vincent de Paul & St. Mary's Mobile Pantry
- Central Arizona Shelter volunteer services Campus sustainability program
- Expanded game room
- Increase in campus clubs from 10 to 25
- Partnerships with campus clubs availability
- Marketing of program activities
- New Student Orientation
- Recruitment/partnerships

The external demands of the community we serve are as diverse as our students' population varied needs. In addition to the external demands of our surrounding community are the needs of other stakeholders which include government and state entities, employers, vendors, solicitors, elementary and high schools, alumni, visiting dignitaries from other colleges and universities (both within and outside the borders of the United States).

The South Phoenix Community, Tempe and Central Phoenix are identified as external users and key stakeholders of services provided by SMCC. Many families within the community are [economically vulnerable](#). As such, SMCC has partnered with St. Mary's for 15 plus years of service to the South Mountain, Tempe, Central Phoenix, and Laveen. This partnership has resulted in 22,490 community members served, 1,120 volunteers (staff, faculty and students), and 989,793 pounds of produce were distributed. SMCC has also established the [Village at South Mountain](#) to address food insecurities and other challenges that impede student success.

The goal of providing these initiatives supports South Mountain Community College's Mission for "fostering student development and support productive citizenship in an increasingly global and technological society." Through participation in these Student Life volunteer and service learning programs, SMCC students, staff and faculty have volunteered for the following activities:

- Andre House Homeless Shelter
- Make a Difference Day
- MLK Day of Service

4.B.3. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.

SMCC uses the information gained from our assessment practices to improve student learning in a variety of ways. All cSLO assessment work is developed and implemented to improve student learning. Upon completing the cSLO assessment activity, faculty are encouraged to:

- Reflect on how the assessment findings may inform pedagogical practice and/or curricular planning.
- Determine the effectiveness and limitations of the assessment process.
- Communicate the findings and associated implications with those who are involved with the course/program.
- Determine the impact of the results of the assessment.
- Report the results of the assessment and plans for action to the iTeachSMART team.
- Identify the next cSLO assessment project for this course/program (which could mean a repetition of the same assessment activity or a completely new assessment activity for the same or different cSLO).

An example of this process occurred in 2017-2018 when the developmental English faculty met to discuss the cSLO's results. The faculty discussed and evaluated class sets of end-of semester student papers for achievement of the first [SLO for ENG071, ENG081, and ENG091](#). As a result of the improvement in student work, faculty were able to begin evaluating student work for higher level skills, such as analysis. For the first time, a group of student papers was developed that had been assessed using this platform which produced multiple benefits regarding professional development. Ultimately it was recommended that we continue to review the competencies, student learning, and the assessment strategy with all current faculty. The team further recommended that the program schedule professional development workshops to help build resources around organization, particularly transitions, and critical thinking skills, particularly analysis, and continue to promote using the librarians for information literacy sessions in all classes.

The Math faculty uses [common final exams](#) in all developmental courses. SMCC also has common final exam questions that are linked to specific course learning outcomes for all other math courses for which more than one section is offered. These include assessment of the Course Competencies as well as the cSLO's. As Course Competencies have changed through the years, these final exams are updated. All instructors are required to administer the common final, but can grade it and use the grades in their final course grade calculations as they see fit. Each instructor provides data at the question level. For each question they report:

- the number of students who got the question correct (An answer key is provided.)
- the number of students who got the question incorrect
- the number of students who didn't try the question at all

Each summer an analysis of the data is conducted and a summary report is produced. Suggestions for changes in pedagogy, supplemental material, text books, and curriculum are made. The department then discusses the results and decides what changes to make, or what to keep doing. This has led to various changes such as:

- re-ordering of course content
- sharing of supplemental material with adjuncts to address text-book deficiencies
- rewriting of common final questions for greater clarity and focus
- recommending adding more time in schedules to address weak areas'
-

In some CIS courses, a common e-portfolio assessment analysis is conducted. In our Survey of Computer Information Systems course (CIS105) the results of comparing the e-portfolio assessments to final grades resulted in a discussion of future improvements. For example the CIS105 instructional team decided that vertical integration of the portfolio should be continued moving forward with the added benefit of comparing semesters with a goal to increasing percentages of student success. The team is planning to cover the other two cSLOs for the courses in common assessments as well as each application of the Office Suite taught in CIS105. The team believes their practice can be a model for courses in other disciplines.

Moving forward, the college plans to add more common assessments to cover the other two cSLOs. We would like to see it cover each part of the office suite application we teach. As part of the integration, it would be nice to receive faculty input on other features that would benefit students taught in our courses besides those in myCareer, for example, engineering, English, Psychology, etc

SMCC uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning. As evidenced not only by cSLO assessment activities and analysis but also includes Faculty classroom observations and student evaluations, PARc evaluations, division discussions with Development Math and English. These divisions work collaboratively to design a common final exam and evaluation of results to improve course. SMCC utilizes a [Multiple Measures](#) approach to have an impact in better placement of students.

4.B.4.

At SMCC we have made a deliberate choice to make academic assessment a faculty developed and faculty driven initiative. Our goal was to create a positive, productive culture of assessment at the College that supports faculty teaching and student learning. We want a process that values teaching and learning and starts where faculty and students live—in the classroom. Thus, our approach to assessment in this project relies heavily on faculty involvement and input.

Sources

- ACO_AssessmentENG101andENG102_2018_4B2
- ACO_HonorsProgram_2019_4B2
- ACO_MathCommonFinalExams_2017_4B3
- ACO_MultipleMeasures_2019_4B3
- ACO_SLOsDevelopmentalEnglishCourses_2016_4B3

- ORG_EconomicallyDisadvantaged_2019_4B2
- ORG_VillageatSouthMountain_2019_4B2
- SEA_MaleEmpowermentNetwork_2019_4B2
- SEA_ServiceLearning_2019_4B2
- SEA_StudentLifeandLeadership_2019_4B2
- SEA_WomenRising_2017_4B2
- SOC_AcademicProgramReview_2019_4B1
- SOC_CourseLearningOutcomes_2017_4B1
- SOC_CurriculumMap_2017_4B1
- SOC_FocusOneCSLOEachYear_2016_4B1
- SOC_FormativeAssessmentTool_2014_4B1
- SOC_SyllabiCourseCompetencies_2019_4B1

4.C - Core Component 4.C

The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational improvement through ongoing attention to retention, persistence, and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs.

1. The institution has defined goals for student retention, persistence, and completion that are ambitious but attainable and appropriate to its mission, student populations, and educational offerings.
2. The institution collects and analyzes information on student retention, persistence, and completion of its programs.
3. The institution uses information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs to make improvements as warranted by the data.
4. The institution's processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs reflect good practice. (Institutions are not required to use IPEDS definitions in their determination of persistence or completion rates. Institutions are encouraged to choose measures that are suitable to their student populations, but institutions are accountable for the validity of their measures.)

Argument

4.C.1

SMCC has established defined goals for [student retention](#), [persistence](#) and [completion rates](#) as evidenced by the creation of the [Shared Governance Model](#). The purpose of the model is to focus on advancing organizational strategies with alignment and priority established from the South Mountain Community College (SMCC) [Strategic Plan](#) and strategic initiatives in pursuit of improving the institution's key results. The Council assesses a variety of operations at the college while encouraging the advancement of innovative changes.

The Planning, Research and Development (PRD) department provides guidance to the college in defining goals for student success. Not only does the department help to define these goals but SMCC is committed to data literacy and ensuring that all employees understand the goals related to student retention, persistence, and completion. Although these goals are fundamental to the organization, SMCC has identified several metrics that serve as additional measures and markers of student and organizational success. The college also participates in the [National Community College Benchmark Project \(NCCBP\)](#), [Community College Survey of Student Engagement \(CCSSE\)](#), [Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory](#), [Survey of Entering Student Engagement \(SENSE\)](#) and most recently the [Voluntary Framework of Accountability \(VFA\)](#).

4.C.2.

The strongest evidence of collecting and analyzing information on student retention, persistence and completion are apparent in the Strategic Plan. The most recent plan was developed in 2016 and is scheduled to be revised in 2020. The plan was developed using the [Appreciative Inquiry model](#) and has been established based on input from faculty, staff, and community. The Strategic Directions and Priorities established by the institution in 2016 recognizes five areas: teaching and learning, student success and completion, community partnerships & workforce development, employee organizational

excellence and organizational effectiveness. These five areas demonstrate a commitment to student success at SMCC.

In addition, SMCC utilizes the MCCCDC Governing Board Metrics as an annual reporting mechanism for data metrics of student success. This data is provided each year via Tableau dashboards and allows the college to benchmark college progress and make comparisons to other MCCCDC colleges. This data is also shared each year with the Governing Board, MCCCDC leaders, and college stakeholders. A subset of these metrics are placed in conference rooms to remind employees of our current progress, purpose and commitment to students. The PRD department has also developed a comprehensive set of dashboards which allows employees to review data at all times as a key component of dialogue and decision-making across the college.

4.C.3.

All divisions and departments participate in action (operational) planning through the use of a [strategic planning online tool \(SPOL\)](#). All activities are linked to the strategic plan and integrated with the college budgeting process. In addition, all activities are developed and monitored with student success at the forefront. The institution uses information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs to make improvements as warranted by the data. This plan serves as the guiding framework for all activities on campus and is directly linked to the key performance measures identified by the Governing Board Metrics. Key data trends regarding student retention, persistence, and completion are available via [dashboards](#) and are posted in all [conference rooms](#) to aid in decision making at all levels of the institution. SMCC web reports on the data center nationally normed studies, including Noel Levitz, CCSSE, and SENSE. This data is utilized by faculty and staff to make improvements.

The [Strategic Enrollment Management \(SEM\)](#) plan was developed in 2015 and activities are updated each year by all divisions of the college. The three areas of priority that were established are the recruitment, enrollment and the instructional experience (courses and programs) for all students. The plan establishes a metric with the targeted goal for each activity. The institution collects and analyzes information on student retention, persistence, and completion of its programs in support of this plan.

[Program Review](#) is another tool that has been utilized by SMCC to track and improve programming based on data. Program Review is a cyclical process that reflects our commitment to continuous improvement and the alignment of our academic programs to our mission and goals. Participation in program review every three years allows us to examine our programs with a critical eye; review our methods for and results of assessment, including any improvements made as of those assessments; review trends in enrollment, completion, success and resources; and outline a plan for improvement or change that are suggested by the review. A key part of the program review process is the inclusion of data metrics related to student success,

[The Foundations Academy](#) which was implemented at success. The foundations academy brought together math, reading and English faculty and support services which focused on three key strategies; placement, innovative teaching and learning and integration of support services. Students persistence and completion trends for all developmental classes were tracked and each instructional team assessed materials and practices for continuous improvement. The practice of sharing data and becoming data informed with the developmental staff continues even after the ending of the academy.

In pursuit of academic excellence and student success, the SMCC Shared Governance process identifies, reviews, and explores ideas, initiatives, and opportunities to advance the college vision.

SMCC's Shared Governance is comprised of four councils, the Shared Governance Council, the Learning Council, the Student Development Council, and the Organizational Effectiveness and Technology Council. They are organized to ensure that Administration, Faculty, and Staff are actively involved in SMCC planning and decision-making processes. All councils utilize data to make informed decisions regarding proposals.

4.C.4.

The institution's processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs reflect good practice (institutions are not required to use IPEDS definitions in their determination of persistence or completion rates). Institutions are encouraged to choose measures that are suitable to their student populations, but institutions are accountable for the validity of their measures). SMCC practices for collecting data responsibility includes transparency, speaking in a language regarding data that everyone understands making data exchange mutual, safeguarding the data, and knowing relevant laws, regulations or administrative procedures the may affect data collection.

Sources

- INO_FoundationsAcademy_2018_4C3
- ORG_AppreciativeInquiry_2016_4C2
- ORG_CCSSE_2017_4C1
- ORG_ConferenceRoomVisuals_2018_4C3
- ORG_DataCenter_2019_4C3
- ORG_NoelLevitz_2019_4C1
- ORG_ProgramReview_2018_4C3
- ORG_SENSE_2017_4C1
- ORG_SharedGovernanceModel_2019_4C1
- PLN_SPOL_2019_4C3
- PLN_StrategicEnrollmentManagementPlan_2016_4C3
- PLN_StrategicPlan_2016_4C1
- SOC_CourseCompletionRates_2019_4C1
- SOC_NCCBP_2019_4C1
- SOC_Persistence_2019_4C1
- SOC_StudentRetention_2019_4C1
- SOC_VFA_2019_4C1

4.S - Criterion 4 - Summary

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

Summary

Summary

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments, and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement. Core to this practice and in support of the mission, the college has adopted and follows a rigors process for curriculum development and modification. This is further supported by a variety of aspects within the organization including the college strategic plan, enrollment management plan, shared governance model, and other institutional frameworks.

Within each of these areas, quality data is provided to support data-informed decision-making. The college utilizes a variety of data sources to support these efforts and reports this information via a multiple mediums to ensure that all information is applicable and relevant.

Students from SMCC benefit from quality programs and effective program review processes to ensure that this quality remains paramount to the college mission. Program review is continuous and included in the annual action plans to ensure that activities are constantly monitored and tracked. In addition, the college adheres to processes to ensure that all transfer credits are appropriately designated to benefit the student and uphold the integrity of the organization. Faculty credentials are also assessed to maintain quality teaching regardless of location or modality.

Sources

There are no sources.

5 - Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness

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

5.A - Core Component 5.A

The institution's resource base supports its current educational programs and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future.

1. The institution has the fiscal and human resources and physical and technological infrastructure sufficient to support its operations wherever and however programs are delivered.
2. The institution's resource allocation process ensures that its educational purposes are not adversely affected by elective resource allocations to other areas or disbursement of revenue to a superordinate entity.
3. The goals incorporated into mission statements or elaborations of mission statements are realistic in light of the institution's organization, resources, and opportunities.
4. The institution's staff in all areas are appropriately qualified and trained.
5. The institution has a well-developed process in place for budgeting and for monitoring expense.

Argument

5.A.1.

Fiscal Resources

South Mountain Community College (SMCC) is part of the Maricopa County Community College District (MCCCD). Budgets for the MCCCD are established by the Chancellor of the district in consultation with the Vice Chancellor of Business Services and the [Financial Advisory Committee](#). The budget is subsequently reviewed and adopted by the MCCCD Governing Board (the Board) each year. Through this process of budget development and approval, SMCC has the fiscal resources needed to support the operations of the college.

Historically, funding for SMCC included three key sources: (1) Maricopa County property taxes, (2) tuition and fees, and (3) funds provided by the State of Arizona. However, in 2015 all state aid was eliminated to the MCCCD. Additional measures impacting the SMCC budget include a decrease in tuition to \$85.00 per credit hour. Despite these budget changes, SMCC has maintained the essential operations core to the mission by applying a philosophy of public stewardship and cost containment to all expenditures.

Currently, the budget operates on a fiscal calendar beginning July 1st and ending June 30th. During fiscal year 2018-2019, the [total budget](#) was \$40,314,213. The most significant portion of the budget

(\$28,010,494) is allocated to the General Fund. Budget allocation at SMCC is influenced by a Full Time Student Equivalency (FTSE) model, whereby budget is allocated or deducted to the base budget based on annual student enrollment. The collective financial resources which also include auxiliary, restricted, and plant funds are evidence of the college's ability to support programs and services now and in the future.

The financial needs of the institution are also addressed with alternative financial resources such as [carry-forward funds](#), remaining General Obligation Bonds, and limited property tax increases enacted by the Governing Board (currently \$1.1558 rate per \$100.00 of assessed valuation). The college is committed to effectively managing these resources to maintain financial stability to support operations and ensure that the mission of SMCC is upheld. As a [federally designated Hispanic-serving institution](#) and a [minority-serving institution](#), several local, state, and federal grants also supplement the resource allocations to SMCC. These include [Title III](#), [Hoop of Learning \(HOOP\)](#), [Achieving a College Education \(ACE\)](#), [TRIO](#), [Upward Bound](#), [STEP](#), [PODER](#), [Proposition 301](#), and [Carl-Perkins](#). The college has developed a [formal grants process](#) to facilitate the completion of grant proposals. All grant proposals are developed by a designated grants coordinator in collaboration with faculty, staff and administration. Ultimately, grant proposals are reviewed by Executive Leadership, Shared Governance and the MCCCCD Grants Department prior to final submission.

The College also pursues opportunities for alternative revenue sources through the MCCCCD. For fiscal year 2019-20, the MCCCCD advanced a new budget development initiative. This new structure provided SMCC with the opportunity to apply for additional permanent and temporary resources. The categories of funding included financial resources to support SMCC's general operating funds; capital resources to off-set student course fees for capital equipment in the classroom; and grant funds from Proposition 301 which is an initiative to enhance workforce opportunities within the state of Arizona.

Human Resources

As of fiscal year 2018-19, SMCC had 57 exempt and 83 non-exempt employees. These employee groups are funded primarily by the General Fund. However, a small number of employees are funded by grants such as [TRIO/Upward Bound](#) and Proposition 301. The college also has 69 full-time residential faculty and 338 adjunct faculty. In 2015, the Maricopa County Community College District adopted a plan for the colleges to reach a 60:40 ratio of sections taught by residential faculty (full-time) vs. adjunct faculty (part-time) in order to enhance quality instruction and to better serve students. To facilitate appropriate distribution of faculty positions, the [Faculty Staffing Committee](#) reviews and prioritizes faculty position proposals from each division on an annual basis. Rankings and priorities are determined by examining factors such as semester course load (fall and spring), Full-Time Student Equivalent (FTSE), position rationale, and current staffing levels within the department. In addition, the MCCCCD evaluates the overall district needs by college and may appropriate new faculty lines to the colleges.

Physical Resources and Infrastructure

The college also allocates the necessary physical and infrastructure resources to maintain college operations. SMCC is located in the metropolitan area of South Phoenix and has [two extended campuses](#) in the neighboring town of Laveen (located on the campus of Betty Fairfax High School) and the Town of Guadalupe. There is also a public charter high school located on the main SMCC campus: [Arizona Agribusiness and Equine Center \(AAEC\)](#). AAEC participates in a concurrent enrollment program whereby students attend classes at SMCC for a portion of the day which results

in significant credits toward an Associate's Degree at the completion of high school.

Over the years, SMCC has achieved necessary infrastructure expansions and improvements despite inconsistent funding from the state government. There have also been a number of college facility improvements and expansions, such as an innovative community hub known as the [Community Entrepreneurship Center](#). These improvements provide evidence of the commitment to exemplary learning spaces. The college has also utilized remaining [2004 General Obligation Bonds](#) from the [Capital Development Project](#) to construct the Learning Resource Center, which houses the [Foundations Academy](#) and tutoring support services. Additional attention has been given to improvements crucial to establishing a well-functioning learning environment for students. For example, SMCC has remodeled the vacated IS Building to develop an [Engineering Lab](#). This alteration to physical infrastructures addressed an emerging need and demand for hands-on experience that would accommodate and support innovations such as 3-D printing and exposure to fabrication and computer numerical controlled (CNC) equipment needed for the competitive job market. Within one semester, this expansion significantly increased enrollment in the Engineering program. The Engineering Lab was made possible through a combination of General Obligation Bond funds and a [Base 11](#) grant.

Additional evidence of the commitment to ensuring physical facilities support operations include chiller plant improvements, cafeteria upgrades, and restroom remodeling throughout SMCC. The strategic allocation of financial resources from the 2004 bond has funded many projects that support college operations. Although the next bond will not likely be approved until 2024 or 2028, SMCC remains committed to the continued enhancement of the physical structures that support the mission.

In addition, the [South Mountain Community Library \(SMCL\)](#) is both a college and public library. It serves the surrounding South Mountain community while simultaneously providing quality college-level resources to SMCC students. This partnership has enabled collaboration between SMCC and the City of Phoenix to maintain the functional and physical needs of the library. The collaboration also delivers tremendous benefit by providing greater access, resources, and quality of service to both public and academic programs.

The college is also dedicated to sustainability. The [MCCCD energy initiative](#) which funded installation of a [solar grid on campus](#), and an [LED lighting project](#) for all parking lot lights on the main campus are examples of this dedication. The implementation of these sustainability measures have provided the campus with clean energy, created operational savings, and reduced maintenance costs. [Second Nature](#) (formerly the President's Climate Commitment) provides a national forum for universities and community colleges to learn, work toward, and develop sustainable practices and use sustainable resources. SMCC is a member of Second Nature and submits an annual report on the progress of sustainability efforts. The college also participates in the state's [travel reduction program](#) which polls all students and employees. Based on this data, strategies for improving the carbon footprint by reducing the reliance on individual vehicles are developed. The college is also enacting a change in waste collection by embracing a product known as the "[Trash Buddy](#)." The "Trash Buddy" is a recycling initiative which SMCC hopes will improve campus economic and environmental sustainability. A pilot project was enacted with dozens of faculty or staff members receiving a new recycling bin with an attached trash buddy.

The college also recognizes the need to assess facilities in an effort to maintain appropriate levels for operations. The Facilities Assessment, Analysis, and Benchmarking study began in 2017 and will evaluate outcomes over a three-year period. In the first year, the college participated in audits of the following areas:

- [Facilities Assessment and Benchmarking](#)– Assessed the facilities backlog for deferred maintenance, facilities deficiencies, mitigated risk of future failures, and coordinated repairs, modernization, and new spaces to optimize finite capital dollars. It also provided data to incorporate into the plan to protect the buildings and infrastructure, aligning building needs to financial capacity.
- [Sustainability](#) – Examined prospective opportunities to increase energy savings and reduce the campus carbon footprint.
- [Space Utilization](#) – Evaluated the utilization of teaching spaces and classroom condition assessment.

The results of these audits inform master planning for the institution and assists in the development of capital investment strategies to sustain the campus facilities. In addition, building systems and deferred maintenance requirements to protect SMCC’s physical assets will be further developed, in the effort to ultimately improve the overall state of facilities.

Technology Infrastructure

The extensive IT infrastructure of SMCC was designed to support learning and meet the needs, expectations, and requirements of students, faculty, and staff alike. These college resources are managed by the Technology Support Services (TSS) department, and guided by an annual [Strategic Action Planning](#), [Technology Obsolescence Plan](#) and [Technology Customer Service Satisfaction Survey](#). Historically, the college has allocated both General Obligation Bond funds and operational funding to maintain and upgrade existing technology hardware and software in accordance with the Technology Obsolescence Plan. In addition to these funds, from 2011 through 2017, a Title III grant enabled the college to provide additional technology resources, particularly for classrooms dedicated to developmental education instruction.

College operations, college archives, and college processes are supported via an [Inside South web portal](#). This is a secure, accessible employee-only intranet portal. Inside South provides a convenient solution for employees to have easy access to operational processes, resource links, and auxiliary support services to work effectively and efficiently. Other resources include the bookstore, calendars, work order systems and the campus directory.

Student learning is supported by approximately 74 classrooms, all configured with an instructor workstation computer, document camera and overhead projector. Within the classrooms there are approximately 1020 student computers. Password-protected Wi-Fi access is available campus-wide to staff and students. SMCC has also identified several public spaces on campus for access to public Wi-Fi: the SMCL (library), the cafeteria, the Student Union, and the Learning Resource Center open area. The wireless access throughout campus provides the necessary connectivity to support staff, student and community owned devices. The main campus bandwidth is built on dual/redundant service providers serving 600Mbps of internet connection speed. Each building is connected to a main data center via fiber channel on a complete Cisco architecture of layer 3 switches, routers and firewalls.

TSS also supports the academic, student and administrative needs of the institution. Examples include customized solutions such as a tutor, advisor, and counseling tracking system that support students. The programmers within the department have also developed a [portal](#) that supports the college Shared Governance processes and archives. The department also assists with specialized data

reporting tools (BOEXI, Tableau, and Power BI) reports which provide college information to assist in informed decision making at all levels of the institution.

Maintaining the instructional learning spaces and classroom technologies is also a key function, including maintaining two large computer labs on campus. Additionally, TSS supports the technology in the Engineering Lab, Community Entrepreneurial Center, Tutoring Center, Learning Resource Center, Music Business Lab, and the CISCO Networking Lab. To improve technology accessibility, TSS also supports laptop carts which can be delivered to any facility throughout the college.

Security is a primary focus, and IT professionals are dedicated to sustaining and protecting the infrastructure of servers, routers and data storage, as well as maintaining cyber security measures in alignment with MCCCCD Directives, guidelines and best practices. The college Technology Obsolescence Plan tracks units and year of replacement for all technology equipment and audio video/media in classrooms, conference rooms, public locations, offices, and the SMCL to ensure the units are replaced on an appropriate schedule. As part of this plan, the [Technology Utilization Proposal](#) has been implemented to annually review opportunities to maximize technology while considering limited resources.

The college also utilizes technology to enhance the safety of staff, students and the community. SMCC has incorporated surveillance cameras as a key method to monitor the campus and maintain safety. The cameras are installed internally and externally in strategic locations and are monitored by the College Police department. The college has also incorporated a multi-modal system for emergency notification across the campus. This allows multiple options to notify the college community in the event of an emergency. The equipment installed includes VOIP telephones, Emergency call boxes, and emergency call towers in the parking lots. In addition, the college utilizes [RAVE](#), which is a third-party notification system widely used by colleges and universities across the nation. Finally, the [Alertus](#) Emergency Management System, (funded by a district 2004 General Obligations Bond) rounds out the multi-modal system, by adding beacons in each building on campus.

5.A.2.

As a non-profit institution, the budget undergoes a participatory proposal process that encourages transparency and collaboration among numerous stakeholders. This process ensures the appropriate allocation of resources to educational purposes. Approximately 82% of the budget is allocated to human resources. SMCC develops the [General Operating Budget](#) utilizing an [integrated planning and budgeting process](#). This process aligns the college strategic plan, action plans (operational) and budget. The process is a product of participatory engagement of faculty, staff, and administrators who develop divisional or department strategies linked to the [strategic plan](#) that may have single or multiple budget requests. These strategies and budget requests are vetted by the respective Division Chairs, Departmental Managers and the college Leadership Team for prioritization and approval. The electronic system the college uses to advance the Integrated Planning and Budgeting process is [Strategic Planning Online \(SPOL\)](#), which captures strategies, activities, accomplishments and budget linked to the college strategic plan.

5.A.3.

The mission statement reflects the core of the institution where the focus is learning that will develop the skills needed to contribute to the increasingly global and technological world. By offering

programs that meet community needs for general education, transfer, occupational, continuing and developmental learning, the college ensures that the mission is realistic and reflective of all aspects of the organization.

The college [strategic plan](#) serves as the organizational infrastructure influenced by the mission and provides direction for all college activities. The current strategic plan contains five directions. Each direction reflects the broad area of focus and scope of work important to the college. Within each strategic direction, institutional priorities have been established to further refine the work of the college to ensure streamlined and targeted efforts for all members of the college community.

Within the strategic planning process, goals, benchmarks, action plans and assessment tools are created collaboratively by all members of each division. This ensures that activities and goals are realistic. Each strategic direction includes a “[key result](#)” which is developed using trend data to ensure that metrics are both measurable and attainable. Key results are also monitored to ensure institutional progress in meeting stated goals. In addition to the five key results, SMCC has adopted [Key Performance Indicators \(KPIs\)](#) which serve as an additional performance measure directly linked to the strategic plan. The establishment of KPIs represent another practice used by the institution to ensure that goals within mission statements are realistic in light of the organization’s resources.

5.A.4.

Qualified Staff

SMCC ensures that all employees meet the necessary hiring qualifications. The hiring process for all job types is [managed](#) by the Human Resources department, which reports directly to the College President. The HR Director ensures that all SMCC hiring procedures align with MCCCDC as well as all applicable laws. All full-time positions are hired through a process that starts with a posted job announcement, a [district-centralized application portal](#), and a screening committee reflective of the college demographics which includes subject matter experts. At the conclusion of interviews, a [hiring rubric](#) is used to score applicants based on qualifications and the most qualified candidates are sent forward to the college president. Final hiring decisions are made by the college president (in consultation with the hiring manager who will be overseeing the employee). Classified staff have documented [job descriptions](#) that list minimum required qualifications, desired qualifications, and specific job duties. In 2018, a job [classification and compensation study](#) was completed at the district level in order to ensure that all employees were qualified according to market payroll rates. In addition, policy groups were combined to form one classified staff employment status with new [classification and compensation structures](#) developed.

Training

All new employees are required to complete comprehensive orientation and training provided by the MCCCDC. The [Employee District Training Day](#) introduces new employees to the community college mission and values, policies and procedures, benefits and opportunities for professional growth, expectations for employee conduct, and more. In addition to MCCCDC training, all SMCC employees complete an introduction to [Gallup Strengths](#) as part of a strategic employee development initiative that [identifies and leverages the talents](#) of each employee to benefit the college. Professional growth opportunities for faculty and staff are also available from a variety of resources which include:

- [Maricopa Center for Learning and Instruction \(MCLI\)](#) offers professional growth opportunities

in the form of workshops, training sessions, and competitive grants for innovative projects that contribute to the continuous improvement of college and district programs and services.

- [The MCCCDC Employee Learning Center](#) is an online resource that provides a variety of training opportunities and resources in the areas of diversity and inclusion, performance management, learning and instruction, technology training, CEUs for classified staff, and training in particular operating systems such as FMS, HCM, etc.
- [Center for Teaching and Learning \(CTL\)](#) provides training and support to faculty and staff at the college level.
- [Online and hybrid instructor mentoring and training](#) provides training and mentoring to instructors teaching in online and hybrid modalities based on best practices and discipline specific academic standards.

The MCCCDC requires all SMCC leaders, supervisors, and employees to attend training in public stewardship, cost containment and administrative regulations. Additionally, all employees must complete the [annual disclosures](#) that include acknowledgement of the rules and requirements for travel, conflict of interest, cash handling, cash controls, employee codes of conduct, information and privacy security, legal issues, and Title IX. Employees must undergo required training before participating in employee recruitment and hiring procedures. These include the [Hiring Knowledge Sequence](#) – screener, manager, interviewers. The training ensures appropriate knowledge in the areas of rights and responsibilities to help employees successfully navigate SMCC and the district.

5.A.5.

Budgeting for SMCC occurs via an integrated planning and budgeting process. This process was developed to prevent planning and resource allocation from occurring in isolation. The process aligns departmental and institutional efforts with the college strategic plan and key performance indicators. All funding including discretionary funding at SMCC is based upon this comprehensive process.

The Business Services Department annually publishes and distributes the [SMCC Fiscal Year Adopted Budget](#) college-wide. To ensure the college monitors expenses appropriately, the College Business Services department provides quarterly financial reports, such as trending data, salary savings, budget approvals, payroll, and capital expense reports. The college also utilizes financial reports and other ad hoc reports that can be specialized for specific needs or to monitor the college's spending ([burn reports](#)). Additionally, the MCCCDC Budget Office requires data from the colleges relative to expenditures, revenues or the Governing Board metrics (not necessarily financial) that may impact the prioritization of any MCCCDC level funding opportunities. This information is also provided to the district to maintain budgetary integrity of financial resources.

[Internal Audit and Management Advisory Services \(IAMAS\)](#) is also a key resource used by SMCC to monitor budget and other key operations of the college. IAMAS conducts specific audits based on the evaluation of risk which are arranged on a three-year audit plan cycle. The IAMAS, college administrators and the Auditor General's Office assist in the development of the plan for annual audits district-wide. South Mountain Community College has participated in the following audits in the past two years - [Civil Rights Compliance Review](#), [Emergency Preparedness](#), Employee Separations, [Fraud Audit](#), [Network Administration](#), [Fiscal Internal Controls](#), [Open File Shares](#), and [Travel](#). Progress on any recommendations are reported back to the IAMAS quarterly until resolutions are completed. This process has provided improvements and reductions of risk, which has enhanced

collective operations at the institution.

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5.B - Core Component 5.B

The institution's governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the institution to fulfill its mission.

1. The governing board is knowledgeable about the institution; it provides oversight of the institution's financial and academic policies and practices and meets its legal and fiduciary responsibilities.
2. The institution has and employs policies and procedures to engage its internal constituencies—including its governing board, administration, faculty, staff, and students—in the institution's governance.
3. Administration, faculty, staff, and students are involved in setting academic requirements, policy, and processes through effective structures for contribution and collaborative effort.

Argument

5.B.1.

The Governing Board of the MCCCCD is made up of seven publicly-elected members: five from geographical districts across the county and two at-large representatives from any geographic area within the county. Meeting on the fourth Tuesday of each month, the board acts on behalf of the residents of Maricopa County, directing the activities of MCCCCD according to [Arizona Revised Statutes \(ARS\) §15-1444](#).

According to [Arizona Revised Statutes \(ARS\) §38-431.02](#), [public notices](#) of board meetings are posted at the District Support Services Center (outside the Governing Board Room). Board Books, PDF files of current action items, agendas and minutes, are provided on the Governing Board website. As of January 2018, prior action items, minutes, and agendas will be provided in bound books in the District Office's Legal Library. Board proceedings are available in video format and are located on the MCTV Board web page.

The Governing Board is knowledgeable about the institution, institutional operations, and the unique aspects of the 10 colleges it oversees. The Governing Board considers and votes on outcomes appropriate to the community it serves; follows and enforces board outcomes and policies; complies with [Open Meeting Laws \(ARS §38-431.02\)](#) and is committed to fulfilling the vision, mission, and values of MCCCCD.

The Governing Board is also responsible for reviewing and approving the annual budget which ensures knowledge about the financials of SMCC. The Governing Board annually reviews the tuition rate and has the authority to implement changes in the best interest of the organization. The Governing Board also reviews and approves all course fees assessed to students for enrollment into courses. The Governing Board is additionally required to abide by Arizona statutes and requirements in the areas of expenditure limitation, property tax levy limits, truth and taxation, debt, financial stability and capital reserve. Oversight and approval in the financial aspects of the college ensures that the Governing Board has appropriate knowledge to ensure the college adheres to the fiduciary responsibilities bestowed upon the organization.

The September 2018 [complaint from the MCCCCD Faculty Association](#), claimed the MCCCCD Governing Board failed to understand the impact of board decisions on colleges and did not fulfill its fiduciary role. As part of the regular and ongoing training in May 2019, the Governing Board completed a [training](#) that included the importance of having principles or rules of engagement to ensure the board understands the impact of its decisions and a review of its duty of care, loyalty, and obedience noted in the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges 2015 [statement on Fiduciary Duties of Governing Board Members](#). The Governing Board will continue to engage in regular training to ensure its deliberations reflect priorities to preserve and enhance the institution.

5.B.2.

The college employs policies and procedures to engage its internal constituencies (governing board, administration, faculty, staff, and students) in the institution's governance. This includes regular communication and reports to the college, MCCCCD, Chancellor and the Governing Board. This also includes a [college leadership structure](#), grounded in a [Shared Governance Model](#) that includes representation from administration, faculty, staff, and students.

SMCC provides regular communication and reports to district leadership, including weekly snapshots, and [annual reports](#) that are shared with the Chancellor and Governing Board. For example, the MCCCCD and Governing Board receive periodic and annual reports on adopted budgets, [Governing Board Metrics](#), student success and achievement, programs and initiatives, college and student accolades and achievements that are presented at Governing Board meetings.

The college maximizes stakeholder involvement to help ensure accountability and proper resource allocation. This is achieved through the Shared Governance Model. Developed in 2014, the [Shared Governance Handbook](#) outlines the structure and purpose of Shared Governance at SMCC, identifies the four primary councils, and establishes the domains and areas of governance for each council. The Shared Governance Councils (Shared Governance, Learning, Organizational Effectiveness and Technology, and Student Development) have been established as a means of engaging and involving all stakeholders across the college in dialogue pertaining to campus-wide initiatives and proposals. Using the practice of [Interest-Based Negotiation](#), each of the four councils is charged with ensuring that administration, faculty, staff, and students are able to actively participate in policy making and decision processes within their respective domains that have campus-wide impact. Proposals submitted to the Shared Governance Councils are reviewed and prioritized in an online portal, enabling data informed recommendations from cross-functional constituents of the college. Proposals that the Shared Governance Councils have considered are available on the Shared Governance page. Examples of proposals and actions of the councils include: continuous improvement of the Shared Governance model, multiple measures placement initiative, centralization of tutoring services, and commencement keynote speakers. Minutes from meetings are posted and emailed campus-wide to ensure transparency of communication and the ability of all stakeholders to engage in this process.

The SMCC [Faculty Senate](#) plays a vital role in the operations of the college, and its involvement in shared governance has recently been incorporated into the SMCC [College Plan](#), a college-level shared governance agreement that acknowledges and provides for a Faculty Senate. As specified in sections 1.1 and 1.2 of the College Plan (Updated 5/11/18), the faculty senate regularly meets with the College President and Vice President of Learning, and senate officers and members are actively involved in college councils and committees. This collaborative engagement between administration and faculty ensures transparency of communication and reinforces the college's commitment to partner with SMCC faculty in planning and decision-making processes.

Students are an essential part of the ongoing governance, leadership, and decision-making processes at SMCC. At every level of campus leadership, students are involved, with opportunities to represent the student perspective while serving on Shared Governance Councils, participating in College Forums, Student Conduct Board, Student Life and Leadership Council, and presenting their accomplishments at the President's Advisory Council and at our College Celebrations events. From their involvement in campus clubs and organizations to their deep involvement in academic programs, students are at the heart of the decisions we make as a college.

For decades, the MCCCCD Governing Board engaged in Collaborative Policy Development (CPD) with classified staff and meet and confer practices with faculty through a shared governance structure across the colleges and district office. The MCCCCD Governing Board ended these practices in the resolutions dated [September 18, 2017](#) (classified staff), regarding staff organization policies was followed by the resolution dated [February 27, 2018](#) (faculty).

In April 2015, the Governing Board approved the collapsing of five non-faculty employee groups into one, classified staff, all within a single [Staff Policy Manual](#). A district level constituency group, [Classified Staff Council \(CSC\)](#), was established to represent the interests of classified staff in district level decisions and policy development. In September of 2017, the Governing Board approved a [resolution](#) to remove the CPD process and dissolve CSC. In spring 2019, MCCCCD administration contracted with [Collaborative Brain Trust Consultancy](#) to provide staff the support needed to reestablish some form of staff organization. In July 2019, the [Employee Groups Organizing Council](#) had their initial meeting. This council is charged with making recommendations on the number and composition of employee groups, duties and responsibilities, and operational guidelines in accordance with the requirements set by the Governing Board.

The [Faculty Executive Council \(FEC\)](#), consists of college level faculty senate presidents and president-elects from each of the 10 MCCCCD colleges, including GWCC. FEC serves as the primary constituency group to represent the interests of faculty in district level decisions and policy development. In February of 2018, the Governing Board approved a resolution to terminate the meet and confer as defined in the Residential Faculty Policy (RFP) Definitions 1.2, a collaborative process to revise and develop faculty policy and RFP 7.6, Interest Based Negotiation. In the same resolution, the current RFP was extended to October 2018 and the MCCCCD Chancellor was charged with overseeing a new RFP manual.

The MCCCCD Chancellor initiated a [task force](#) in March 2018 to develop a faculty policy development process and in January 2019, the Governing Board [rescinded the resolutions](#), extended the current RFP to July 2020, and initiated the [Faculty Administration Collaboration Team \(FACT\)](#), reinstating the FEC as the official representative body for residential faculty and acknowledging the Adjunct Faculty Association's role in shared governance. Originally, FACT was composed of two residential faculty members, two adjunct faculty members, two administrators (the Provost and a college president), and tasked with reviewing current residential and adjunct faculty agreements and practices with the perspective of improving student success. The team has now revised membership to include three administrators (two college presidents and a college Vice President of Academic Affairs (VPAA)).

Importantly, the preamble of the [January 22, 2019](#), resolution reiterated the Governing Board's commitment to operating within the parameters set forth in its own policy governing the collective board and individual board member behavior.

5.B.3.

With collaboration as a core value of the college, administration, faculty, staff and students are involved in establishing requirements, policies and processes the various structures within the organization. This guiding principle influences college interactions and operations at all levels. South Mountain Community College adheres to the academic policies established by the MCCCDC as it relates to the development, enhancement and elimination of all curriculum. The current process is facilitated by Instructional Councils which consists of membership district-wide.

At the district-level, SMCC employees participate in a variety of committees and task forces to ensure involvement in establishing processes. For example, there are [established councils](#) that support the leadership functions of the MCCCDC and SMCC. These include the Chancellor's Executive Council, Vice President of Administrative Services Council, Vice President of Student Affairs Council, Vice President of Learning Council, Deans Council and Institutional Research Council. Each of these councils has a long-established history and works collectively to influence academic requirements, policy and processes. The college staff also provides key leadership in district-wide initiatives such as Maricopa Priorities and Guided Pathways to ensure representation in the development of new initiatives.

At the college level, employees at all levels have opportunities to participate in matters concerning the organization. A fundamental guiding principle of SMCC is to include all necessary stakeholders in decision-making as it relates to college operations and learning. As such, the college is both diligent and purposeful in the council, committee and task force composition to ensure that all stakeholders have the opportunity to contribute to the participatory decision-making that influences all aspects of the college. This practice is evidenced through Executive Team, Shared Governance, and adhoc task forces.

Other forms of collaboration include college listening sessions, [brown bag events](#), and [College Celebrations and Updates](#) twice per semester. Listening sessions and brown bag events establish opportunities for faculty, staff, and administrators to communicate about important changes or updates in policy, to troubleshoot or solve problems in a collective and collaborative frame, and to foster transparent and cooperative communication across the college.

For decades, the MCCCDC Governing Board engaged in Collaborative Policy Development (CPD) with classified staff and meet and confer practices with faculty through a shared governance structure across the colleges and district office. The MCCCDC Governing Board ended these practices in the resolutions dated September 18, 2017 (classified staff), regarding staff organization policies was followed by the resolution dated February 27, 2018 (faculty).

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5.C - Core Component 5.C

The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning.

1. The institution allocates its resources in alignment with its mission and priorities.
2. The institution links its processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning, and budgeting.
3. The planning process encompasses the institution as a whole and considers the perspectives of internal and external constituent groups.
4. The institution plans on the basis of a sound understanding of its current capacity. Institutional plans anticipate the possible impact of fluctuations in the institution's sources of revenue, such as enrollment, the economy, and state support.
5. Institutional planning anticipates emerging factors, such as technology, demographic shifts, and globalization.

Argument

5.C.1.

The campus vision statement guides and informs the inherent dedication of faculty and staff to serving students and the surrounding community. The vision, mission, values, and strategic plan documents serve as the foundation for long-term planning and resource allocation. Connecting the vision, mission, and values to strategic planning, the college has developed an integrated planning and budget process which intersects with the college academic plan, divisional action plans, and (where appropriate) annual Governing Board metrics by having a shared development process and is guided by the vision, mission, and values of the organization.

South Mountain Community College also has a very strong academic culture that fully supports the mission as evidenced by the exemplary programs, cross-functional collaborations, and connections to the community. As such, the institution's human and financial resources are dedicated to the priorities of fulfilling the mission and allocating resources accordingly. The primary processes that support this culture include: a) Strategic Plan b) Instructional and Non-Instructional Program Review, and c) the Integrated Planning and Budgeting process. Through these three processes the college provides for effectiveness and efficiencies in meeting the mission and aligning all activities with the institutional mission and the resources of the institution.

5.C.2.

The [iTeachSMART](#) is a campus committee focused on assessment of student learning outcomes (SLOs) at the course, program, and institutional levels. The iTeachSMART team helps academic divisions, departments, and faculty define SLOs that are suitable, measurable, and broad enough to cover lifelong impact. The team also assists with creating or obtaining assessment instruments to measure the students' achievement of the outcomes, and to then use the resulting data to develop and implement a plan for improving student success. The five institutional (general education) outcomes for the college include: Critical and Creative Thinking, Information Literacy, Quantitative Analysis, Written and Oral Communication and SMCC Experience. The assessment of student learning prevails throughout the organization and is embedded in key operations, planning, and budget.

The college is committed to continuous improvement and evaluates operations in a variety of ways. First, the college has completed a series of [Educational Lean projects](#) designed to improve efficiency of operations. Specifically, these projects focused on academic scheduling, data requests systems for Institutional Research and Marketing, universal project management and a one-stop model for Student Development. In addition, the Technology Support Services department deploys a periodic survey to assess customer service standards and satisfaction. The college also provided employees [Lean Six Sigma](#) training with more than 20 employees receiving white belt certifications. The results of this work are also included in key college processes.

The college [Academic Plan](#) is presently undergoing review, revision, and development as the college seeks new ways to meet the needs of the diverse community it serves. Economic and residential growth in some parts of our community along with economic and sociocultural challenges in other areas continue to impact the diversity of our student population. Responding to these needs, the college has continued to focus on workforce development and outreach to community and industry leaders as well as improving overall guidance to students seeking a pathway to completion, whether by certificate, associate degree, and/or transfer preparation. Guided Pathways is one initiative that is informing our academic planning and development for the college. Action planning within campus divisions and departments establishes budgetary and allocation needs in relation to continuous improvement goals. These division and departmental goals are tied to specific parts of the college Strategic Plan, which then informs and ties into the overall Academic Planning for the college. Finally, the Shared Governance model of councils enables members of the campus community--faculty, staff, students, administrators--to forward new proposals and initiatives for consideration.

5.C.3.

The college views strategic planning as a vision-focused process that results in major, long-range and far-reaching directions for an organization. Effective strategic planning allows organizations to define their future direction and determine the allocation of resources, including capital and people. The process takes long-range planning into account, emphasizes actions to be accomplished in three years, results in anticipatory decision making, and is integrated throughout the organization.

In 2012, South Mountain Community College initiated a new strategic planning process. This process utilized [Appreciative Inquiry](#) as the foundation and framework for developing and reviewing key areas of the college. Appreciative Inquiry is the cooperative search for the best in people, their organizations, and the world around them. It involves the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system's capacity to maximize positive potential.

The four phases of Appreciative Inquiry were incorporated into the college planning process and facilitated the development of the following areas:

- Discovery Phase: Appreciating the best life has to offer Outcome: Strategic Directions
- Dream Phase: Envisioning results of what might be Outcome: Mission, Vision & Values
- Design Phase: Co-constructing what should be the ideal Outcome: Institutional Priorities
- Destiny Phase: Sustaining efforts through empowering, learning, adjusting & improvising

During the strategic planning process, [strategic conversations](#) were conducted with faculty, staff, students and community members to identify new institutional priorities for the organization. During these sessions, participants were guided through a visionary process which focused on future planning for the college. Information from these sessions was summarized and grouped into thematic categories. The thematic categories were used to draft institutional priorities, which were reviewed

and revised by various stakeholders throughout the organization. The college-wide participant feedback resulted in enhanced strategic directions and finalized institutional priorities.

The plan clearly communicates the future direction of the organization, aligns with Maricopa Community College District planning, and supports the college's long-range and operational plans. In an effort to ensure that the strategic plan is inclusive of internal and external groups, the electronic versions of the annual reports immediately preceding the new planning process included [short videos](#) for each strategic direction that were designed to reflect the many voices that ultimately developed the guiding framework for SMCC. The Strategic Plan is a [cyclical process](#) in which the college reassess the strategic directions every four years within the framework of the mission and educational environment during the planning cycle. This period of time provides clear guidance to the college community on the strategic directions for the institution and the key results the college is seeking to successfully attain. More importantly, the current strategic plan and process integrates feedback from all areas of the college and community.

5.C.4.

SMCC's institutional planning is based upon understanding of its current capacity and it anticipates potential fluctuations in revenue sources, based upon enrollment, the economy, and state support. These factors inform the decisions made at the district and college levels to fund ongoing programs and initiatives. Out of the data received from a variety of sources, the Adopted Budget for SMCC is determined by allocations from the District's Annual Adopted Budget for each year as well as the District Strategic Plan and College Strategic Plan.

[Instructional and Non-Instructional Program Review](#) are the next impactful processes that inform the operational efficiencies of the academic divisions, as well as the student support and administrative services departments of the college. The most recent completed program review was part of a district initiative called the [Maricopa Priorities](#). This initiative required all ten colleges to complete a district-level program review. The purpose of Maricopa Priorities was to evaluate district performance and efficiencies, to align all colleges with the MCCCDC strategic priorities, and to make collaborative recommendations district-wide.

More recently, program review processes have been returned locally to each of the colleges, and the SMCC [cycle for program review](#) was completed in 2019. The Program Review Cycle is completed every three years and informs the college in continuous improvement opportunities to maximize organizational performance. The program review outcomes are based on a rubric established by the college task forces for each area. The scores from the rubric and feedback from [Program Review Boards](#) assist in evaluating college instructional and support services with opportunities for enhancement, maintaining, sustaining, or discontinuing services at the institution.

The outcomes of program review and the associated recommendations are evaluated and if feasible incorporated in the subsequent Integrated Planning and Budgeting cycle as part of the action planning and accomplishments. Budgeting and monitoring of expenses is also integrated with academic planning and strategic planning. During the action planning process departments and divisions provide updates to goals to demonstrate accountability. To facilitate gathering this data, a planning, budgeting and assessment tool, Strategic Planning Online (SPOL), provides an interface for connecting divisional academic and action planning goals with the Strategic Plan.

The college has anticipated and responded to institutional needs such as the [Default Management Plan](#), a debt reduction plan intended to inform and educate students receiving financial aid.

Ultimately, the program was intended to reduce student default rates by educating students about student loan debt and helping them to understand proactive measures they could take to avoid default after they graduated from college. This proved to be a significantly successful program, enacted by a cross-campus task force and ultimately involving the entire campus in establishing a solution. To support efforts in Student Services, faculty members incorporated information about student loan debt into their curriculum, teaching lessons appropriate to their disciplines. In cohort year 2016, the draft rate was 20.6%, which represented a decrease from the previous two-year period (33.3%). The 2017 default rate is projected to be approximately 18.2%. This was accomplished through [financial literacy workshops](#) for students, face to face [loan-entrance counseling](#) for all new students who choose to borrow, and by incorporating [financial literacy information in curricula](#) for College Success, Math, Reading and English courses. The college has been selected as a top 10 Bellwether finalist in the area of Governance and Finance for this work and will compete on February 3, 2020 for the top award.

Additional evidence that the institution plans on the basis of a sound understanding of its current capacity is seen through the Strategic Enrollment Management Plan. In Spring 2015, the SMCC [Strategic Enrollment Management Plan](#) (SEMP) was developed using the Appreciative Inquiry approach. More than 50 internal stakeholders representing all areas of the college were brought together over a series of meetings to discuss the historical, current and future enrollment strategies of the college. This approach allowed for a collaborative process in developing a plan that focuses on the future of the college. This plan is the tangible result of the inquiry process that describes where the organization wants to be, based on the internal and external needs of the college and community. During the 2015-16 academic year the enrollment plan was modified to be in alignment with the college strategic plan and process. This plan has resulted in an increase in enrollment during periods where some community colleges are experiencing declines.

5.C.5

Among several initiatives and ongoing programs designed to address the needs of students and the surrounding community, SMCC has turned its attention to emerging trends such as student loan education and debt prevention; Guided Pathways initiatives; Multiple Measures placement of students in Reading, Math, and English; community partnerships and workforce development task forces that enhance student access to service learning, internships, and practicums. These areas of focus serve to anticipate and inform the institution's future planning and development. With a lens of continuous improvement infused into all initiatives, SMCC continues to plan, anticipate, and address the emerging needs of its community.

South Mountain Community College includes in its strategic planning process the very crucial review of the educational environment. To do this, in 2018, SMCC solicited work from Paulien & Associates, a firm focused on academic and facilities related planning. The objective was to complete an [environmental scanning report](#) to systematically collect and analyze trends, issues, and events that may externally impact the institution. SMCC's environmental scan included the following study data elements: demographic trends, education trends, economic trends, technology trends, political trends, and competitor analysis. Within the environmental scanning project, the researchers also provided an occupational gap analysis. This allowed for identification of future programmatic and workforce opportunities in the SMCC service area.

The college is inherently interested in assessing and reassessing employer workforce needs to provide a steady workforce and pipeline of qualified students and talent to meet the demands of the existing forecasted job openings. With the changes in the nation, the state, and the local community, the data

from the environmental scan provided the college with information indicating significant changes in the environment and providing the college with sufficient time to respond proactively to emerging trends. This allows the college to design and implement strategies that would benefit the students and surrounding community.

Data from the environmental scan also impacted future planning, enabling the college to take advantage of external and internal opportunities for expansion or improvement. Consequently, the information from the environmental scan has informed the development of the Academic Master Plan and the development of career and technical education program enhancements at the institution.

Sources

- ACO_LiteracyInformationinCurricula_2018_5C4
- EXT_EnvironmentalScan_2018_5C5
- FIN_DefaultManagementPlan_2013_5C4
- FIN_FinancialLiteracyWorkshops_2019_5C4
- FIN_LoanEntranceCounseling_2019_5C4
- ORG_AppreciativeInquiry_2016_5C3
- ORG_LeanProject_2013_5C2
- ORG_LeanSixSigma_2013_5C2
- ORG_MaricopaPriorities_2014_5C4
- ORG_ProgramReview_2018_5C4
- ORG_ProgramReviewBoards_2019_5C4
- ORG_ProgramReviewCycles_2018_5C4
- ORG_Shortvideos_2014_5C3
- ORG_StrategicConversations_2012_5C3
- PLN_AcademicMasterPlan_2019_5C2
- PLN_CyclicalProcess_2019_5C3
- PLN_StrategicEnrollmentManagementPlan_2016_5C4
- SOC_iTeachSmart_2014_5C2

5.D - Core Component 5.D

The institution works systematically to improve its performance.

1. The institution develops and documents evidence of performance in its operations.
2. The institution learns from its operational experience and applies that learning to improve its institutional effectiveness, capabilities, and sustainability, overall and in its component parts.

Argument

5.D.1.

South Mountain Community College has incorporated the process of Integrated Planning and Budgeting to assist in the monitoring of progress of the SMCC Strategic Plan and the identified key results. Through the process the college is able to document the annual accomplishments of the college and of the individual departments of the institution. [Budget allocations are then linked to the advancement of the Strategic Plan.](#) Participating in this process, departments annually reflect upon their prior year accomplishments, incorporate the outcomes of the program review feedback and recommendations and begin action plans for the upcoming academic year. This provides a way to continuously improve instruction and support services and to archive the information and sustain the information for future measurement of success.

Program Review is linked to the above dynamic Integrated Planning and Budgeting cycle by providing a self-assessment of all instructional divisions and non-instructional departments of the college. The program review cycle is completed every three years. Through the self-assessments and the recommendations from a Review Board consisting of a group of subject matter experts and cross-college constituents, the departments receive feedback and recommendations on their academic quality and support services provided at the institution. The outcomes are then [incorporated into the action planning](#) and advancement of key results again by way of the above Integrated Planning and Budgeting process.

Similarly, the college's Strategic Plan is aligned with the [District's Strategic Plan](#). The college annually submits an Accomplishments Report to demonstrate accountability. The three key District Strategic Commitments for 2017-2020 are "Build a Thriving Community Through Access and Student Success," "Be a Driving Force for Economic and Workforce Development in Arizona," and "Attain Recognition as an Innovator Among Institutions of Higher Education." This report is submitted to the District to ensure alignment and advancement of the Maricopa County Community College District as a whole as accountable to the state, the taxpayers, and the local community served.

The MCCCED Governing Board also requires an Annual Monitoring Report (5B2) with the key metrics and outcomes system-wide in relation to their Governing Boards Outcome Statements. These statements include University Transfer Education and General Education, Workforce and Economic Development, Developmental Education, Community Development and Civic and Global Engagement. South Mountain Community College data is incorporated into the metrics and key performance indicators relative to the District.

The college also participates in a variety of institutional assessments. The National Community College Benchmark Project ([NCCBP](#)) provides data that measures institutional effectiveness. The Community College Survey of Student Engagement ([CCSSE](#)) examines the level of student engagement in key areas linked to student success. The [Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Indicator](#) (SSI) measures what is important to students as it relates to their academic experiences and the extent to which students are satisfied with the services received from the college. Finally, the Survey of Entering Student Engagement ([SENSE](#)) focuses on first year students and identifies distinct characteristics related to persistence, completion and success. Recognizing that student success is multi-faceted, the college uses these assessments to improve student performance.

At South Mountain Community College, Tableau [Dashboards](#) are a self-serve repository of institutional data. A data dashboard is a collection of visual data views (tables, graphs, infographics) that can be arranged and customized using a predetermined set of filters and parameters created by staff within the Institutional Research division. Dashboards are created by linking these visuals to the Institutional Research Information System (IRIS) data warehouse, which is a subset of the Student Information System (SIS) data warehouse. Dashboards are typically refreshed each semester with new data from. Current dashboards reflect SMCC data for a variety of metrics, including: student demographics, student completions, course scheduling and profiles, and faculty staffing. Through a variety of administrator created parameters, staff and faculty are able to shape institutional data to meet their needs for reporting purposes. The dashboards continue to serve as an integral link between staff, institutional data and evidence of college performance.

South Mountain Community College has been highlighted as the district college that has the highest number of [employee performance evaluations](#) completed. The employee performance evaluations are completed annually with varying deadline dates during the year for the various employee groups. The college has an institutional goal of 100% participation annually. The supervisors, people leaders, of the institution are contacted and divisional completion is tracked for their progress. Each supervisor has completing performance evaluations and/or performance plans as part of their own performance evaluations from the College President. This process has shown a positive effect on alerting employees to their progress and successes in addition to any needed improvements documented in the required performance plans. The monitoring of the performance evaluations is done by the College Human Resources Divisions and is reviewed by the college leadership team until all are completed.

South Mountain Community College faculty also have had to document their performance in their [Individual Development Plans \(IDPs\)](#). The IDPs provide evidence of the faculty members' progress during the academic year in the classroom, with instruction, with service to the institution, and in initiatives that they participate in. Additionally, they are monitored and provided feedback by the Vice President of Learning and their respective Academic Dean as well as from their mentors, until the tenure process in year five. Beyond year five, faculty complete a Faculty Evaluation Plan (FEP) for Instructional Improvement every three years, again to provide evidence of their continued professional growth, service to the institution, and dedication to continuous improvement. In developing the FEP, faculty are expected to address the following key areas:

- Teaching, Learning, and/or Service
- Course Assessment and/or Program Development/Revision
- Governance and/or Committee Participation at the College and/or District levels

SMCC recognizes the importance of ensuring the safety and security of its students, faculty, staff and extended community. In 2013-14, a [critical incident management team \(CIMT\)](#) was established. The Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) is a cross functional leadership group responsible for

planning and coordination of emergency preparedness activities under the guidelines of the National Incident Management System-Incident Command System (NIMS-ICS). The Incident Command System (ICS) provides a structured model for managing emergency operations and coordinating response activities within our organization and with external agencies. The CIMT group will align our strategic planning and operational activities with the Maricopa Emergency Management System (MEMS) that provides guidance and support for all Maricopa colleges. For more information on MEMS direction and compliance scope.

5.D.2.

South Mountain Community College maintains the following institutional pillars as indicators of its success and as a means of honoring the achievements of faculty and staff: learning college continuous improvement, and student success. Keeping to the pillars of the institution, the focus of the college's work is to improve the institutional effectiveness, capabilities, and sustainability to advance student success and completion. SMCC has participated in advancing the operational process to enhance the student experience with varied initiatives in instruction, student development, and operational effectiveness and technology.

SMCC is a member of the [Alliance for Transformation and Innovation \(AFIT\)](#) formerly the Continuous Quality Improvement Network (CQIN). Through this organizational membership, SMCC has annually worked on [college-wide initiatives](#) that have included, customer service, advisement, data utilization, and technology enhancements. These projects have added tremendous value to SMCC and allowed the college to address critical needs in strategic ways.

The institution's Higher Learning Commission (HLC) [Quality Initiative](#) continues to be the most critical advancement to sustain the institution by focusing on improving the distribution and allocations for the academic load. This project has been a Quality Initiative designed to suit the college's present concerns for load and schedule costs that were escalating and that which is one of the largest costs for the institution, the academic schedule.

Similarly, the district provides a platform for best practices to be shared district-wide by hosting the annual [Student Success Conference](#). All the MCCCCD colleges participate and share the new knowledge and new practices and their outcomes across colleges. The best practices are often adopted in enrollment services, academics, and other areas of the college.

Student Learning outside of the classroom is also continuing to be monitored and tracked in our Student Life and Leadership (Clubs) and Student Learning Outcomes throughout the Student Enrollment Services areas and Counseling. These outcomes assist the college in ensuring that learning occurs in all aspects of the student experience. In addition, this information is used to make critical changes to programs and services to provide quality experiences for students.

Sources

- ACO_QualityInitiative_2018_5D2
- COM_StudentSuccessConference_2019_5D2
- FIN_BudgetAllocationStrategicPlan_2019_5D1
- FSA_IDP_2019_5D1

- ORG_AFITCQIN_2017_5D2
- ORG_CCSSE_2017_5D1
- ORG_CollegeWideActivities_2016_5D2
- ORG_Dashboards_2019_5D1
- ORG_NoelLevitz_2019_5D1
- ORG_SENSE_2017_5D1
- PLN_CIMT_2018_5D1
- PLN_IncorporatedintheActionPlan_2019_5D1
- PLN_MCCCDStrategicPlan_2017_5C4
- POL_EmployeeEvaluation_2019_5D1
- SOC_NCCBP_2019_5D1

5.S - Criterion 5 - Summary

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

Summary

Summary

The institution's resources, structures, and processes are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities. The college is committed to continuing its mission of service to students and the surrounding community, focusing on continuous improvement strategies that align with the college mission, vision, and values, as well as the strategic plan. Through its grounding in shared governance, the college will continue to support programs as it seeks innovative ways to achieve and sustain its goals. The physical resources and budgetary planning are sound, anticipating and addressing the crucial operational and educational needs of the college. The college plans are future-facing and seek alternative sources of revenue while maintaining a high quality of educational service to the community. Furthermore, the college continues to maintain a high standard of excellence in the hiring process, seeking the best qualified candidates for faculty and staff positions while also providing opportunities for students to gain employment experience through work-study positions on campus.

The Governing Board of the Maricopa Community College District (MCCCD) is knowledgeable about the institution, institutional operations, and the unique aspects of the ten colleges it oversees. It is responsible for adhering to Arizona law and statutes relevant to community college governance and operations. SMCC continues to break boundaries and barriers by anticipating and addressing the future needs of its students as they prepare for and enter the workforce of the 21st century. In the future, SMCC will continue to meet the above criteria, focusing on continuous improvement of student services and support, monitoring and expansion of programs according to community needs, and seeking additional community outreach and workforce opportunities for students in the form of internships, service learning, experiential learning, and other collaborative efforts with the surrounding community.

Sources

There are no sources.