



## CATEGORY 1 HELPING STUDENTS LEARN

### Comment

---

In the past 10 years the scope and complexity of Southwestern College’s educational offerings has increased. The college’s Professional Studies program has added many degrees and many adult learners from both the civilian and military sectors, and provides instruction on ground at Professional Studies Centers, at military installations, and online. On the college’s residential campus the faculty have recently completed the first significant revision of the college’s general education curriculum in 15 years. The college is now working to create coherent expressions of intended learning outcomes and strategies to evaluate those outcomes.

### 1C1 Common Student Learning Objectives

---

The mission and the vision of Southwestern College commit the college to creating and sustaining a learning community that is dedicated to intellectual growth, career preparation, ethical awareness for both the individual and community, leadership through service, and life-long learning.

The college is in the third year of an AQIP action project concerning academic outcomes assessment. That project was undertaken because the college’s efforts in outcomes assessment have been scattered, inadequate, and unsuccessful. The action project fostered a consultative process (led by the college’s main campus faculty) designed to clarify institution-wide student learning objectives. Expressed as outcomes and related demonstrable knowledge and skills, the college’s newly-stated learning objectives are:

Institutional Outcome	Knowledge and Skills
Critical Thinking	The ability to analyze information to arrive at a reasoned judgment of what to do or believe
Ethical Behavior	The conscious practice of accepted standards of fairness and integrity in all endeavors
Leadership	The ability to create and communicate a vision that inspires others to act or achieve a desired goal
Communication	The ability to communicate effectively using reading, writing, listening, behavior, media, quantitative data, and technology
Career Preparation	The cultivation of knowledge, attitude, creative skills, to excel in life’s chosen work

The next steps to be taken in the project will involve faculty and administrators in specifying concretely how courses and curricula address these five institutional outcomes and how student attainment of these outcomes is to be measured and improved.



## 1C2 Learning With a Mission

---

The college's learning and development objectives are correlated strongly with language in the college's statement of mission and vision. This statement is periodically affirmed by the college's Board of Trustees.

Institutional Outcome	References in College Vision and Mission Statements
Critical Thinking	Commits to an academic program that emphasizes intellectual growth; oral and written communication skills; creativity; wellness; historical, cultural, and environmental understandings. Offers programs for the emergent learning society that stress enrichment, enhancement, and personal growth.
Ethical Behavior	Affirms the role of individual Christians in shaping a world that preserves honesty and integrity and nurtures communities of service and care.
Leadership	Describes the college as a learning community committed to leadership through service in a world without boundaries. Challenges students to take responsibility for the future of society.
Communication	Emphasizes oral and written communication skills.
Career Preparation	Offers programs leading to baccalaureate degrees that serve as foundations to professional development, and envisions a learning community committed to career preparation. Offers specific programs for degree completion, and encourages those employed full time to continue their learning.

## 1C3 Key Programs

---

The key instructional programs at Southwestern College are: baccalaureate programs offered to traditional-age students in a residential setting, master's programs offered to traditional-age students in a residential setting, baccalaureate degree completion programs offered to adult learners at Professional Studies locations distant from the main campus and online, and master's degree programs offered to adult learners at Professional Studies locations distant from the main campus and online. Professional Studies also delivers customized courses to companies/organizations that require unique employee development programs.

Bachelor's degree programs on the main campus are delivered in classrooms and laboratories. Because all students and faculty on the main campus use college-issued Dell laptop computers, main campus instruction is able to take full advantage of multimedia technology and course management software. The college's main campus programs in teacher education, business administration, and biology each generate about 15% of main campus enrollment. Nursing (10%), communication (10%), and physical education (12%) also have significant shares of enrollment.

The college currently offers a Master of Business Administration on its main campus. The program is presented as a 5<sup>th</sup> year master's degree. Completion requires full-time study from July of one academic year through May of the following academic year. The current cohort of main campus MBA students has 15 members. The college plans to introduce two additional 5<sup>th</sup> year master's degrees beginning in the summer of 2007: Master of Science in Leadership, and Master of Arts in Specialized Ministries. All three of these programs use face-to-face classroom instruction.

The college's Professional Studies undergraduate program serves degree-completion learners who have earned at least 30 hours of transferable college credit. Bachelor's degrees are offered in business and



management fields, security management, leadership, teacher education, pastoral studies, computer fields, and nursing. Professional Studies learners may study in face-to-face instructional settings at PS centers in Winfield, Kansas; Wichita, Kansas; Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; or at the following military installations: McConnell Air Force Base, Wichita, Kansas; Fort Riley, Junction City, Kansas; White Sands Missile Range, New Mexico.

Learners may also complete bachelor's degrees exclusively online. Many learners access both onground and online instructional options as they earn their degrees.

The college's graduate programs for part-time adult learners include the Master of Business Administration, Master of Education (emphases in special education or in curriculum and instruction), Master of Science in Leadership, Master of Science in Security Administration, and Master of Arts in Specialized Ministries. As with the college's undergraduate Professional Studies programs, instruction takes place onground and online.

The Blackboard course management system supports both onground and online instruction for Professional Studies. Onground instruction in undergraduate and graduate programs is occasionally supplemented through the use of interactive videoconferencing and internet meeting technologies such as Raindance

## 1C4 Diversity and Learning

---

The college's commitment to diversity and learning is expressed in its intention to prepare students for "leadership through service in a world without boundaries." The college's main campus program delivers learning options that both accommodate differing learning styles and expose students to diverse cultures. On the latter count, roughly 25% of the general education curriculum is dedicated to diversity issues. Many of the regular departmental offerings also speak to the concern for diversity and sensitivity toward other cultures and ideas. For example, the college's teacher education program requires 20 hours of observation in a multi-cultural classroom environment for the EDUC 216 Foundations of Education Laboratory, and NURS 318 Culture and Caring ensures that future nurses can provide care to people of diverse cultural groups. On a smaller scale, the college also engages in curricular innovation including internet video linking to a United Methodist high school in El Paso, Texas, from which Spanish instruction is delivered, and a video link to the University of Glasgow, Scotland. Finally, on a less formal level, several outreach teams are tied to the academic unit such as a student nursing association (SCANS), Leadership Southwestern, Discipleship Southwestern, and SIFE, all of which undertake service learning projects in a variety of contexts including Native American reservations and foreign countries.

Because most Professional Studies learners do not complete general education courses at Southwestern, the college seeks to integrate learning focused on diversity and cultural competence across the curriculum in common courses in business ethics and the senior capstone course, Responsibility for the Future, as well as courses required in each major. Because a growing number of Professional Studies learners are active duty military or military reservists, they bring a unique perspective to each of their classes given their encounters with individuals from other cultures. Still other learners work for multi-national companies and have diverse experiences to bring to the learning environment.

The college seeks to respond effectively to a variety of learning styles. Students who self-identify as having learning challenges are supported by their instructors, by use of assistive technology, and by modifications in instruction and testing procedures, etc. The college's small class sizes enable instructors to identify and address different learning styles and needs. The use of active learning techniques, participation in service learning opportunities and internships, and awareness of the real-world experiences of many of the college's adult learners have also enriched the variety of instruction at the



college. Providing online and on-ground instruction allows individuals to choose the type of instruction that best meets their needs.

In fulfillment of a stated objective in the college's strategic plan, the racial and ethnic diversity of the college's main campus has increased markedly in recent years. In response, the president of the college has convened a working group of administrators, faculty, and students to plan for activities and programming that proactively address issues of diversity and difference.

## 1C5 Intellectual Freedom

---

The college's policies commit Southwestern to the protection of academic freedom, free inquiry, vigorous debate, and freedom of expression. These commitments are operationalized through faculty policies concerning tenure and faculty governance, policies forbidding discrimination and harassment, and a student code of conduct. Through visiting lectures, films, and public forums on issues of concern in the college and the community, Southwestern College demonstrates its commitment to academic freedom. The college's policy on intellectual property and employee created materials assures equitable treatment of employees.

## 1P1 Learning Objectives

---

Southwestern College chose academic outcomes assessment as a focus in its first round of AQIP action projects. As noted above, this project has resulted in the identification of critical thinking, ethical behavior, leadership, communication, and career preparation as the key objectives of the college's academic programs. Participants in this identification process included members of the assessment goal task force, which comprised representatives from the residential academic unit, the Professional Studies unit, and the technology support unit. In order to ensure both efficiency and maximal participation the task force involved the following groups in the process: main campus assessment committee, faculty senate, academic division chairs, professional studies academic council, and academic administrators.

On the main campus this outcomes assessment project has produced a fruitful faculty effort to revise the college's general education program. It now is more prescriptive, with components of general education curriculum that address and further desired outcomes. These efforts have produced a newly revised general education program.

Institutional learning outcomes have been added to each Professional Studies syllabus to clearly articulate to learners intended learning outcomes as well as course objectives. Professional Studies personnel have also been working to more effectively link institutional outcomes and course objectives and to tailor curriculum to achieve desired outcomes. That process continues with discussions incorporated into the major review process. Recently there have been several major reviews which have resulted in significant change to instructional objectives in an effort to better align classroom learning with institutional outcomes.



## 1P2 New Programs

---

Southwestern College develops new programs in response to regional and national needs. Often these needs are communicated to the college by employers, by graduate schools to whom the college sends students, and by students themselves as they seek relevant degrees. On the main campus, the college's faculty propose changes to the Curriculum Committee of the faculty, which recommends changes to the full faculty for discussion and approval. As the Curriculum Committee is processing proposed changes it interacts with the academic vice president and dean of the faculty (especially regarding budgeting and work load issues) and the registrar's office (in relation to course numbering and accounting of prerequisites). This process applies to main campus undergraduate and graduate programs.

Professional Studies develops new programs by scanning the national and regional environment for current trends and needs. Using a model called the "Situational Analysis," eleven factors relevant to launching a new program are analyzed. These factors include enrollment projections, competitive environment, library resources, and financial implications. Upon completion of the internal analysis, advisory councils consisting of leaders of area businesses provide insight concerning evolving employment and educational needs. Draft program proposals are submitted for review and approval by the Professional Studies Academic Council. Similarly, proposals for new graduate programs for adults are developed by staff and reviewed by the Graduate Studies Academic Council.

All new majors and degrees are approved by the president and forwarded to the Academic Affairs Committee of the Board of Trustees for review and recommendation. New majors and degrees are approved by the Board of Trustees.

## 1P3 Student Preparation

---

In order to ensure that students are prepared to undertake academic work, the college screens applicants through its admission process.

Once admitted, main campus students are monitored by the registrar and expectations about academic performance are enforced by both probation and suspension processes and the general advising system. Specialized programs such as nursing and education have additional standards that are clearly communicated through handbooks and student progressions committees. Finally, student preparation is gauged by the successful completion of sequential course offerings.

Before a learner can be admitted to the Professional Studies program he/she must have earned at least 30 hours of college level credit with a 2.0 or higher GPA, and have at least three years of work experience. As with main campus programs in nursing and education, PS programs in these two fields have additional standards that are clearly communicated through handbooks and student progression committees.

Professional Studies has developed a series of self-assessment tools for learners interested in studying online. The tools include a "Learning Style Readiness" inventory and a "Technical Skills Readiness" inventory. These tools, coupled with the "Test Drive an Online Course," allow learners to assess their readiness for online learning. All of these tools are available on the college's Web site.

Each entering undergraduate PS learner is required to take an Entrance Seminar during the first session with Professional Studies. During the Entrance Seminar the learner provides a writing sample that is used to assess communication skills. All PS syllabi provide information to learners about the availability of a writing lab. PS staff members are currently evaluating the feasibility of developing a math and Microsoft Office assessment tool to further evaluate student preparation. Expectations concerning academic



performance are communicated through academic advising, and through the monitoring of stop-outs, and are enforced through probation and suspension processes.

### 1P4 Communicating Expectations

---

Expectations of student preparation and performance are communicated in a variety of ways including admission materials, course catalog requirements, new student orientation, Entrance Seminar (in the case of Professional Studies learners), an advising system, and handbooks in programs that are regulated by external bodies.

Admission advisors and Professional Studies counselors communicate to prospective students the college's expectations concerning required preparation during the intake process. Institutional outcomes and course objectives are delineated on all PS syllabi for clarity for learners.

The registrar produces degree checks that record student progress toward meeting requirements for a degree. These reports are sent both to the students and to their advisors. During the PS Entrance Seminar, learner transcripts are evaluated and a plan of study is developed. Each PS learner's progress is checked when 100 hours of credit have been completed. Since the college's conversion to the SCT PowerCampus (administrative software) product in 2006, both students and advisors now have ready access to current information on the status of student degree plans through an online portal, IQWeb.

### 1P5 Selecting Programs

---

This is an area of weakness at the college. Students meet with advisors, of course, but the college has not created a **system** to evaluate the abilities and interests of new students and to address discrepancies between preparation and program requirements. The ingredients for such a system are in place, both on the main campus and in Professional Studies, but these have not been aligned into an intentional system.

On the main campus, the need for a system is being addressed through the appointment of a new academic administrator, the associate vice president for advising and student success, who will begin her duties July 1, 2007, and is charged with developing a system to evaluate and respond to the needs of students. This is a response to lessons learned through an AQIP action project related to main campus retention.

Professional Studies personnel look for a good match between the prospective learner's educational goals and the various undergraduate and graduate programs offered. Some programs have a clear standard for selection. For example, the nursing program is an RN to BSN program that requires entering learners to be registered nurses. Other degree programs do not have such clear prerequisites. This challenge is being addressed through the "Destination Graduation" project, an on-going process review designed to identify and remedy weaknesses in the advising and retention efforts of the PS program.

### 1P6 Effective Teaching

---

Effective main campus teaching is monitored through the faculty evaluation system. New faculty are evaluated annually for the first four years of service, then undergo an intensive evaluation in the fifth year, and prepare for tenure and promotion in the sixth. Tenured faculty are evaluated every fifth year. The process for faculty evaluation involves focus groups, classroom observation, and evidence of good teaching such as teaching evaluations, videotapes, etc. All faculty members are required to submit portfolios in which they provide documentation of effective teaching. These portfolios are evaluated by the



academic vice president and dean of the faculty and provide an opportunity for feedback from the academic vice president. Expectations about effective teaching are communicated to new faculty members during orientation activities and to continuing faculty through the portfolio review process.

In Professional Studies, effective teaching is monitored through course evaluations, in-class observations of new faculty members, and assessment of online best practices using developed rubrics. Learners are asked to evaluate every online and on ground instructor for effectiveness and class content. The evaluations for each class are compiled and reviewed by the director of academic affairs.

Professional Studies administrators regularly evaluate on-ground and online affiliate faculty through the use of detailed rubrics. Faculty are evaluated on organization and structure, content, academic rigor, interactivity, instructional design, and administration of their courses. The faculty are also asked to self-evaluate using the same rubric. The rubric is used by the director of academic affairs as a springboard for detailed conversations about necessary improvements to instruction when warranted.

Expectations about effective teaching are communicated to Professional Studies affiliate faculty members through faculty development programs led by PS administrators and lead instructors. Prospective online instructors are required to complete the college's Introduction to Online Teaching course before they can be employed. Evaluation of their performance in this course communicates the college's expectations for their subsequent teaching. PS is also finalizing preparations for a "Working With Adult Learners" course for existing faculty members to supplement the Introduction to Online Learning course and faculty development workshops.

## 1P7 Building Course Delivery

---

Course delivery at Southwestern College is highly varied, reflecting the diverse needs of the college's students. The main campus offers students an intimate residential learning experience, and students and faculty value the close interaction of face-to-face classroom instruction. In most cases, this occurs over the course of a full semester. Exceptions to the classroom emphasis are internships, and courses that have practical experience components such as labs, off-site teaching, or hospital work. The college occasionally offers an online course to its main campus students, but that is usually dictated by difficulties with securing onground instruction in a specialized course in a program such as computer science. Instruction on the main campus is augmented by the use of digital tools, such as Blackboard software, that is accessed by students and faculty through college-issued laptops (see 1C3). The library provides both databases (full text and reference only) and e-books. Usage of these resources has not been carefully studied but data will become more available with the recent addition of an online services library employee. Many instructors use Blackboard as an electronic course delivery system.

Main campus graduate programs at Southwestern College are delivered mostly through traditional face-to-face instruction. A few Master of Education classes combine synchronous and asynchronous technology in a single course in order to ensure effective learning. Many courses are offered in a format that is shorter than a full semester.

Course delivery in Professional Studies reflects the needs of adult learners, with classes both on ground and online. On-ground instruction is offered in the evening at Professional Studies Centers in Winfield, Wichita, and Oklahoma City in commercial space that has been renovated for educational use. On the military installations where the college offers programs, on-ground instruction takes place in on-installation classrooms.

Online enrollment is growing rapidly in both undergraduate and graduate Professional Studies programs, reflecting the growing acceptance of this mode of teaching and learning and its ability to meet the needs



of adult learners for flexible scheduling. All PS courses are taught in an accelerated six-week course format.

To respond to the needs of learners, the SC Memorial Library has enhanced access to a growing number of online databases in recent years. The library provides both databases (full text and reference only) and e-books supporting both main campus and Professional Studies learners. The library has enhanced its services to distance learners through the establishment of a toll-free library telephone number, a modified Web site with automated response forms, and many after-hours services for learners in various time zones. Usage of these resources is continually under review.

## 1P8 Monitoring Curricular Effectiveness

---

The college's main campus faculty are completing (in the spring of 2007) a major review and revision of the college's general education requirements. This is the first such review in more than a decade. Outcomes assessment findings will drive more frequent reviews in the future. Departmental curricula have not been systematically reviewed for effectiveness. The college's outcomes assessment project is designed to correct this deficiency. First findings concerning outcomes, and resulting curricular changes, are expected in the 2007-08 academic year.

Professional Studies reviews each program curriculum on a rotating basis. A review committee comprising current faculty and industry leaders is formed to review each program. The committee examines:

- Program purposes, goals and objectives
- Learner enrollments and other demographic trends
- Overall curriculum and degree requirements
- Learning outcomes and assessment measures
- Individual classes and sequencing issues
- Textbooks and other class resources
- Relevancy and cutting-edge trends
- Marketing plans

Curricular changes recommended as an outcome of the program reviews are forwarded to the Professional Studies Academic Council or the Graduate Studies Council for action.

Through this process and a thorough administrative review, Professional Studies programs can and have been discontinued. One of the first programs launched in PS (manufacturing technology) was discontinued. The program was launched at the right time, with the right learner base in Wichita, Kansas; however, workplace dynamics shifted and the program was no longer seen as relevant to area employers.

## 1P9 Needs and Support

---

As noted above, the college has not yet created a strong system for evaluating the needs of students, and the needs of faculty who are trying to respond to the needs of students. Incoming main campus freshmen complete the Noel-Levitz College Student Inventory (CSI), which allows a self-report of student concerns about their preparation for college studies. Student-specific findings from the CSI are provided to appropriate academic advisors. As part of its outcomes assessment action project, the college administered the Academic Profile test to freshmen for the first time in the fall of 2006. The results provided both aggregate data on the preparation of these freshmen for college-level work and student-specific data which has been forwarded to appropriate academic advisors. Main campus students who





come to the college with conditional admission status meet regularly with a designated advisor who assesses their needs and helps them access remedial or tutorial services.

In the Professional Studies Entrance Seminar, learners complete an evaluation and assessment project designed to provide information about their academic strengths and weaknesses. As noted in 1P3, Professional Studies provides a writing lab to support learners.

Once admitted, a Professional Studies learner works one-on-one with an academic advisor to develop a degree plan. Academic advising is provided by appointment, but walk-ins, call-ins, and virtual sessions are easily accommodated. A full-time staff member (soon to be two) serves as a primary financial aid counselor. All PS staff and administrators are available for consultation in person, or by e-mail, telephone, fax, or postal mail. Staff photos on the Web site help to connect distance learners with personnel providing these support services.

The college's support for faculty who are teaching students with unique needs – e.g., physical limitations, learning disabilities – tends to be student-specific and ad hoc. More work is needed, particularly in the realm of professional development and creating a clear system of referral and support, to equip faculty with the ability to recognize and respond to the varied needs and learning styles of Southwestern's students. Professional Studies is developing an early warning system so online and on-ground faculty members can alert college administrators to the special needs of learners.

## 1P10 Aligning Co-Curricular Goals

---

Because Professional Studies is focused on serving the educational needs of working adult learners, no co-curricular activities are in place. Most campus co-curricular programs emanate from an academic unit or program and are presumed to support the college's curricular goals, but there is no formal process for aligning co-curricular goals with the curriculum at Southwestern College main campus.

## 1P11 Student Assessment

---

This is part of the AQIP action project related to outcomes assessment. The project has focused on revision of main campus general education requirements in light of the college's five key learning objectives. With this project completed, the main campus is now selecting appropriate measures of student learning.

Professional Studies undergraduate and graduate programs, whether delivered in the classroom or asynchronously online, rely on a variety of learning opportunities to optimize collaborative learning, including:

- Lecture/group discussion
- Student research and presentation
- Exercises, case studies, and simulations
- Journaling and debates
- Group projects
- Guest speakers
- Textbooks, journals, and other secondary materials
- Capstone experiences and portfolios

The director of academic affairs takes the lead on all Professional Studies assessment initiatives. PS uses some common assessments (e.g., NSSE (National Survey of Student Engagement), FSSE (Faculty Survey of Student Engagement), Flashlight Student Inventory) and triangulates that data with other



measures. A further analysis of adult-focused outcomes assessment measures used in degree-completion programs is underway.

### **1P12 Assessing Career Preparation**

---

This is part of the AQIP action project related to outcomes assessment and a process for assessing student preparation for further study or employment is still being built. Some departments of the college have strong processes for such evaluation (e.g., pre-med program), other departments have no evaluation program.

### **1P13 Measuring Student Performance**

---

This is part of the AQIP action project related to outcomes assessment and gathering and analysis of measures of student performance is not yet being systematically completed at an institutional level. The college's programs in teacher education and in nursing routinely measure student performance through standardized examinations such as PPST and NCLEX.

Three of the newest professional graduate programs (Master of Science in Leadership, Master of Science in Management, and Master of Science in Security Administration), have incorporated a portfolio as their culminating capstone experience. Portfolios of graduates will be both internally and externally evaluated. The external evaluation will be conducted by professionals from other educational institutions who can assess the learner's performance across institutional boundaries.