Southern Arkansas University Tech Quality Highlights Report

SAU TECH

Dr. Jason Morrison, Chancellor
870-574-4501/jmorriso@sautech.edu

Dr. Valerie Wilson, Vice Chancellor for Academics & Planning
SAU Tech Accreditation Liaison Officer
870-574-4514/vwilson@sautech.edu

6415 Spellman Road, Camden, Arkansas 71701/www.sautech.edu

Southern Arkansas University Tech Quality Highlights Report – 2020

Introduction

Southern Arkansas University Tech (SAUT) is a public, two-year college in south Arkansas. The College operates under the Southern Arkansas University System in delivering career technical, online, and transfer degrees and certifications. SAUT operates a secondary career center, and the Arkansas Fire Training Academy and Arkansas Environmental Training Academy. The College employs an average of 160 staff and faculty and serves an annual student body average of 1,800.

SAUT was created in 1967 and started offering classes in the fall of 1968. The campus of the College is inside the Highland Industrial Park-the largest privately owned industrial park in the southern area of the country. The College's original role was as a technical trainer to maintain a trained workforce for the industries that settled in the industrial park. SAUT has done that and more for over 50 years. Its role as a career technical trainer expanded to providing complete online and transfer degrees. The College is vital to the success of the industrial park and the area of south Arkansas it serves. SAUT provides students with options to learn in hands-on programs that provide for employment upon graduation or programs that transfer to four-year universities to complete bachelor degrees. The College provides student housing, NJCAA athletics, student support services (tutoring, personal counseling, expanded student orientation, student success courses, etc.) SAUT continues to connect with the needs of the region it serves and Arkansas in its development, expansion, and revisions to its program offerings.

SAUT entered the AQIP pathway in 2007. The College has submitted three systems portfolios, attended strategy forums, administered fourteen action projects, and had its accreditation most recently reaffirmed by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) in 2012. SAUT received the 2019 systems appraisal feedback report in June 2019. This Quality Highlights Report (QHR) is focused on providing information that may have been missing, or clarifying responses contained within the Systems Portfolio. Also, the QHR will provide evidence of actions the College is taking in areas that were self-determined to need improvement since the completion of the Systems Portfolio.

This report will address the strategic challenges identified, and the criterion for accreditation scored as unclear and adequate by the review team. SAUT is addressing the concerns identified in the systems appraisal feedback report and providing an updated overview that will be useful for the Comprehensive Quality Review (CQR) team.

Summary of Feedback from the 2019 Systems Appraisal Feedback Report

The 2019 SAUT Systems Portfolio provided descriptions and evidence of how the College meets HLC's Criteria for Accreditation. Evidence for seven core components was identified as "Adequate." SAUT's leadership reviewed these items and, with the support and input from their staff, provided additional evidence to address the specific concerns identified by the reviewers. Evidence for nine core components was identified as "Unclear." The College's Executive Leadership team believes these core components, while being met by the institution, were not adequately addressed in the Systems Portfolio. Five strategic challenges identified by the Systems Appraisal Review Team (SAT). The College's responses, actions, and planned activities are below. The items appearing in blue and underlined represent links to additional information for that item.

SAUT's HLC Task Force is led by the Vice Chancellor for Academics & Planning and includes the College's Chancellor, Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration, Vice Chancellor for Student Services, and seven faculty and staff members. This group was brought together in October of 2019 to collect evidence and review institutional practices and processes to address the specific concerns of the HLC reviewers and to prepare for the CQR team visit.

Institutional Strategic Challenges

1. Lack of clearly articulated procedures and processes tied to relevant results.
2. Data collection and analysis for ensuring procedures and processes are properly evaluated.
3. Interpretation of data providing analysis and improvements based upon the data provided.
4. Setting internal targets and external benchmarks.
5. The narrative and evidence may not be reflecting actual practices at the College.

Institutional Response to Strategic Challenges

To address the strategic challenges, SAUT reviewed the identified challenges and the feedback from the Systems Appraisal Feedback and used it to formulate the responses below as they relate to the Criteria for Accreditation.

Strategic Challenge #1, 2, 3, and 5 (Criterion 3, 4, and 5)
1. Lack of clearly articulated procedures and processes tied to relevant results. (Criterion 3, 4, and 5)
2. Data collection and analysis for ensuring procedures and processes are properly evaluated. (Criterion 2 and 5)
3. Interpretation of data providing analysis and improvements based upon the data provided. (Criterion 3 and 4)
5. The narrative and evidence may not be reflecting actual practices at the College. (Criterion 2)

While the College is still working to improve in these areas, some areas are more mature than others. These areas can be used as models as we work to improve in other areas. Examples are listed below.

1. Data collection for non-academic assessment is accomplished through Nuventive Improve. Annual reporting is done, by departments, throughout the year with a deadline of July 31. Data analysis is done by the departments and entered into Improve along with results. This report provides a sampling of data collection and analysis.
2. The hiring process is detailed in this flow chart. The results and evaluation of the process are detailed in this document.
3. The data collection and analysis process for program reviews is outlined in this document. This report contains results from this process.

Strategic Challenge #4 (Criterion 1, 3, 4, and 5)
Setting internal targets and external benchmarks.

Setting internal targets and external benchmarks is another area for improvement that is recognized by SAUT. The State productivity funding formula serves as the impetus for this process. The formula was discussed in great detail in the Systems Portfolio. Although funding is not based on comparisons between institutions, the results can be used by SAUT for external benchmarking. Key performance indicators (KPIs) for the College are included in the five-year strategic plan and are retention, persistence, and completion. The KPIs will be used by departments to set internal targets for their work. The plan for 2020-2021 thru 2024-2025 is in work and will be available for review during the evaluation visit.

Institutional Response to Core Components

Criterion One. Mission
Core Component 1.A Unclear
Core Component 1.D Unclear

Core Component 1.A

Reviewers' Comment: Evidence in Core Components 1.A.1. and 1.A.3. is circumstantial, providing a narrative around a process last conducted in 2008.

1.A.1. The process for development of SAUT's mission statement was not clearly articulated in the Systems Portfolio. The process is detailed in this chart. Changes in new college leadership delayed this process until a new chancellor was appointed in 2017. The process was kicked off when the Executive Cabinet chose "review of the college identity" as the project for the College's strategy forum in May 2018. Upon return from the strategy forum, SAUT employees were informed of the strategy forum attendance via an AQIP blast communication (email). During the College's fall 2018 convocation, the Vice Chancellor for Academics and Planning shared further details from the strategy forum and information about the proposed project to review the College's identity. A team (Rocket Nation Liftoff Committee) with representatives from the Faculty Senate (FS), Classified Staff Organization (ASO), and the Administrative Staff Organization (ASO) examined the College's mission, vision, and values. During March 2019, this team conducted surveys and focus group discussions and obtained feedback for the development of an updated mission, vision, and values for the College. In April 2019, the team compiled the information and used it to create the first draft of the mission, vision, and values. The draft, with minor revisions, was approved by the Rocket Council and SAUT's Executive Cabinet. It was then approved by SAU System President and subsequently by the SAU System Board of Trustees, in May 2019. SAUT's Chancellor presented the new mission, vision, and values to the campus community during the College's fall 2019 convocation. The Chancellor and his wife presented t-shirts to all employees with the mission statement printed on the back. The College's new mission, vision, and values statements are read each week at the beginning the College's Facebook radio show-Rocket LauncherLIVE.

The statement is posted on the College's main website and included in the academic catalog, student handbook, and other College publications. SAUT's current mission statement: "Southern Arkansas University Tech is a comprehensive community college that meets the educational, training, and cultural needs of the communities it serves." This statement is evident in all relationships and activities associated with SAUT.

1.A.3. Reviewers' Comment: Evidence in Core Components 1.A.1. and 1.A.3. is circumstantial, providing a narrative around a process last conducted in 2008.

The details of the budgeting process, including articulation of the process of allocation and how each budget area impacts the work supporting the mission, is discussed in the response for 5.C.1.

Core Component 1.D

Reviewers' Comment: Evidence in Core Component 1.D. is circumstantial as to how the mission demonstrates commitment to the public good. Evidence in the portfolio did not include documents outlining work with the community as well as external stakeholders. It was not clear if the institution reviews stakeholders for additional opportunities for enrollment or to identify additional services needed for students.

Evidence demonstrating how SAUT's mission statement demonstrates its commitment to the public good is discussed in the following paragraphs with links to evidence provided. Two of SAUT's separate training divisions, Arkansas Fire Training Academy (AFTA) and the Arkansas Environmental Training Academy (AETA), provide training statewide to individuals who hold public occupations or act as volunteers in fire departments and wastewater facilities. SAUT also has training agreements with the Arkansas Game & Fish Commission and the Arkansas Law Enforcement Training Academy (ALETA) to provide college credit for training hours towards degree attainment.

Employees are encouraged to participate as members and volunteers in the College's service area. Employees are members of the following organizations: Leadership Camden Area Board of Directors; Kiwanis of Camden; Rotary Club; Lions Club; Camden Housing Authority Board of Directors; Ouachita/Calhoun County Single Parent Scholarship Fund; Ouachita Partnership for Economic Development; Golden Triangle Economic Development Council: Arkansas Chamber of Commerce; and Camden Area Chamber of Commerce. SAUT maintains partnerships with external entities, particularly training partnerships within the Highland Industrial Park.

Additionally, the College hosts several events that the community attends (i.e., NJCAA Men & Women Basketball and Women Softball) and a variety of community events. SAUT has facility spaces available for public rental. In some cases, as with the local office for Court Appointed Child Advocates (CASA), the College provides office space. SAUT is mindful of its carbon footprint and has taken steps to make the campus more energy-efficient and green through LED retrofit projects, partnerships with solar providers and recycling programs.

Feedback from stakeholders is collected using various methods, including but not limited to: program advisory committees; form on web site for program suggestions; and recruiting. Feedback is also collected from college stakeholders that is used in the development of the strategic plan. A student opinion survey is conducted annually to get feedback from students on the services provided by the college. The details related to this survey and other surveys used for this purpose are discussed under Criterion 3 on page 5.

Criterion Two. Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct
Core Component 2.A Adequate
Core Component 2.C Unclear
Core Component 2.E Unclear

Core Component 2.A

Reviewers' Comment: While all documents noted in provided evidence (audit reports, accounting policies, internal control manual, external program accreditation, and conflict of interest policy for Board of Trustees and SAUT Executive Team), the evidence does not address integrity processes in all functional areas. The feedback provided in the Systems Portfolio for this criteria suggested that, "*Articulating how the information from the audits is used by the College and the improvements implemented as a result could strengthen this category. Additionally, articulating the College's approach for self-monitoring and resolving non-ethical behavior may raise the maturity level.*"

SAUT's response follows. As part of SAUT's annual self-monitoring, the State of Arkansas's official audit report for the College is presented to the SAU Board of Trustees by SAUT's, Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance. The presentation delivery is through a printed report and a PowerPoint presentation. Board members review a summary of the mandatory audit exhibits and budget versus actual comparisons. The data in the audit report is used to calculate all of SAUT's financial ratios, indirect cost rate and is used to complete mandatory federal and state reports, grant applications, and supporting documentation for revenue bond issues.

Core Component 2.C

 2.C.1. *Reviewers' Comment: Evidence in Core Component 2.C.1 consists of 75 pages of BOT minutes dating back to 2014, stating that they "can be examined to see how the board reviews and considers the interests of internal and external constituencies". The evidence does not point the review team to how the board's deliberations reflect priorities to preserve and enhance the institution or how they consider the interests of internal/external constituencies as could be expected in responding to the prompt.*

 The Board of Trustees, System President, SAUT Chancellor, administrators, and employees work to see that the College and members of the campus community are compliant with state and federal laws and College standards. Southern Arkansas University's general counsel provides orientation for all new board trustees regarding their fiduciary responsibilities. The SAUT Executive Cabinet provides budget reports, financial reports, and audit reports from the Arkansas Division of Legislative Audit to the Board.

 2.C.3. *Reviewer's Comment: Evidence in Core Component 2.C.3 identifies evidence of board meetings and corroborating evidence of a 2014 report presented to the BOT. Identifying evidence of BOT approvals from 2014 are provided, but it is unclear how this evidence demonstrates fulfillment of Core Component 2.C.3. A link is provided to the BOT conflict of interest policy, which also applies to the SAUT executive team.*

 The Governor, by and with the consent of the Arkansas Senate, appoints all five board of trustee members for the Southern Arkansas University System. Each appointee takes, subscribes, and files in the office of the Secretary of State, an oath to support the United States Constitution and the Arkansas Constitution and to faithfully perform the duties of the office for which they are appointed. Each board trustee also confirms, when taking oath of office that he or she will not be or become interested, directly or indirectly, in any contract made by the Board.

 Trustees are required to participate in statutory training, which is conducted by the General Counsel of Southern Arkansas University. The training consists of issues affecting student affairs, budgeting and finance, construction projects, the legal concerns of higher education, strategic issues for boards in higher education, fiduciary duties, academic accreditation, academic programming, and human resource updates. Trustees receive training in the areas of Title IX, the Cleary Act, FERPA, and ethics.

 A copy of the *Shared Governance in Times of Change* by Steven C. Bahl, a book published by the Association of Governing Boards, is provided to each board member. This book articulates why shared governance is an effective, alternative method of governance. The book also covers accreditation standards, barriers, and best practices.

 2.C.4. *Reviewers' Comment: Evidence in Core Component 2.C.4 is an organizational chart, and a screen shot of the webpage with the BOT and narrative around their responsibilities, but provides no identifying evidence that day-to-day management of the institution is delegated to the administration/faculty. No evidence beyond an organizational chart and narrative that the governing board expects the faculty to oversee academic matters is provided.*

 Arkansas Code 6-65-404 grants authority to the Board of Trustees and President of Southern Arkansas University to establish rules and regulations for the operation of SAUT. SAUT's Curriculum Committee and Assessment Committee are responsible for oversight of SAUT's academic matters. Recommendations for program development, revision and deletion are made by the Curriculum Committee and submitted to the Board of Trustees for approval. A log is maintained of these approvals. The Board Manual directs that SAUT's administration will develop faculty and employee manuals that will be used to direct the operations of the College.

 2.E.1. *Reviewers' Comment: Evidence in Core Component 2.E.1 is not presented due to the College's view that research is not part of its mission. This might not be a completely appropriate response since all students who write formal papers complete bibliographic research and some faculty utilize students in research projects for graduate degrees.*

 SAUT is a comprehensive two-year college providing career, technical, transfer, and training education. Teaching and hands-on training is the primary focus of the mission of the institution. Student research consists of secondary analysis of topics in which the student demonstrates the ability to collect, organize, and present information to complete class projects and assignments. Students receive instruction on issues of plagiarism using various methods, including individual course syllabi, Rocket Success Center orientation, Upswing video tutorials, free work cited services offered through the Center's online databases, and the SAUT Student Handbook.

 Any research conducted by a third party entity, including employees completing degree course work, is handled by the Office of Institutional Research, approved by the Chancellor, and must have an approval letter/MOU from the originating institution's Institutional Review Board.

 2.E.2. *Reviewers' Comment: Evidence in Core Component 2.E.2 for giving guidance on ethics for information resources delineates consequences and requiring the use of plagiarism software in some courses. This evidence might not be enough to demonstrate proactive guidance for the ethical use of information resources.*

 Students receive guidance on the ethical use of information resources. Classes that require students to cite sources accurately provide students advice through instructions for assignments and explanation of plagiarism. Some instructors use the third-party software, Turnitin, to serve as a tool to assist students in writing papers and to discourage plagiarism. Some instructors allow students to use Turnitin to check for plagiarism before finally submitting the assignment for grading.

Instructors address acts of plagiarism in their course syllabi and include the disciplinary measures regarding acts of plagiarism.

Criterion Three. Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support
Core Component 3.B Adequate
Core Component 3.C Adequate
Core Component 3.D Adequate
Core Component 3.E Unclear

Criterion 3. *Reviewers' Comment: Evidence in Criterion 3, while robust in some instances, does not provide direct evidence for the specific prompt in the criterion. There are numerous narrative statements outlining processes or referring to data; however, the data is not provided to support the statements.*

This is addressed in the narratives and evidence for Core Components 3B, 3C, 3D, and 3E discussed later in this section.

Criterion 3. *Reviewers' Comment: Evidence in Criterion 3 could be strengthened by including usage data for the areas noted for student support demonstrating the effectiveness of the services provided for students.*

In response to reviewer feedback, this document contains the usage data for some of SAUT's student support services. The College uses several surveys to collect feedback from students on the support services that are provided. The Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) is conducted during the spring semesters of the even numbered years (2016, 2018, 2020, etc.). Although this was the plan, the CCSSE was not conducted in spring 2018. The next administration of this survey is scheduled for spring 2020. A student satisfaction survey is conducted each fall semester. A graduate opinion survey is conducted May of every year prior to graduation. The student evaluation on teaching is done during the fall and spring semesters annually.

Although these instruments are in place, in many cases, the results have not been provided to the departments in a timely manner to be used for evaluation and/or improvement of services. The data are used to implement improvements however, not in an intentional and systematic way to track results. Another challenge has been the declining response rate (with the exception of the CCSSE). Lastly, SAUT uses surveys as the only means of obtaining student feedback on these services. A committee, made up of student support personnel, students and academic personnel, has been formed to address this issue. The actions and timeline for completion of this project are provided in the table below.

Action	Planned Completion
Implement use of student focus groups to collect feedback on student support services	Spring 2020
Review/revise content of surveys • Graduate opinion survey • Student satisfaction survey • Student evaluation on teaching (classroom and online instruments)	April 2020 Summer 2020 Summer 2020
Determine the appropriate means of collecting survey data • Graduate opinion survey • Student satisfaction survey • Student evaluation on teaching (classroom and online instruments)	April 2020 (Next administration: May 2020) Summer 2020 (Next administration: Fall 2020) Summer 2020 (Next administration: Fall 2020)
Add survey metrics to department plans	July 31, 2020

Core Component 3B

3.B.1. SAUT recognizes its role in preparing its associate degree graduates to function as competent and skilled workers to achieve any continuing academic goals and to live as life-long learners and thinkers. Consequently, general education at SAUT assists students in understanding the connection between their course work, their social and vocational responsibilities, and their rewards as citizens of a free nation.

The general education core curriculum requirements are consistent with SAUT's mission. Each associate degree requires completion of a minimum number of credit hours of general education courses. Also, each program-specific course within the associate degrees assesses at least one general education competency (GEC) with all GECs being assessed within the program-specific courses. For assessment, the general education component at SAUT focuses on measurable student learning outcomes. To support its general education mission, SAUT has adopted the following competencies expected of all

its associate degree graduates: 1) applied ethics, 2) communication, 3) information technology, 4) critical thinking, and 5) mathematical reasoning.

3.B.2. Reviewers' Comment: Evidence for Core Component 3.B.2 for the sufficiency of SAUT's general education offerings is possibly missing attention to the social sciences (including understanding diversity), the natural sciences, and the arts.

In response to this comment, the Assessment Committee made the decision to add GEC #3-A Historical, Cultural, Social, and Global Perspective from the previous GECS, back to the GECs as GEC #6. This GEC will be added for the next assessment cycle in 2021-22. The components of GEC #6 are listed below.

A Historical, Cultural, Social, and Global Perspective
1. Understand the complexities of the human experience in reference to sociological, cultural, historical, geographical, psychological, political, and/or economic events issues and points of view.
2. Demonstrate a familiarity with the body of knowledge in the social science fields.
3. Acquire an appreciation for the art, history, politics, and philosophies of their own and other cultures.
4. Acquire the basic abilities within the social sciences to identify multiple perspectives, assess problems and advance solutions, and pursue inquiry and report results and/or opinions.

GECs are reviewed at the end of each assessment cycle. This review is conducted by the Assessment Committee. A brief overview of SAUT's assessment program is provided in this document.

A final point made by reviewers was regrading one of the methods that SAUT uses to articulate the GECs to students. The method in question was listing the GECs next to the applicable course learning outcomes on the course syllabi. To clarify this for students, a section was added to the course syllabi describing the items. A link to the GEC document was also added.

3.B.3. Reviewers' Comment: Evidence for Core Component 3.B.3 does not make clear if every student encounters each of the subcategories of each of the General Educational Competencies (GECs). Additionally, it is not clear that mastering modes of inquiry or creative work is addressed.

A review by the Assessment Committee confirmed that all five major GECs are assessed in all of the College's programs. In response to the comment regarding students not encountering each of the subcategories for each GEC, the Assessment Committee agreed that students are not expected to encounter all of the subcategories but that they should encounter all of the major GECs. The subcategories are used to allow options for faculty to choose way(s) in which their students encounter the major GECs which fully addresses this HLC subcomponent.

3.B.5. Reviewers' Comment: This activity is not mentioned in the Portfolio or in SAUT's mission. This is not at all unusual at institutions that offer two-year degrees with career preparation focus.

SAUT agrees with the reviewer comment for this subcomponent.

Core Component 3.C

3.C.2. Reviewer's Comment: SAUT will want to be sure to have available on-site evidence by instructor regarding faculty credentials as well as evidence showing that the College's expectations for the expected credentials of concurrent and adjunct faculty have been followed.

Files for full-time, adjunct and concurrent faculty regarding faculty credentials will be available for review.

3.C.3. Reviewer's Comment: SAUT should assure that it can provide documents as evidence of how faculty evaluations have been completed according to policy and procedures, and how the various inputs are used within the process.

Evidence of how faculty evaluations have been completed according to policy and procedures, and how the various inputs are used within the process will be available for review.

3.C.4. Reviewers' Comment: SAUT appears to have processes and resources in place to assure instructors are current in their disciplines and adept in their teaching roles. The College will want to have evidence available on site that would indicate by instructor that the College is keeping its faculty current and how this has been accomplished.

The primary means of faculty remaining current in their discipline is through professional development. This process is discussed in 5.A.4.

3.C.5. Reviewers' Comment: While SAUT has the faculty requirements in place to assure instructors are accessible for student inquiry, the College will want to determine how it can prove this accessibility takes place (evidence).

Office hours for adjunct faculty, including online faculty, are outlined in the Adjunct Faculty Policy and Procedures Manual. One means of evaluating faculty accessibility for students is the CCSSE. The last CCSSE conducted at the College was in 2016. The results show that SAUT scored .2 percent higher (50.2%) than its cohort group (50.0%) in student-faculty interaction. Student-faculty interaction was one area of highest student engagement. Thirteen point two percent (13.2%) of SAUT students, compared with 11.7% of other students in the cohort, responded *often* or *very often* on item 4q, "Worked with instructors on activities other than coursework." The next administration of the survey will take place spring 2020.

Another means of determining if faculty accessibility to students is taking place is from the Graduate Opinion Survey and the Student Opinion Survey. The results of the Graduate Opinion Survey show a decline of .02 percent from 2016 to 2018 for "faculty available for student outside of class". The Student Opinion Survey shows a .42 increase from 2015 to 2018 for "faculty are usually available to students outside of class (during office hours, by phone, or by e-mail)". In an effort to verify individual faculty availability for students, random checks for availability during office hours will begin fall 2020.

3.C.6. Reviewers' Comment: SAUT appears to have steps in place to assure staff are qualified, trained, and supported. The College will want to assure it has documentation that provides evidence that these steps are followed and have assured that qualifications, training, and support have occurred and have been available for all support service staff.

The College will have documentation available that provides evidence that qualifications, training and support have occurred and have been available for all student support services staff.

Core Component 3D

In November 2018, a team, appointed by the Chancellor, attended a Holistic Student Support Services Institute. The Institute was hosted by the Arkansas Community College (ACC) association and led by representatives from the nationally-recognized Achieving the Dream (ATD) initiative. This Institute led to an 18-month guided process intended to assist the participating institutions in improving their student support services so that students are provided services when needed during their education process. A committee was formed with the Vice Chancellor for Academics and Planning and the Vice Chancellor for Student Services serving as co-chairs. The committee named itself "Dream Team." The purpose of the initiative is "to create a student experience that will provide tools and resources needed to be successful both academically and personally." The Team's mission is to "provide oversight for the entire student experience from first contact to graduation," and its vision is, "All SAU Tech students will be guided, supported, valued, and empowered to reach their personal, academic and career goals.

Some changes that have taken place since November 2018 include a revamp of the College's new student orientation process; implementation of Rocket Launch (an intensive program that takes place before the semester starts but after students move into campus housing); and the implementation of an intake process for students. The Team recently completed the process mapping of the student lifecycle from the time students apply for admission to the College to the first day of classes to identify gaps in the process. Input from students, faculty, and student service departments was used to complete the process. This activity led to the creation of the Team's initial action plan.

Core Component 3E

3.E.1. Reviewers' Comment: SAUT opened an action project to develop a process for designing, aligning and delivering co-curricular activities to support learning. The institution's mission statement is not mentioned.

In 2016, an AQIP Action Project was initiated to develop co-curricular assessment for the College. Co-curricular activities, goals, and outcomes were developed and tracked through 2018. The co-curricular activities that were tracked and measured are listed in this table. The originally selected activities relate to the College's GECs for Communication (Oral), Communication (Interpersonal), and Critical Thinking. They also relate to the College's stated mission of providing educational, training, and cultural needs of the communities it serves. In this case, its community is students.

While the stated co-curricular goals and outcomes were valid at the point of creation, they are limited in scope, and they do not include a number of other means that SAUT provides co-curricular learning experiences for its students. The College also is aware of the need for additional evidence in the form of qualitative questionnaires and/or short surveys to assess the student experiences as they relate to the linked GECs.

In reviewing the information included in the College's stated co-curricular goals, it was apparent that the College needed to take a step back and reassess the larger picture of what students are provided within the area of co-curricular. A need to revamp the goals and objectives to encompass additional activities was also identified. An effort will be undertaken to determine other activities that are considered co-curricular and are course-specific or program-specific, that may or may not have been shared with the original AQIP Action Project team members. Student services personnel will be added to the current Assessment Committee. The Committee will review the co-curricular goals and objectives and update the information to create a more comprehensive picture of what is taking place to support student learning outside of general program coursework. Clear linkage between the College's GECs and mission statement will be documented.

3.E.2. Reviewers' Comment: SAUT does not directly claim to make contributions to its students in its mission, other than to state it provides its service area with quality education. The College assesses learning outcomes and has information regarding licensure exam pass rates, both of which document quality. In general, the College downplays its mission statement, often discussing its strategic plan instead when AQIP prompts reference the mission statement.

The College's GECs, the College's Mission Statement, and the College's Strategic Plan all link to support the learning experience of SAUT's students. While the College's Mission is a broad statement focusing on the education,

training, and cultural needs of the communities it serves, the SAUT student is considered one of the College's most prominent "communities." SAUT serves its student community by providing opportunities to learn both inside the classroom and outside of the classroom. In the classroom, the College offers both quality transfer degrees and technical degrees, which are industry advised. The College's programs meet outside licensing standards, Arkansas Division of Higher Education (ADHE) standards, and internal review standards. Transfer programs are closely aligned with partner institutions.

To further create learning opportunities, the College provides co-curricular activities (stated in 3.E.1.) for students to enhance learning that supports their academic and cultural development. Both the curricular and co-curricular activities link to the College's GECs in that they support the development of oral communication, interpersonal communication, and critical thinking. The College's courses, programs, and degrees are aligned in order to prepare students to meet transfer and workforce expectations. A review of the College's GECs, General Education Statement, course learning outcomes, program learning outcomes, College Mission Statement, and Strategic Plan to clarify and improve linkage is anticipated in 2020.

Criterion Four. Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement
Core Component 4.A Adequate
Core Component 4.B Adequate
Core Component 4.C Unclear

Core Component 4A

4.A.1. *Reviewers' Comment: Evidence for Core Component 4.A.1 regarding the reviewing of academic programs for quality appears to focus mostly on cost and market factors and not learning outcomes or the success of its graduates.*
The information provided in the Systems Portfolio did not clearly articulate SAUT's program review process. As a result of a 2011 AQIP action project, the College established a program review process. A table, detailing the process, was created by the action project team. The process provides details for external and internal program reviews. The external reviews are conducted in accordance with the Arkansas Division of Higher Education (ADHE) mandate that programs are to be reviewed every seven to ten years. The external program review schedule is submitted to ADHE annually by the Vice Chancellor for Academics & Planning. This report contains activities resulting from the 2018 external reviews. Internal program reviews will begin fall 2020. This document contains the schedule for internal program reviews.
4.A.6. *Reviewers' Comment: Not mentioned are employment rates and participation in other post-graduate activity beside transfer.*
At the present time, the College does not track the employment rates of its graduates internally. SAUT does not currently have the resources or means to track other postgraduate activities of its students. However, this is a concern state-wide for colleges. ADHE and college representatives are discussing methods that may resolve this lack of outcome data in the future.

Core Component 4B

4.B.1. *Reviewers' Comment: Evidence for Core Component 4.B.1 regarding the assessment of student learning outcomes does not clarify if all students encounter and are assessed in all the GEC subcategories.*
This is addressed in 3.B.3.
4.B.3. *Reviewer's Comment: Evidence for Core Component 4.B.3 regarding improvements made in student learning through assessment findings are minimal in nature given the breadth of the entire curriculum. Those few courses (less than five) where students failed to pass the GECs at the 70% level were part of an action plan for improvement. It was not clear what these improvements were and how the improvements would be measured to determine effectiveness.*
In spring 2017, a new Vice Chancellor for Academics and Planning was appointed for the College. At that time, there were five GECs: Communication Arts (Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking); 2) Computer Literacy; 3) Critical Thinking; 4) Historical, Cultural, Social, and Global Perspective; and 5) Research. The process for assessing the GECs was:
1. The GECs were divided into two groups that were assessed during the fall and spring semesters. In the fall semesters, GEC #2-Computer Literacy, #1-Reading, #1-Speaking, and #4-Critical Thinking were assessed. In the spring semesters, GEC #1-Listening, #1-Writing, #3-Historical, Cultural, Social, and Global Perspective and #5-Research were assessed.
2. Each semester the Vice Chancellor for Academics identified the courses for which GECs would be assessed.
3. Data was collected with results provided back to faculty during faculty meetings at the beginning of each semester.

There was no clear process used in selecting the courses where GECs were assessed each semester. This made it difficult to demonstrate that action was taken in instances where standards were not met in a course. Also, the sample sizes varied each semester. For example, in fall 2014 there were 62 observations for GEC #2-Computer Literacy. In fall 2015, there were 183 observations for that same GEC. The courses where GECs were assessed for fall 2015 were not the same courses where

GECs were assessed for fall 2014. Although standards were met for both years, two different sets of courses were assessed in those years. There was no indication that the courses assessed in fall 2014 would eventually be assessed again for those GECs or that all courses would eventually be assessed for all GECs thus ensuring that all associate degree students were encountering all GECs prior to completion of their degree.

In spring 2017, the Assessment Committee met to review the GECs and discuss the process being used for assessing the GECs. As a result, the GECs were revised along with the assessment process. The revised GECs are listed in 3.B.1 above. The new process was implemented fall 2017. At the time of the writing of the Systems Portfolio, the implementation of the "new" assessment process was in its very early stages. The College is currently in its second year of data collection for courses and GECs using the new process. This document contains 2017-2018 course assessment results for some programs. This table contains 2017-2018 GEC assessment results.

Part of the revisions to SAUT's assessment process included the creation of a method to be used for program assessment. A program assessment cycle was developed. This graphic shows the progress of program assessment at SAUT. This document contains the results from the first group of programs in the program assessment cycle.

4.B.4. Reviewers' Comment: Evidence for Core Component 4.B.4 regarding the participation of the faculty in assessment reveals that only 11 of 21 programs are on schedule with the program assessment cycle.

Since submission of the Systems Portfolio, updates have been made to the program assessment schedule. There are a total of 17 programs being assessed with all programs on schedule. The "graphic" in 4.B.3. shows the progress.

Core Component 4C

4.C.1. Reviewers' Comment: SAUT's understanding of the metrics of the state's new funding formula and establishment of course completion targets provide a good foundation for the College to establish targets for retention, persistence, and completion. This gives SAUT the opportunity to determine trends and set targets that could improve their productivity and increase their funding.

At the writing of the Systems Portfolio, SAUT did not have a documented process for establishing targets for retention, persistence, and completion. Since that time, this has been added as part of the strategic planning process. SAUT is in the process of establishing targets for the next five years which will be included in the strategic plan.

4.C.2. Reviewers' Comment: Narrative describing work was included but no evidence was provided. SAUT has clearly defined definitions for retention, persistence, and completion. However, the process described appears to be limited in scope because it does not include steps beyond where it begins and to whom it is distributed. Outlining how the various functional areas in the College review and use this information to improve retention, persistence and graduation could strengthen this process.

As discussed in the response to Strategic Challenge #4, retention, persistence and completion are KPIs for the College. The method in which the various functional areas will use this information to improve in these areas will be detailed in department plans. SAUT is in the process of finalizing its newest five-year plan which will be followed by revisions to department plans. Therefore, this information is not available at the writing of this report.

4.C.3. Reviewers' Comment: Narrative describing work was included but no evidence was provided. Planning documents to improve student retention, including how all functional areas of SAUT will be involved in the improvement outcomes was not provided as evidence.

The results of the program viability review are included in this document. The next review is schedule to occur during the spring 2020 semester at which time the results and related follow-up actions will be reviewed to determine if further action is required from the spring 2017 review.

During the fall 2019 semester, instructors set individual success rate goals for the 2019-2020 academic year. Progress toward meeting the established goals will be discussed with instructors during their spring 2020 evaluations. Goals for the 2020-2021 academic year, as well as actions taken to improve rates for the 2019-2020 academic year, will be included in the spring 2020 faculty self-evaluation. During spring 2021 evaluations, instructors will be evaluated on meeting/not meeting their 2019-2020 goal.

Student retention, persistence and completion are included in the strategic plan. Strategies and metrics are identified and will be filtered down into department plans which will then provide evidence of functional areas contributing to the improvement of these indicators.

Criterion Five. Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness
Core Component 5.A Adequate
Core Component 5.B Unclear
Core Component 5.C Unclear
Core Component 5.D Unclear

Core Component 5.A

5.A.1. Reviewers' Comment: SAUT appears to have the fiscal and human resources and physical and technological infrastructure sufficient to support its operations wherever and however programs are delivered. However, the College might benefit from building more intentional and systematic processes to ensure there are sufficient resources in these critical areas to support operations. The processes for maintaining the physical infrastructure are not well defined.

SAUT does have intentional processes in place to ensure there are sufficient resources in these critical areas to support operations. The College has dedicated student fees that are used to help support the expenses associated with technology and security needs across the campus. In compliance with a state mandate, the College budgets a Facilities Use Fee for the upkeep and maintenance of the newly constructed student center. Additionally, the Student Activity Fee is used to help fund both men's and women's athletic programs in addition to student activities.

Other intentional processes include moving any unused utility budget to Plant Funds at year end to build a utility reserve account and any unused contingency to a capital reserve account in Plant Funds. Ten percent of the Student Processing Fee is also moved to the Plant Funds Parking Lot Reserve since state funds cannot be used for parking lots. Finally, both the Welding Academy and the Workforce Development departments are now self-supportive. All student fees associated with the academy and workforce training are solely used to fund these programs.

There are defined processes in place for maintaining the physical infrastructure of the College that were not discussed in detail in the Systems Portfolio. These include: Arkansas State Vehicle Safety Program, State Agency Vehicle Application (SAVA), capital improvement program, work order system and preventive maintenance, energy program, and grounds maintenance.

SAUT participates in the Arkansas State Vehicle Safety program. The program is designed to monitor SAUT employees who operate the College's vehicles. The system rates a driver as good or bad by using a point system which can change if the employee's record requires them to take a defensive driving course or, in rare occasions, to lose their driving privileges. This program is crucial in reducing accidents which may cause harm to someone or result in unnecessary costs to the College. In addition to this program, the Physical Plant has also updated the College's vehicle reservation forms which further support safe driving.

The Physical Plant department uses the Arkansas Department of Finance & Administration's SAVA program to maintain all state vehicles under the management of SAUT. The program is used in purchasing, reporting and maintaining the vehicle fleet. The SAVA vehicle program monitors all gas receipts, maintenance repairs, vehicle parts replacements, mileage and preventive maintenance. The use of this reporting system increases the longevity of the fleet and helps reduce overall maintenance cost.

In 2017, the College had increased to a level of growth that it became necessary to prioritize all building projects. In this process, the capital improvement form was developed. The implementation of this form streamlined information between departments and personnel involved in the project. The form is designed to give specific instructions on campus planning, project management and funding sources.

The Physical Plant department is responsible for providing the repairs and maintenance of all SAUT buildings and grounds. A work order system is used to track the work performed by the department. The submission of work orders is accomplished in various ways (phone, email, personal contact, etc.). The orders are entered into the system where work is tracked from start to completion. Emergency services needed after normal business hours are reported to the Physical Plant Director who delegates the work through the proper channels. The work order system is also used in the preventive maintenance process. Each building has a checklist for fire extinguishers, exit lights and emergency lighting which are checked monthly to ensure all equipment is in working condition.

As part of the strategic planning for SAUT, an energy plan was developed which continues as an ongoing process. SAUT is proactive in planning for ways to decrease energy usage. Some examples include: installation of LED lighting in all on campus facilities; installation of a solar farm; replacement of old HVAC systems resulting in energy efficient furnaces and condensers; and window replacements. These activities have shown remarkable value to the College in reduction in energy cost. The Strategic Energy Plan Committee continues to work toward implementing more processes to reduce energy cost.

In 2019, SAUT administration recognized the need to outsource the majority of grounds maintenance. The total estimated annual cost savings from this decision is $19,966.

5.A.2. *Reviewers' Comment: SAUT's resource allocation processes ensure that its educational purposes are not adversely affected by elective resource allocations to other areas or disbursement of revenue to a superordinate entity. The allocation of resources to achieve organizational goals includes a designated allocation to academics; however, the process does not necessarily ensure that educational purposes are not adversely affected by other organizational goals. An approach that prioritizes funds necessary for supporting educational purposes over other institutional objectives might enhance the maturity level in this area. Also, providing more evidence regarding how the budgeting process works and how it assures proper allocation of resources would strengthen the College's response.*

The budgeting process is shown in this flowchart. At present, SAUT does not have a formalized process for ensuring that educational purposes are not adversely affected by other organizational goals. However, Instruction and Academics (Instruction and Academic Support) expenses have normally comprised 35 to 40 percent of the College's budget. Since the appointment of a new Vice Chancellor for Academics (January 2017) faculty are required to be more involved in the budget development process than previously.

5.A.3. *Reviewers' Comment: The overall process might be enhanced by periodic evaluation to ensure that this alignment is occurring and effective.*

Once the College's strategic goals are identified, department goals and outcomes are established based on the College's overall goals. Departments develop departmental goals that support the College's overall identified strategic goals. Annually, departments report the outcomes of their department's goals and review/revise their department goals for the upcoming year. This process is an effort to ensure that every College department's goals and activities remain aligned to what SAUT as a whole is seeking to achieve with its strategic plan. This process is overseen by the Vice Chancellor for Academics and Planning.

5.A.4. *Reviewers' Comment: The staff of SAUT are adequately qualified and trained. A more holistic approach might better ensure that all departments are providing appropriate professional development for all employees.*

As discussed in the original Systems Portfolio, employees are required to complete mandatory professional development. Additional training requirements are established between employees and their supervisor based on areas that the supervisor identifies as needing improvement, or additional training is requested by the employee. A self-evaluation component has been added to the employee evaluation process and includes a section for employees to identify their individual goals as it relates to their job duties. The goals are expected to link to the College's strategic plan goals. This information is used by supervisors to identify/determine employee professional development needs. In 2019, the College began requiring instructors to complete discipline-specific professional development as a faculty member. The first evaluation to determine if instructors met this requirement will take place during the spring 2020 faculty evaluations. Funds are allocated in the operating budget each year to cover the cost for faculty professional development.

5.A.5. *Reviewers' Comments: Authorized unit budget managers are able to view their budgets throughout the year with the ability to transfer funds within their unit budgets upon the approval of the appropriate administrators. However, outlining more details for monitoring all financial decisions and developing an evaluation of the processes that includes measuring the satisfaction of those involved may improve the maturity in this area.*

At present, SAUT does not have a process in place to evaluate employee satisfaction with the budgeting process. The College has developed several layers of financial monitoring and oversight. At the end of each month's closure and reconciliation, budget managers receive a summary of monthly activities with supporting documentation. Managers are charged with reviewing these reports for accuracy. In addition to the monthly activity reports, budget managers receive an Overage Report for accounts with a negative balance. A negative balance doesn't always mean a problem. It could be a timing issue, but this report brings immediate attention to the balance so that it can be investigated. Budget managers are given authority to make budget transfers within their respective departments and operating accounts; however, all budget transfers must have executive officer approval so that alignment with the strategic plan can be verified.

The second level of monitoring consists of comprehensive revenue and expense reports for all Current Unrestricted Funds. These reports are sent monthly to the CFO and the Chancellor for review. The CFO reviews each account to verify sufficient balance and also for transaction posting errors. At year-end, the Controller produces a Year-End Budget vs. Actual Report, which compares the initial budgeted revenues and expenses to the actual revenues and expenses. This report is presented to the Board of Trustees along with the mandatory financial exhibits and audits.

One of the most useful and relevant monitoring devices comes from the review of the Annual State-wide Financial Condition Report that is produced annually by the ADHE. The purpose of the report is to describe the financial condition as well as the challenges experienced by Arkansas's public institutions of higher education. The report addresses several topics including performance-based funding, productivity-based funding, revenues versus costs in higher education, funds per full-time equivalent (FTE) student, the increased volume of construction on campuses, a comparison of Arkansas faculty salaries to other Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) states and various charts and graphs on tuition and fees by institution, expenditures by function, fund balance, operating margins, athletic income and spending, scholarship expenditures and measures of performance. This report benchmarks the two- and four-year institutions.

Core Component 5.B

5.B.1. Reviewers' Comment: Evidence in Core Components 5.B.1 and 5.B.2 around oversight is not related specifically to the criterion. Ancillary evidence that the board approves institutional budgets and academic program proposals is provided. Evidence of policies/procedures is not provided.

The General Assembly of Arkansas created Southwest Technical Institute (SWTI) in 1967 to provide a technically trained workforce for the growing Highland Industrial Park in which the institution was located. The Brown Foundation of Houston, Texas, which purchased the Shumaker Naval Ammunition Depot for use as Highland Industrial Park, donated 70 acres of land and six buildings, forming the first physical facilities of the school. The State Board of Education operated SWTI until 1975 when, by an Act of the Arkansas legislature, SWTI became Southern Arkansas University Tech (SAUT), under the governance of the Board of Trustees of Southern Arkansas University. With this change, the College came under the jurisdiction of the Arkansas Department of Higher Education with authority to grant up to and including the associate of arts, an associate of science, and associate of applied science degrees. Arkansas Code 6-65-404 grants authority to the Board of Trustees and President of Southern Arkansas University to establish rules and regulations for the operation of SAUT. The Code also directs these entities to operate the properties belonging to SAUT. The Southern Arkansas University Board Manual delineates the processes for establishing rules and regulations for SAUT and its relationship with the Board of Trustees.

To keep the Board informed about SAUT and its activities, SAUT's Chancellor has a standing place on the agenda to update the Board at quarterly meetings. The Board also approves SAUT policies, budget, and academic programs. For information purposes, SAUT presents its annual Minority Recruitment and Retention Report and Arkansas Financial Audit Reports to the Board.

5.B.2. Reviewers' Comment: Evidence in Core Components 5.B.1 and 5.B.2 around oversight is not related specifically to the criterion. Ancillary evidence that the board approves institutional budgets and academic program proposals is provided. Evidence of policies/procedures is not provided

SAUT promotes the philosophy of shared governance and has established governance and advising groups to help ensure open communication, collaboration, and problem-solving. Descriptions of these groups are as follows:

- The Executive Cabinet consists of the chancellor and vice chancellors and meets regularly to discuss the business of the College, address issues/concerns/suggestions that require executive decisions and facilitate communication and coordination among the separate departments.
- The Rocket Nation Council (formerly Quality Council) is an extension of the Executive Cabinet and includes the department heads who report directly to the Chancellor, the director of the Career Academy, chairs of each staff organization, and other department heads. This Council provides a forum to share concerns and ideas from all departments and to propose/approve policies and practices for the College.
- The employee organizations (Classified Staff Organization (CSO), Administrative Staff Organization (ASO), and Faculty Senate (FS) meet regularly and submit concerns and/or suggestions to the appropriate executive officer who researches the issue(s) and provides follow-up to the organization chair who communicates the response/resolution to the organization body.
- SAUT's Student Leadership Program defines the student leadership experience at SAUT for all students regardless of class year or skill level. These select students volunteer their time to various campus and community events as well as projects that enhance SAUT and South Arkansas.
- The Board of Trustees is engaged with SAUT at this level as appropriate. For example, members served on the search committee for hiring SAUT's Chancellor.
- There are also numerous committees in place that promote the shared governance philosophy.

5.B.3. Reviewers' Comment: Evidence in Core Component 5.B.3 is the charter for the curriculum committee and a description of the assessment committee, which corroborate the narrative that they exist, but provides no identifying or corroborative evidence to support that these committees meet regularly or what they do to meet the sub-component.

The Curriculum Committee and Assessment Committee are charged with setting academic requirements for the College. These committees meet regularly and are comprised of administrators, faculty, staff, and students.

Core Component 5.C

5.C.1. Reviewers' Comment: Evidence in Core Components 5.C.1 and 5.C.4 supporting the narrative stating this is accomplished by action plans identified through the budgeting and planning processes is not provided. A form for budget requests is the only evidence document.

SAUT is a state-supported two-year college whose revenue is based on Arkansas's general revenue, tuition, fees, grants, contracts, private gifts, and sales/services. SAUT allocates all financial resources through its operating budget process, which is conducted every spring. The budget process was revised for the FY18 budget making use of a new budget template form.

Employee self-evaluation was implemented for the 2019 evaluation period. This evaluation includes a section for employees to identify their goals for the upcoming year. They are required to link them to the applicable strategic plan goals. Employees are evaluated to determine if the goals they identified the previous year were accomplished. While the College is in the early stages of this new process, the ultimate goal is that employee goals directly contribute to department goals that link to SAUT's strategic plan and goals.

The College's operating budget is allocated across the major classifications of Instruction, Academic Affairs, Institutional Support, Student Services, Physical Plant, Debt Service, and Auxiliary. Within each of these classifications, budget managers are entrusted to make sure funds are managed efficiently and in accordance with the identified and linked strategic priorities and goals.

State funding is determined through the Biennial Appropriations Process, which is conducted in the fall of every odd-numbered year and is coordinated through the ADHE. This comprehensive process includes requests for Capital, Personnel, Non-formula, and Formula Operating needs. This process establishes appropriations for both Arkansas general revenue and cash funds. All state appropriation requests are submitted to the Arkansas General Assembly for final funding approval.

Historically, capital expenditures have been funded primarily through Arkansas's General Improvement Funds, Bond Issues, and Private Gifts. The capital needs of the College include buildings, infrastructure, and equipment that are identified and prioritized by the Chancellor's Executive Cabinet and other department heads and requested through the Biennial Capital Appropriations Request.

5.C.2. Reviewer's Comment: Evidence in Core Component 5.C.2 for linking its processes for assessment of students learning, evaluation of operations, planning, and budgeting is departmental plans, which contain assessment of learning outcomes. Evidence of how these plans link to operations and budgeting is mentioned in the narrative, but not provided.

The information provided in the Systems Portfolio did not clearly communicate the processes that are place to address this subcomponent. SAUT has processes in place for the assessment of student learning and program quality, evaluation of operations through the institutional quality process (see Core Component 5D) and institutional planning (see Core Component 5.C.3.).

5.C.3. Reviewers' Comment: Evidence in Core Component 5.C.3 for systematic and integrated planning that encompasses the institution as a whole is a list of Program Advisory Committees and a form asking employees to crosswalk their goals to the institutional mission and goals. Evidence could be considered circumstantial, as no direct evidence that Advisory Committees meetings are held or that the forms are completed by employees is provided.

SAUT's planning process is led by the planning committee and starts every five years with a review/revision of the College's mission, vision, and values. SAUT's planning process is outlined in this process chart. The strategic plan is reviewed every year to evaluate the progress being made and to determine if revisions are needed.

As mentioned in the Systems Portfolio, 2008 was the last time that SAUT went through the full process of revising its strategic plan. The strategic plan was, however, reviewed each year from 2008 to 2015. During 2015 and 2016, SAUT was led by an interim appointed vice chancellor and the President of the Southern Arkansas University System. During that time, the main focus of the College was to increase student enrollment.

In January 2016, the process for appointing a new chancellor for SAUT began. An excerpt from the position announcement described the characteristics of SAUT's new leader in stating, "The Board and President are seeking an innovative, inspirational, and visionary leader committed to academic excellence and student success working with students, faculty, and staff of the Tech Campus, and others in the System to provide a comprehensive program of instruction and services that fulfill the needs of students, community, and business and industry. Communicating with and responding to community, business, and industry, and statewide stakeholders are key to overall success and fulfillment of the mission." In December 2016, a new chancellor was named for SAUT with a start date of January 3, 2017.

In December 2016, the new Chancellor sent pre-planning thoughts to the vice chancellors. His first address to all employees was held in January 2017, where he discussed his pre-planning ideas and focus for the College. On January 23, 2017, the Chancellor held a strategic planning retreat with his executive cabinet. The retreat resulted in a list of agreed-upon initiatives that refocused the College's strategic plan. In summer 2017, the Chancellor asked the vice chancellors for an update on the progress made toward the completion of the initiatives.

May 2-4, 2018, is the date that was assigned for SAUT's most recent strategy forum. The newly appointed Chancellor thought it would be logical for the focus of this forum to be re-identifying SAUT. The identification of a project focus led to the assignment of a team to review and revise the College's mission, vision, and values, as discussed in 1.A.1. The completion of this project led directly to the revision of the strategic plan. The Chancellor appointed a strategic planning committee composed of the three vice chancellors and representatives from faculty, classified and administrative employees. The timeline and meeting minutes are provided as evidence for the CQR team. The current planned completion date of SAUT's new strategic plan is February 2020.

5.C.4. Reviewers' Comment: Evidence in Core Components 5.C.1 and 5.C.4 supporting the narrative stating this is accomplished by action plans identified through the budgeting and planning processes is not provided. A form for budget requests is the only evidence document. Evidence in Core Components 5.C.4 and 5.C.5 regarding reduction of force does not, according to the narrative, result from environmental scanning. The narrative states that environmental scanning is used to address these; however, no processes for this are provided.

This narrative better addresses this core component. When the state funding formula was implemented ten years ago, the intent was that all institutions, both four-year and two-year, would be funded at a minimum level of 75 percent of the needs-based model. Unfortunately, for many of the institutions, including SAUT, this level has never been reached. Currently, SAUT is funded at 61.9 percent of the calculated need. The shortfalls in state funding, declining enrollment, and overall public perception of higher education have entirely changed the way SAUT addresses its SWOT analysis. Through the services of the ADHE, ACC, and many of the state and federal higher education associations, SAUT administrators are better able to stay informed on global and local trends affecting colleges and universities.

Declining cash flow, resulting in enrollment decline, required SAUT to respond to an HLC Financial Review for 2016 and 2017. This created a sense of urgency and concern. The two primary areas that contributed to the change in the institution's financial health as interpreted by the financial ratios at that time were:

- The College's financial ratios were significantly impacted in the fiscal year 2012-2013 when the College issued two revenue bonds to help fund the construction of a new student center located on the north side of the campus; and
- The fiscal Year 2011-2012 represented the beginning of the decline in campus enrollment. From 2011 through 2015, the College's core enrollment declined by approximately 22 percent, resulting in a drastic reduction in cash flow from tuition and fee revenues. Because of the negative impact on cash flow, the administration made bold efforts in 2014 and 2015 in reducing daily operating expenses and developing strategies to rebuild and increase the annual enrollment. The result of the budget adjustments was a $918,000 (8 percent) decrease in the College's operating budget during that period. The College faced this decrease by maximizing resources and improving efficiencies, which is extremely critical and the key to sustaining current services and facilities. Some of the strategic ways in which the College has approached these trends include:
  - Campus-wide focus on cost-containment ([AQIP Action Project #9](#));
  - Changes in processes for improved efficiencies;
  - Focused efforts on improvement in student graduation and retention rates (AQIP Action Projects #6 & #13);
  - Focused efforts on decreasing the institutional default rate resulted in the creation of a committee (default rate declined from 31.5% in FY10 to 20.5% for FY16) charged with continual monitoring of the College's rate;
  - Continued discussions with state officials about the shared responsibility of remediation costs between the secondary schools and two-year colleges;
  - Analysis of vacant positions and the critical need to fill [(new process for filling positions)](#);
  - Annual review and recommended changes in health care benefits and retirement options;
  - Aggressive efforts in securing [grant funding](#); and
  - [Enhanced workforce training](#) through the College's Workforce Training Program.

All of these strategic efforts have included campus-wide involvement of faculty, administrators, staff, and students through institutional [committee](#) charges and AQIP Action Projects.

5.C.5. Reviewers' Comment: Evidence in Core Components 5.C.4 and 5.C.5 regarding reduction of force does not, according to the narrative, result from environmental scanning. The narrative states that environmental scanning is used to address these; however, no processes for this are provided.

As part of SAUT's process for updating its strategic plan, a SWOT analysis is conducted. This process assists the College in anticipating emerging factors, such as technology, demographic shifts, and globalization. Feedback for the SWOT analysis is solicited from the College's internal (employees, students, Board of Trustees, etc.) and external (business and industry, community members, etc.) constituencies. The [results of the SWOT](#) analysis are used to develop the institution's strategic goals for the following five years.

Core Component 5.D

5.D.1. Reviewers' Comment: The reports that SAUT provides as evidence of performance in its operations do not provide context for how CQI has impacted these reports.

As discussed in the Systems Portfolio, SAUT uses numerous reports to monitor/inform continuous quality improvement activities. For example, the College's increasing loan default rate in 2010 prompted the initiation of a contract with a consulting firm to work with the financial aid office to implement ongoing activities to decrease the rate. These activities are now part of the normal loan process and a committee was formed to oversee that work and advise additional process changes. The default rate decreased by 11 percent from FY10 to FY16. The [assessment of student learning process](#) is used to continually assess and continuously improve student learning at the institutional, course and program levels.

Retention, persistence and completion rates are used to monitor/improve services/processes such as tutoring, early alert reporting, etc.

5.D.2. Reviewers' Comment: SAUT states that follow-up action is taken for any initiatives that did not achieve the stated objectives. However, the kind of analysis that takes place to determine why the objectives were not achieved and how best practices or research in the field might be incorporated to guide the follow-up action is not mentioned. Also, no mention is made about what might be learned from successful CQI initiatives that might be applicable to other College initiatives. Although SAUT communicates the status of AQIP projects and initiatives to the College community in a number of ways, no evidence is presented that an intentional process to review, reaffirm, and understand the benefits of being on the AQIP Pathways has been developed.

SAUT learns from its operational experience and applies that learning to improve institutional effectiveness, capabilities, and sustainability, overall and in its component parts. Some examples of this are:

1. An AQIP action project led to the improvement in the class schedule process. The old process was mapped leading to a much streamlined process that is still being used at the College. The goal of the project was to publish the class schedule by the established deadline. The spring 2020 class schedule was published one week before the established deadline.
2. There was no process in place to ensure that classes were scheduled during days/times that did not conflict with other classes that students needed to complete their degree. In spring 2017, the Chancellor appointed a committee to address this issue. A schedule matrix was developed and is being used to ensure that there are no overlaps in classes that students need to complete their degrees. As a result, the College's student semester credit hour (SSCH) for its core college enrollment (excludes concurrent, AFTA, and ALETA enrollments) has increased by 9.7 percent.
3. To ensure that the College's programs are relevant to the current job market, the College maintains advisory committees for each program. The new Vice Chancellor for Academics and Planning and a division chair found that most of the program advisory committees were no longer functioning. Industry experts and industry representatives were identified to serve on committees related to their professional areas to ensure that program advisory committees worked to ensure programmatic success. The advisory committees met during spring 2019. The target date for the next meeting of the advisory committees is February 2020.
4. Another means of improving College effectiveness was the creation of a common internship class for students in the College's technical programs. There was no consistency or standards for internships, as well as no means of tracking the completion of hours and employer follow-up. A common internship course has been developed that is part of the degree plan for most of the College's AAS degrees. The course is comprised of coursework that is completed in the College's learning management system (taught by one instructor) and completion of a predetermined number of hours with employers identified by program faculty.
5. Through a partnership with ACC and the Charles A. Dana Center of the University of Texas at Austin, SAUT is participating in the Math Pathways Initiative. This is a statewide initiative for two- and four-year colleges with the goal of increasing student success by addressing two structural drivers of the problem: 1) the mismatch of content; and 2) long, multi-semester course sequences. Mathematics pathways refer to developmental and college-level course sequences that align to a student's academic and career goals, and that accelerate student completion of a gateway college-level math course that introduced the co-requisite model for students scoring at a certain level in developmental math. SAUT moved to this co-requisite model beginning fall 2018. The College is currently analyzing and comparing data for the students completing college-level math under the new model versus the old model.

This is a shortlist of improvement initiatives undertaken by SAUT. Under the College's current leadership, the focus is to continually find better and improved ways to do business and serve the College's stakeholders. The Chancellor stresses the importance of questioning processes that are not feasible and taking the necessary steps for improvement.