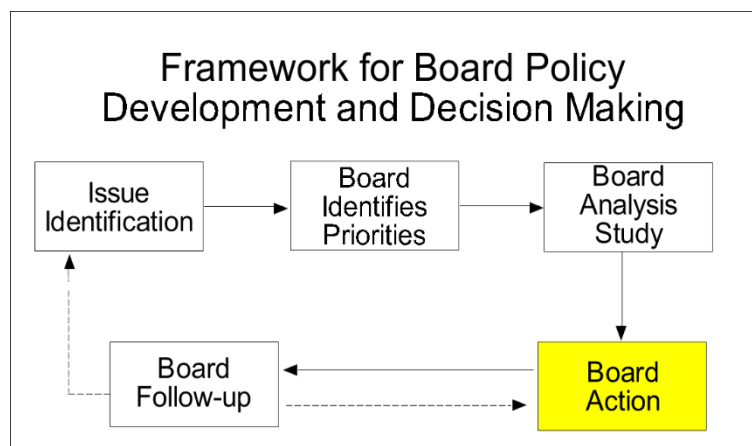


Iowa State Board of Education

Executive Summary

March 29, 2018



- Agenda Item:** Southwestern Community College (SWCC) Comprehensive Accreditation Report—Fiscal Year 2018
- State Board Priority:** Increasing Accessibility of Career and Technical Education, Work-Based Learning, and Community College Credit and Preparing Productive Citizens for Rewarding Careers
- State Board Role/Authority:** Iowa Code section 260C.47(3) grants authority to the State Board of Education to determine whether the programs of a community college shall remain accredited.
- Presenter(s):** Barbara Burrows, Chief
Bureau of Community Colleges
- Attachment(s):** One
- Recommendation:** It is recommended that the State Board grant continued accreditation for Southwestern Community College. A state interim accreditation evaluation will be conducted in fiscal year 2023.
- Background:** This is a report of the evaluation of SWCC for continued state accreditation as an associate degree-granting institution. The Department of Education conducted the on-site portion of the evaluation on November 29-30, 2017. The findings reflect the work of the accreditation team during the interim review of SWCC.
- SWCC is regionally accredited by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) that conducts college reviews every five years. In an effort not to duplicate the HLC accreditation process, the state process reviews the most recent HLC report to see if any follow-up is needed and then focuses on the college's compliance with Iowa state criteria/standards. State standards are reviewed through a structured process by Department staff and community college peer reviewers. Because this was a comprehensive review, the two peer reviewers joined the Department team on the site visit.

Accreditation Report
Comprehensive State Evaluation

Southwestern Community College

November 29-30, 2017

FY 2018



**COMMUNITY COLLEGES &
WORKFORCE PREPARATION**
PROSPERITY THROUGH EDUCATION

**State of Iowa
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Grimes State Office Building
Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0146**

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**Accreditation Team
Southwestern Community College
Comprehensive Accreditation Evaluation
FY 2018 (Academic Year 2016-2017)**

Accreditation Team Members

Barbara Burrows, Chief
Bureau of Community Colleges
Iowa Department of Education
Grimes State Office Building
Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0146

Eric St Clair, Education Program Consultant
Bureau of Career and Technical Education
Iowa Department of Education
Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0146

Chris Russell, Education Program Consultant
Bureau of Community Colleges
Iowa Department of Education
Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0146

Zoë Thornton, Education Program Consultant
Bureau of Career and Technical Education
Iowa Department of Education
Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0146

Bob Leifeld, Vice President of Administration
Iowa Lakes Community College
19 South 7th Street
Estherville, IA 51334

Susan Troy, Science and Social Science Faculty
Northeast Iowa Community College
PO Box 400
Calmar, Iowa 52132

**Southwestern Community College (SWCC)
Comprehensive State Accreditation Evaluation
FY 2018 – Conducted November 29-30, 2017**

Purpose of the Evaluation

The purpose of this review was a scheduled accreditation evaluation of Southwestern Community College by the Iowa Department of Education as mandated by Iowa Code Section 260C.47.

INSTITUTIONAL OVERVIEW

College History¹

Southwestern Community College (SWCC) began operation as a part of Iowa's community college system on July 1, 1966. In assuming its role as a new institution, SWCC inherited the facilities and instructional programs of Creston Community College which had been operated by the Creston Community School District since 1926.

A 406-acre campus site was purchased in 1966, and the first new building was occupied in the summer of 1970. Over the next two decades, the campus expanded with the addition of the Student Center, Administration Center, and Technical Center, followed in 1995 by the Arts and Wellness Center. This facility houses SWCC's adult and continuing education department and performing arts auditorium; as well as the Southern Prairie YMCA, complete with gymnasium, Olympic-size pool, and other recreation and fitness facilities. The Creston campus also includes outdoor facilities for tennis, baseball, softball, and recreational facilities to house intercollegiate and intramural activities. SWCC's campus is home to hundreds of students living in their residence halls, so the college expends financial and staff resources to provide a robust campus environment conducive to student learning and personal development.

SWCC has a strong arts and sciences program complimented by an array of career and technical education (CTE) programs, a comprehensive adult and continuing education program, and just-in-time industrial training dedicated to their service area's economic development. In addition to programs offered at the main campus in Creston, the Red Oak Center was opened in 1985 to serve the growing needs in Montgomery County. The center moved to a permanent location in 1991, where staff provide customized training for local businesses and industries, as well as adult and continuing education classes, including high school equivalency diploma classes and testing.

In 1992, SWCC opened another center in Osceola in collaboration with the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) program. The Osceola facility was expanded by 8,000 square feet in 1999, making more room to offer high-quality CTE classes, customized training, adult and continuing education classes, and select arts and science classes.

In 2000, in an effort to increase the accessibility of coursework to students across the college's service region, SWCC joined with six Iowa community colleges to organize the Iowa Community College Online Consortium (ICCO). The consortium offers online courses taught by instructors at the six colleges that lead to various degree program options, accompanied by a robust offering of educational services for students. This is just one of the many ways SWCC has used its limited resources to expand its programs and services to residents in southwest Iowa and beyond.

Institutional Profile²

Southwestern Community College exists to provide community members with opportunities to gain skills and knowledge necessary for successful employment, higher education achievement, and lifelong learning. SWCC is a comprehensive two-year degree-granting institution accredited by the Higher Learning Commission. The college offers over 20 CTE programs (with 35 award types) in addition to the Associate in Arts (AA) and Associate in Science (AS) academic programs at its three locations: Creston (Main) Campus, Osceola Center, and Red Oak Center. In addition to its centers, SWCC extends educational opportunities and services within its region, which includes portions of 10 counties and 19 school districts, through regional centers that offer career academies and concurrent enrollment courses offered in partnership with area high schools.

SWCC enrolls over 2,100 students annually in degrees leading to university transfer and preparation for the workforce. The institution's Enrollment Management, Institutional Effectiveness, Assessment, and Strategic Planning committees have implemented numerous initiatives to assist students in reaching their academic and career goals while enjoying college life and personal development activities. These efforts have led to SWCC's students achieving a 51.5 percent success rate (program completion and/or transfer), which is third highest in the state (College Profile, 2016). SWCC also ranks third among Iowa's 15 community colleges in Credit Student Awards as a percentage of total enrollment (College Profile, 2016). These are outstanding accomplishments for the smallest college in the state, in terms of student credit enrollment.

In addition to its success with credit students, SWCC provided 6,329 individuals with non-credit business and industry training through its adult and continuing education division (College Profile, 2016). These statistics speak well about the responsiveness and quality of the academic, career, and personal development opportunities that Southwestern Community College offers its students.

¹ Information for this section was obtained primarily from: <http://www.swcciowa.edu/about/general-college-information/college-history>

² Information for this section was obtained from college website (above) and provided by college staff.

Special Topic Summary – Outcomes Reporting (*Continuous Improvement*)

As part of Iowa Department of Education’s (DE’s) Comprehensive State Accreditation process, colleges may request assistance on a *special topic* that they perceive to be an area in need of improvement. This component is intended to be an opportunity for the college to receive input, feedback, or assistance from one or more agencies or peer institutions. The special topic is purposefully separate from the compliance components of the accreditation review so that no findings may arise based on the DE’s observations. For that reason, inclusion of this summary in the accreditation report is at the college’s discretion.

SWCC’s chief academic officer, Bill Taylor, requested that a special topic be included in their accreditation visit pertaining to student outcome data collection and reporting. The college is currently using a variety of instruments for these processes, including SENSE (Survey of Entering Student Engagement), CCSSE (Community College Survey of Student Engagement), VFA (Voluntary Framework of Accountability), program review, graduate placement and satisfaction surveys, and various student assessment tools. In an effort to streamline the use of such instruments, and because the college has not been able to fund a full-time institutional research position, they were interested to learn about processes at peer institutions that make the best use of limited staff time in this area. It is also important to note that SWCC was in the process of upgrading their computer software system (Jenzabar) at the time of the DE’s visit, so they requested to consult with at least one peer experienced in outcomes reporting utilizing Jenzabar.

To accommodate this request, DE staff gathered a panel of institutional researchers and administrators from colleges known for having outstanding data collecting and reporting processes, including expertise using Jenzabar and developing web-based dashboards. The four college representatives from Kirkwood, Hawkeye, Western Iowa Tech (WITCC), and Iowa Valley were asked to share information regarding:

- best practices in using Jenzabar EX (if applicable) for internal and external reporting needs;
- information they wish they had when creating their data collection and reporting process; and
- specific advice in utilizing dashboards and processes related to outcomes reporting.

SWCC officials began the special topics session by explaining that they want to develop a comprehensive, user-friendly data collecting and reporting system that goes beyond program/departmental use of information to a comprehensive, collegewide reporting and data utilization process for both internal and external use. They are also interested in utilizing dashboards as a method of getting timely, accurate data to decision-makers on a continuous basis. To start the special topics program, each panel member presented an overview of their institutional data systems and research and outcomes reporting activities.

After the brief overviews, SWCC staff and the DE accreditation team engaged the panel in a vibrant discussion about best practices in data collection; reporting, including the use of dashboards; and the use of Jenzabar. SWCC staff asked questions to garner advice on processing the multitude of data being collected and condensing it into meaningful and useful forms. Examples of dashboard usage were distributed, highlighted by WITCC’s use of dashboards and the Voluntary Framework of Accountability (VFA) data in college outcomes reporting. Kirkwood described their methods for reporting continuing education and workforce outcomes (i.e., non-credit outcomes), and Hawkeye discussed how the college has benefited from *Proview2* program review software. Iowa Valley was the only Jenzabar user, so shared tips regarding data collection, reporting, and producing and designing data publications.

SWCC’s president, Barb Crittenden, and her staff were appreciative of the panel’s presentations and ensuing discussion. They expressed that the information would be helpful in both their Jenzabar transition and the continued development of their student outcomes reporting processes.

ASSURANCE SUMMARY STATE STANDARDS

Compliance with Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Criteria

The Iowa Department of Education's state accreditation team (DE team) reviewed the most recent report and information from the HLC available at the time of this evaluation. Southwestern Community College's HLC accreditation letter provided adequate evidence that the college has continuing regional accreditation with no issues, concerns, or findings documented.

During the opening meeting with Southwestern Community College's president and leadership team, the DE team discussed some suggestions made by the HLC in the March 14, 2016 HLC reaffirmation review visit report. The team learned that SWCC met all HLC required criteria, has implemented strategies to address HLC's suggestions, and the college received notice of continued college HLC accreditation in June 2016, with no interim monitoring recommended.

The team confirmed that the college has made good strides to follow-up on the HLC recommendation to improve the use of college data for continuous quality improvement. As part of their HLC quality initiative, all faculty and adjuncts are completing student learning assessments, including general education assessments (particularly in Composition I and Statistics across all delivery modes). The upcoming Jenzabar EX transition should also aid SWCC's efforts in providing data directly to faculty members for their program review process, and in the form of a web-based dashboard for easy access to current, relevant student enrollment and outcome data.

Compliance with Iowa State Accreditation Standards

Faculty Qualifications

All community college-employed instructors who are under contract as of July 1, 2011, who teach in career and technical education (CTE) or arts and sciences (including adjuncts) are required to meet minimum faculty standards (Iowa Code, Section 260C.48). The DE accreditation team reviewed a random sample of faculty personnel files provided by the human resources office to ensure compliance with the standard.

The DE provided a random list of 20 faculty members who taught credit courses in the previous year for whom SWCC provided personnel files regarding qualifications, with supporting documentation such as college transcripts, employment applications to illustrate related work experience, and third-party licensure/certification, if applicable. The DE team then examined the files to determine whether the qualifications of each faculty member complied with current Iowa Code faculty standards for the courses he or she taught during FY 2017 (i.e., fall term 2016 and spring 2017).

Following a thorough review of SWCC's 20 faculty personnel files, the DE team met with the vice president of instruction (CAO), the assistant vice president of Instruction, and the HR director to discuss one concern raised during the review and to learn more about the college's faculty qualification review process, in general. Regarding the concern about insufficient documentation for one faculty assignment, SWCC staff explained their rationale for approving the instructor in question and were able to provide documentation to support their decision. The DE reviewers were satisfied with the rationale and documentation provided and offered a few suggestions for improving their documentation process.

Finding: No compliance issues were noted during the evaluation.

Faculty Teaching Load

The teaching loads of full-time instructors must not exceed the faculty load limits set forth in Iowa Code. This is the case for CTE instructors, as well as for college parallel (arts and sciences) instructors (Iowa Code, Section 260C.48). To check compliance with this standard, the DE accreditation team reviewed the instructional loads of a random sample of 20 faculty members for whom SWCC provided documentation of their FY 2017 (fall 2016 and spring 2017 terms) teaching loads.

SWCC provided adequate documentation of the FY 2017 teaching loads of the faculty under review. After receiving a brief explanation of the loading procedure, particularly regarding contact hours, the DE reviewers determined that SWCC's instructional assignment/loading practices are sound and compliant.

Finding: No compliance issues were noted during the evaluation.

Special Needs

Community colleges shall provide equal access to the full range of program offerings and services including, but not limited to, recruitment, enrollment, and placement activities for students with special education needs or protected by state or federal civil rights regulation. Students with disabilities shall be given access to the full range of program offerings at a college through reasonable accommodations (Iowa Administrative Code 24.5(3)), with information regarding how to access such accommodations provided in a disability statement. In addition, community colleges shall have nondiscrimination statements ensuring access to educational programs and employment for state and federally protected classes. This nondiscrimination statement must list all state and federally protected classes; provide the name/title and contact information of the person(s) designated to coordinate equity, Title IX, and Section 504 compliance; and provide contact information for the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) in Chicago, Illinois. The nondiscrimination and disability statements may be separate or the college may choose to combine them.

The DE accreditation team conducted a desk review prior to the onsite visit in which they reviewed SWCC's Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and nondiscrimination policies, statements, and practices in marketing and recruitment publications, handbooks, the college catalog, the college's website, and sampled course syllabi. During the onsite visit, the team reviewed additional documentation and conducted interviews with faculty, students, and staff associated with disabilities services to ensure compliance with the standard.

The DE team found adequate evidence to determine that SWCC is using a consistent, compliant nondiscrimination statement in all appropriate publications. A discussion with marketing and student services staff confirmed that they understand the statement should be prevalent in any publications that are designed for student recruiting or that provide information about student programs and services.

In both the desk review and in the onsite visit, the DE team saw evidence of numerous collegewide efforts to create a welcoming environment for all students, provide accommodations for students with special needs, and provide opportunities for special populations of underrepresented students in particular programs of study. Some of these observed efforts include the following:

- Students are involved in decision-making in many areas, such as curriculum, program review, strategic planning, housing, facilities, and co-curricular learning opportunities.
- College staff work with high school counselors to address the needs of individual students either taking concurrent enrollment courses or preparing to attend SWCC.
- Well documented procedures in disabilities support services brochures and handbooks.

- Automotive instructors prepared accommodations for a prospective student in a wheelchair.
- The college engaged a student with special needs in a college facilities ADA review.
- The Electrical program review includes recommendations to increase the recruitment of Latino students.
- The college partners with Iowa State University (ISU) Extension to facility *Juntos Para Una Mejor Educación* (Together for a Better Education), which is a community-based program to encourage youth and their parents to work together to pursue and access higher education.
- The college supports the initiatives of its Educational Equity/Diversity Committee, which has “ADA Compliance” as a standing agenda item.
- When SWCC builds a new building or remodels, they put an emphasis on ADA and student needs.
- The college contracted with a consultant to review the facilities for ADA needs.
- The college purchased a site license of Kurzweil Reader that anyone can access, whether they have limited sight or not. The ICCOC also provides an electronic reader service for online courses.
- The college houses Vocational Rehabilitation on campus and utilizes their resources for testing students regarding potential disabilities and helping students obtain special services.

The DE team held a discussion with student services staff regarding updating some of their college grievance process language and structure. While not a part of the accreditation process, the guidance shared should prove beneficial to their students and help the college prepare for a future equity review.

Finding: No compliance issues were noted during the evaluation.

CTE Program Evaluations and Timelines

There are a variety of state standards related to the offering of career and technical education (CTE) programs included in Iowa Code Chapter 258, 281—IAC 46.7(4), and 281—IAC 24.5(4). These standards include numerous requirements related to program and award length, program content, labor market demand, articulation, advisory committees, and more. All CTE programs (including new programs and changes to existing programs) must be approved by the DE. Standards for CTE programs are included in the *Program Approval: Guidelines for Iowa Community Colleges* and in the *State Accreditation Guide* on the DE website.

The DE utilizes a web-based platform (CurricUNET) for its CTE program approval process and maintains a database of approved programs and courses. This platform performs compliance checks on all CTE programs offered by each college. The DE accreditation team reviewed this compliance check for SWCC’s CTE programs to ensure compliance with the state program standards. For the standards regarding program advisory committees’ composition, roles, and responsibilities, the DE team reviewed a random sample of CTE advisory committee membership lists and meeting minutes to ensure compliance.

Additionally, community colleges are required to review at least 20 percent of their CTE programs annually, standards for which are provided in the aforementioned program approval guideline on the DE website. The DE team reviewed SWCC’s CTE program review process, schedule, and a random sample of recent CTE program reviews to ensure compliance with the CTE program review standards.

The program review documents submitted for desk review from the past five years showed improvement in the consistency and quality of SWCC's evaluation process, especially for those completed in the past two years. The college has developed a collegewide process for a committee to review program evaluations and provide feedback to the program's faculty who, in turn, incorporate the feedback into their review documentation and process. The team was impressed with the following positive efforts associated with SWCC's program review process:

- A comprehensive data-driven template is being utilized and the college has a process to continuously improve the instrument.
- A strong peer review (faculty-owned) process with input from many departments and stakeholders, including some not typically involved in academic program review such as facilities, continuing education, the business office, student services, and students themselves.
- A scoring rubric completed by each member of the program evaluation committee which takes subjectivity out of the process.
- A tracking spreadsheet showing each year's evaluation recommendations and the status of each resulting improvement initiative. This is helpful to the college in closing the loop.
- The program review process is tied to SWCC's strategic plan and equipment request processes.
- The college provides a comprehensive faculty orientation to the program review process and provides a mentor to program faculty who are going through the process for the first time.
- Following a recommendation from the HLC, the college is incorporating program review into Arts and Sciences programs.
- Advisory board members contribute to the program evaluation process and are often instrumental in program improvement, such as providing third-party credentialing.
- An advisory board handbook is comprehensive and well thought out.

During discussions with CTE faculty and administrators, they indicated that they are continuing work on the following initiatives to strengthen SWCC's program review process:

- Automating and pre-populating data in the reports to reduce the faculty's time and effort surrounding program data collection, thereby allowing them to focus on analysis and evaluation.
- Aligning college program review documents and scheduling with third-party accreditation report requirements and timelines to increase efficiency and relevance of the two processes.

Finding: No compliance issues were noted during the evaluation.

Catalog/CurricUNET Review

The DE quality program consultant conducted a manual comparison of SWCC's approved CTE programs in CurricUNET's database with those described in their college catalog. During this comparison, it was found that three of the 35 CTE program award options listed in SWCC's 2016-17 college catalog had minor general education variances from the approved Educational Program Reports (AS-28).

The three minor program issues were discussed with SWCC's CAO and CurricUNET administrator during the visit and they committed to correcting the discrepancies in the next catalog update. The DE reviewers were satisfied with this resolution and the quality program consultant will monitor the catalog changes.

Strategic Plan

Community colleges are required to update their strategic plans at least every five years as a guide for the community and its decision-making (Iowa Code section 256.31(4)(a)). The DE accreditation team reviewed SWCC's most recent strategic plan and interviewed selected staff to ensure compliance with this standard.

The DE team reviewed SWCC's *FY 2016-2020 Strategic Plan*, which includes five initiatives and 25 goals. The initiatives support goals focused on student learning, enrollment and retention, resource efficiency, learning environment, and workforce partnerships. The DE team was impressed with the inclusive and comprehensive process SWCC employed to create their strategic plan, as well as the following components to the strategic planning process:

- The college hired a consultant to assist with their Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity (VUCA) study.
- Staff reviewed past, present, and future considerations through environmental scanning.
- The plan was developed in a relatively short timeframe considering all of the feedback incorporated from faculty, staff, students, advisory boards, department chairs, committees, and external constituents.
- The college utilizes an operational plan that specifies the parties responsible for meeting measurable goals associated with each initiative, which has served to engage the full college community in accomplishing the strategic plan.
- The plan addresses the need to close the middle-skills gap with detailed and targeted benchmarks.
- An "Accomplishments Form" encourages personnel to report their goal-related accomplishments in real-time, which keeps the plan dynamic and transparent.
- An annual progress report tracks the status of each initiative.
- Student input helped improve processes such as the Early Alert System for which they learned they needed to provide feedback to students within the first three weeks of a semester for it to make a difference.

SWCC has experienced some impressive enrollment gains through various initiatives, such as an increased capture rate of high school joint enrollment students (i.e., joint enrollment students enroll in SWCC after graduation rather than another college), improved retention, and an increase in student diversity.

Finding: No compliance issues were noted during the evaluation.

Physical Plant and Facilities

Each community college must present evidence of adequate planning, including a board-approved facilities plan. The community college's plan must meet state and federal requirements as outlined in the state accreditation guide. The DE accreditation team reviewed SWCC's facilities plan and interviewed the college president and the chief financial officer (CFO) regarding the college's facility planning process and decision-making structure to ensure compliance with this standard.

SWCC utilizes a rolling five-year facilities plan (updated each year) that was last approved by the board of trustees in December 2016. In preparing their annual updates, college leadership seeks input from several stakeholders including, but not limited to, faculty, staff, and students. Involvement of industry and local agencies is also evident in matters such as emergency response procedures and decision-making on such things as cancelling classes due to weather situations.

During the DE interview with the vice president in charge of facilities and operations, it was evident that SWCC places a high priority on ADA compliance and campus safety matters. Large-scale requests for ADA-related accommodations or renovations are taken to the president's cabinet for alignment with the strategic plan and to identify resources. Having experienced a tornado that destroyed some of their Creston campus buildings, college leaders know the importance of maintaining accurate, clearly posted emergency plans, and training staff and students to act responsibly in various situations.

In addition, the DE team learned that a technology plan has been developed by a standing committee that monitors computer lab and classroom technology needs. The plan calls for the computers in student learning labs to be upgraded on a three-year cycle. This was just one more demonstration that the SWCC consistently and conscientiously places learning at the center of facility and operational decision-making.

Finding: No compliance issues were noted during the evaluation.

Quality Faculty Plan

Iowa law establishes the process for community colleges to plan for the hiring and professional development of faculty. Institutional quality faculty plans (QFP) are required to meet the standards of 281-IAC 24.5(5). The DE accreditation team reviewed SWCC's QFP and interviewed members of the QFP Committee to ensure compliance with this standard.

SWCC's QFP was last approved by the Board of Trustees in September 2017, and is maintained by a seven-member committee consisting of four faculty and three administrators that frequently meet to review the plan and revise, as necessary. The DE team met with the committee to discuss key components such as faculty orientation, mentoring, professional development opportunities, and record-keeping. The plan requires a face-to-face orientation for all classroom instructors, with an online version for those who cannot attend, as may be the case for adjunct or concurrent enrollment instructors. However, the college schedules mandatory events for concurrent enrollment instructors who are released from their high school responsibilities to attend training and information sharing. Because of the differences in adjunct and full-time instructors' responsibilities, SWCC also offers separate handbooks for each group.

The QFP also includes an impressive mentoring component in which all new full-time instructors are assigned faculty mentors who work with them for two years. In most cases, two mentors are assigned to each new instructor, thereby ensuring that he or she always has someone to assist with curricular, classroom management, and professional development matters.

The only concern the DE team had with SWCC's QFP regarded the fact that five of the required eight faculty development "units" may be earned through regular classroom teaching. The DE team, particularly the external faculty reviewer, expressed that classroom teaching does not seem to fit the expectations of professional development, so it was **recommended** that the committee review other colleges' QFP plans regarding allowable professional development activities and expectations. Additionally, the team also suggested that the committee consider a structured rotation of faculty membership to balance the benefits of experience and continuity with the infusion of energy and fresh ideas that less experienced instructors may bring. The committee seemed to appreciate the DE team's input and said they would also work to increase the rate at which adjunct instructors submit QFP documentation (currently 65 percent) to document the fact that they are all completing professional development activities.

Finding: No compliance issues were noted during the evaluation.

Senior Year Plus Programs

There are a variety of requirements for Senior Year Plus (SYP) programs offered to high school students jointly enrolled in Iowa's community colleges. These requirements are included in Iowa Code Chapter 261E. Currently, the DE utilizes the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnership's (NACEP) accreditation process to ensure compliance with many statutory requirements (legislated Postsecondary Course Audit Committee). The DE accreditation team reviewed SWCC's accreditation status with NACEP, interviewed select staff, and reviewed documentation to ensure compliance with this standard.

SWCC's concurrent enrollment program, College Connection, is overseen by the Coordinator of Secondary Programs, under the office of the Vice President of Instruction (CAO). Through this program, the college offers college coursework at multiple high schools within its region, with a significant portion of students enrolled in career academy opportunities offered on the Creston campus and the two satellite locations in Osceola and Red Oak.

The college's program was initially accredited by the NACEP in 2012, and will undergo reaccreditation during the spring and fall of 2018. The DE team saw evidence that the coordinator maintains appropriate documentation and processes required for NACEP accreditation, including a standard template for observation of courses offered at high school locations, faculty and student orientations, and discipline-specific instructor professional development. The DE team was particularly impressed with the following practices related to SWCC's College Connection program:

- Concurrent enrollment instructors are required to participate in both orientation, with a mandatory event scheduled on the college campus, and annual professional development.
- Concurrent enrollment instructors are assigned a college faculty mentor who completes the required on-site course observation and serves as a college resource.

It is evident that the college is committed to building and sustaining relations with high school instructors and concurrently enrolled students. This relationship building also extends to the students' parent and guardians, as is evident in the parent/guardian involvement with the application process. Parents are asked to sign the application to acknowledge that they understand the benefits and consequences of their child participating in college-level coursework. This awareness is reinforced through outreach efforts such as participation in parent teacher conferences.

SWCC is implementing an impressive degree audit process, which involves the institution developing a report for each high school student that documents their completed coursework and what must be completed to earn a degree in a specific program. The course information is supplemented with cost analysis for completing the degree program at SWCC rather than transferring directly to another institution upon high school graduation. This information is shared with both the student and parents/guardians, and seems to have increased the enrollment rate among these students.

While the DE team understood the college's rationale for the parent/guardian signature on the concurrent enrollment application, they raised a question as to whether the signature can be required on a postsecondary application because this is not a requirement on the general college application. Because of this uncertainty, the DE team **recommends** that the college obtains a legal opinion on this matter, considers removing the required signature line, or revises the form to make it clear that the signature is simply requested (i.e., voluntary with the student's approval).

Finding: No compliance issues were noted during the evaluation.

Compliance with Non-Accreditation State or Federal Requirements

Finding: No non-accreditation compliance issues were noted during the evaluation.

Evaluation Team Recommendations

The Iowa Department of Education's community college accreditation team recommends continued accreditation for Southwestern Community College.

A state interim accreditation evaluation is scheduled for FY 2023 (i.e., Academic Year 2022-2023).