



September, 2016

When you are surrounded by people who share a passionate commitment around a common purpose, anything is possible. ~ Howard Schultz

*When I think about how we, at SouthArk, put our mission of promoting learning, teaching, and service to work to serve our students or clients, I think about our **shared purpose**. Each of you work mightily to meet the many various needs of our students from so many different levels – no matter what position you hold here at SouthArk. Whether it is providing a clean and comfortable learning environment, financial aid, tutoring, support services, educational experiences, corporate training, or even a listening ear, each of you are committed to serving our students. Why? Because we want our students to be **SUCCESSFUL** – through courses and labs, at work, or in life. That is our **shared purpose**. Their success is our success.*

I am so proud of all that you do to help our students succeed. I can see it on the faces of the students and on you when our students graduate. What a fulfilling profession we have in higher education! Thank you for your passion, your commitment, and your shared purpose – to make success possible for our students! Dr. J

UPDATES AND HIGHLIGHTS AROUND CAMPUS:

WEAVE: SouthArk purchased WEAVE (Centrieva’s Academic Effect) two years ago and, in that time, it has been used quite extensively. It is a cloud-based platform which supports institutional effectiveness in higher education institutions. Faculty and staff may think that they are only entering their assessment reports and departmental outcomes but WEAVE is using those tagged outcomes to create connections across the college. On the academic side, WEAVE allows faculty to select the Program Learner Outcomes (PLO) and College Wide Student Learner Outcomes (CWSLO) that are connected to their course learner outcomes. By creating this alignment, PLO can be measured and reviewed from the beginning of the student experience in the program until the end. The same aggregation of data occurs for the CWSLO. In addition to the academic data for CWSLO, cross curricular assessments are also included resulting in evidence of CWSLO from the entire student experience. The Strategic Plan and Institutional Effectiveness Measures can be tagged in assessment reports from academic and non-academic areas as well. Not only does this allow for the collection of data across campus but it clearly facilitates budget requests tied to strategic initiatives or institutional priorities. WEAVE is also being used to organize faculty credentials. By combining degree verification with courses taught, faculty qualifications becomes a quick visual check.

Assessment Coaches: The assessment coaching concept has worked well to improve the overall quality and depth of the assessment reporting at SouthArk. With the assistance and support of the deans and Assessment Coaches, most of the course and program reports are now based on specific learning outcomes, present substantial assessment data, demonstrate analysis or interpretation of data, and include actions for improvement the next time the course is offered. Very few faculty are using grades as a measure of student learning outcomes any more. Many of the 2015-2016 reports also included measures of critical thinking. Faculty has become more accustomed to data entry into the WEAVE platform. Much progress has been made in the past two years with more improvements anticipated. The assessment coaches are doing a good job and making a real difference.

The Freshman Success Pilot Program was implemented during the fall 2016 Semester. This program allows the opportunity for recent El Dorado High School graduates receiving the El Dorado Promise that are considered “at risk” the opportunity to postpone their funds for one semester to earn a WAGE Certificate and/or CRC. Upon successful completion of the WAGE and/or CRC, the students are able to receive their scholarship the following semester and begin college courses. The mission of the program is for these “at risk” students to receive free remediation under Adult Education services, so they can be more successful in college. Additionally, their scholarship funds can potentially be saved for credit courses instead of non-credit remedial courses. The Freshman Success Program has a screening process that is completed in the Student Services Department. After students are identified for this program, they are referred to Adult Education to start the program. The El Dorado Promise Board receives updates through Adult Education, so they are informed of which students are participating. The Freshman Success Program, is available on the East or West Campus.

College and Career Readiness Pilot Program. On July 19, 2016, SouthArk signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Arkansas Department of Higher Education (ADHE) to launch a \$450,000 two-year pilot program in college and career readiness in partnership with all five public school districts in Union County. The program is an outgrowth of the new master plan for higher education adopted by the State of Arkansas in October 2015. One of the goals of the master plan is to engage students at an early age in order to increase the college-going rate of Arkansas secondary students by 5%. Two institutions in the state are participating in this pilot program: SouthArk, representing the two-year colleges, and Henderson State University, representing the four-year colleges. The program has hired a team of four career coaches who will work with 7th-12th graders on the campuses of the five school districts in Union County, where they will communicate with students and coordinate a slate of courses, activities, and mentoring relationships with students throughout their secondary school experience, with a view toward changing the public school culture to one that naturally leads to postsecondary education. The pilot program runs from August 1, 2016-July 31, 2018.

GRANTS UPDATES:

- **Futures in Information Technology (FIT):** The FIT project proposal aligns with Arkansas economic and workforce goals through development of partnerships with employers and K-12 districts, enhancement of service delivery to employers, showcasing local talent, and addressing the IT skills gap. The proposed IT career pathways will offer the opportunity for high school students to earn a Certificate of Proficiency in one of three areas after one year, and a Technical Certificate in Computer Information Technology, after two years. High school graduates could then complete an AAS degree in Computer Information Technology by the end of their first year of college. The 2+2 articulation agreement with SAU Magnolia will offer students an opportunity to complete a Bachelor of Science degree in Computer Science, with a concentration in Computer Information Technology. Cathy Harrell has returned to SouthArk to serve as the FIT Project Manager/Advisor. Four high school students are enrolled in two IT classes this fall.
- **Regional Advanced Manufacturing Pipeline: Building the Pipeline**
 - Hired new Industrial Technology instructor.
- **RAMP/TAACCT/DOL grant:**
 - Manufacturing Day event October 4, 2016 on the East Campus. Vendors will have booths, facility tours will be provided and soft skills training (resume building and interviewing tips) will be available.
 - Congratulations to James Dubose, Welding Instructor, for completing training and licensure for AWS Certified Welding Inspector.
 - Program enrollments: Industrial Technology/Mechatronics-9; Process Technology-22; Welding-34; non-credit - MSSC/Certified Production Tech-11 (another class is scheduled in October)
- **ASP/NEG:**
 - In the month of August, the NEG career counselor shared grant information with 18 new individuals through the WAGE program and the mandatory workshop on unemployment benefits for those on parole/probation. Two grant participants have completed the WAGE program, and one participant achieved **success** by graduating from the “Fast Lane” program/course during the summer with a certificate of proficiency in industrial technology. This student continues at SouthArk working toward her technical certificate.
 - A Fall Job Fair and Job Readiness Workshop are scheduled in October, and the AR Human Development Corp. was added as a new **partner** in August. With a focus on identifying and supporting those who have been working in the farming industry, they have financial resources to assist with training and to provide small stipends while training. A total of 11 eligible participants are currently in the NEG program.
- **Welding Apprenticeship grant:**
 - Advertising for a part-time project manager
 - Securing bids for equipment
- **Economic Development Agency (EDA)** – SouthArk has been “provisionally approved” for a matching grant of \$788,500+ for construction of the Advanced Manufacturing Training Center. Architectural plans and bid documents are being finalized. The EDA engineers will review documents prior to the bid package being publicized. The college hopes to begin construction in late fall.

FACILITIES/PERFORMANCE CONTRACT: SouthArk is making plans to begin an Energy Performance Project under the guidelines of the Arkansas Energy Performance Contracting (AEPC) Program overseen by the Arkansas Energy Office. The project includes interior and exterior lighting retrofit to LED, new campus lighting for east and west campus, energy management controls systems in all buildings (East and West) to allow control of all HVAC systems, weatherization of gym and administration building, new boilers for Administration and Whitfield buildings, expansion of the chilled water loop with chiller and hvac for the Computer Tech building. With approval of our Board of Trustees and the AR Higher Education Coordinating Board, the college will secure a loan for \$2,398,673. As required by the AEPC Program, these improvements will generate annual savings guaranteed by the Energy Service

Company, which will exceed the total project cost (construction, equipment and financing) – estimated as **savings, over the 15 year term, of \$3,235,578.**

JENZABAR UPDATE:

- SouthArk staff continue to refine their business practices and to familiarize themselves with Jenzabar EX.
- IT staff working with module managers to create/customize administrative reports.
- OIT staff continue to work with module managers to map data entry processes and populate data elements.

Higher Learning Commission Accreditation visit update. Work continued throughout the summer in preparation for the upcoming 10-year visit of SouthArk’s accrediting agency scheduled for November 28-29, 2016. Centerpiece of the preparation is a 35,000-word Assurance Argument, in which the college seeks to demonstrate that it meets the five criteria of accreditation as set forth by HLC. In anticipation of the official visit in November, SouthArk has arranged for a “mock visit” in September by officials from ASU-Newport in order to help assure that all expectations will be met. Access to the Assurance Argument has been given to the campus community so that faculty and staff will be able to provide input as another part of the vetting process. Timeline:

- Quality Initiative Report – Submitted to HLC on August 25th
- Federal Compliance – prepared and uploaded to HLC portal
- Assurance Argument – Academic Deans and Dr. Best are working with faculty to complete final entry of **faculty credentials and Master Syllabi**
- **Mock visit – September 26 and 27** – 3 administrators from a peer community college will be on campus to visit and ask questions. Please be on campus and available for meetings the afternoon of Monday, September 26 and Tuesday morning, September 27. We will send out the schedule for meetings. There will be some meetings specific to committees and others that are open forums for any faculty/staff to attend.
- **Make final changes to Assurance Argument – September 28th-October 15th**
- **Submit documents to HLC by October 15th**
- **CAMPUS CONVERSATIONS – OCTOBER 13/14 and NOVEMBER 10/11** – we will use these for HLC prep sessions. **PLAN TO ATTEND!**
- **On-site visit – November 28 and 29!**

FROM HLC 2006 visit: In preparation for the HLC visit in 2016, administrators and committee members reviewed the HLC Reviewers’ Report from 2006. The **HLC Report from 2006** indicated that all core components were essentially met, but they indicated a number of items that while not cited, “**needed organization attention.**” These items included:

1. *Strategic and operational planning*
2. *Assessment of student learning*
3. *Regular and ongoing employee evaluations of professional and administrative staff*
4. *Policies and procedures to insure planning, assessment, and evaluation occur regularly*
5. *Action planning as result of strategic planning outcomes*
6. *Assessment of General Education beyond the AA degree to include AAS*
7. *Articulation of goals for student learning in all of its classes; publish these goals in its course syllabi; and make sure that all sections of the same class have the same goals for student learning*
8. *Progress in the collection, analysis, and use of data to improve student learning and inform the planning and budgeting process is needed*
9. *Student and staff concerns about computer networking, support, and open laboratories were identified.*
10. *Concern that the general education components listed in the catalog pertain only to the AA program. GE must be addressed in all degree programs.*

In review, we are pleased to note that these items of concern from 10 years ago have been addressed! See below:

1. **Strategic Plan** was prepared in 2010 and implemented in 2011-2016. We report annually on outcomes to key performance indicators. Based on the outcomes, action plans are developed for improvement. Any actions which require new funding are required to be submitted through the annual budgeting process. Reports of Strategic Plan Outcomes are available on the IR website.
2. **Assessment of student learning.** This has been an ongoing growth initiative for the college – using data for creating a culture of assessment, evaluation, and planning. We started in about 2010 with moving from course objectives to student outcomes. We used an internal database and shared drive to collect assessment data. As the collection of our assessment data grew, it was determined that there was a need for a more robust system to collect data, thus the purchase of the WEAVE system two years ago. The Assessment Committee, Deans, and Assessment coaches have helped to move the assessment of student learning forward.

3. **Employee evaluations** of professional and administrative staff were inconsistently performed when I arrived in 2009. This is now an annual requirement, with all employees being evaluated.
4. The IE Grid and Manual and Assessment Grid Manual were developed to provide **policies and procedures** to guide employees in the ongoing assessment of students, planning, goal achievement, and evaluation of college operations.
5. **Action plans** – see #1 and #2.
6. **Assessment of general education beyond the AA to AAS degrees** had been done, but began in earnest with the development of the college-wide student learning outcomes (CWSLOs). These CWSLOs helped to define clearly what all graduates of SouthArk should accomplish. In turn, the incorporation of the CWSLOs into the Master Course Syllabi helped further to identify these outcomes and the measures to assure that they are achieved.
7. **Goals** have been articulated for student learning in all classes, on course syllabi, and in all sections – see #6.
8. **Collection, analysis, and use of data** to improve student learning and inform planning and budgeting process – This has been accomplished through tying any requests for budget increases to the strategic plan initiatives and student outcomes. One excellent example is the request for funds for math tutors to support the supplemental learning labs for developmental and college mathematics.
9. With the hiring of Dr. Kirk in 2006, many of the **computer and laboratory concerns** were addressed. In addition, funding from the Title III grant and building of two new facilities with computer laboratories helped to expand the currency and accessibility of computers and technology.
10. **General education** pertaining only to the AA program – must be addressed in all degree programs. See #6.

Sincere thanks to everyone for their many hours of research, writing, and preparation for the HLC 2016 visit. We are not quite done, but we are well on our way. We will be fine-tuning our document, “cleaning house,” and reviewing as we make our final preparations for the visit in November. THANK YOU EVERYONE!



President