



SEM Readiness Review Summary

AACRAO Consulting Report for

SOMERSET COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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Advancing Global Higher Education

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	2
Current Status and Performance Against SEM Standards	4
Functional Area Readiness	6
Marketing	6
Recommendations:	7
Recruitment	8
Recommendations:	9
Admission	10
Recommendations:	11
Records and Registration	12
Recommendations:	13
Use of Data/Research	14
Recommendations:	15
Enrollment Infrastructure	16
Recommendations:	17
Use of Technology	18
Recommendations:	19
Appendix A. Campus Interview Schedule	20



Executive Summary

From a high of 10,028 in 2011, Somerset Community College (SCC) enrollment has dipped to 7,017 in 2014. This decline has caused much discussion in all areas of the College and the identification of several target groups for possible extra efforts in order to improve enrollment. Since the decline seems to be spread through the entire enrollment, many possible enrollment opportunities seem available. President Marshall, Provost Honeycutt, and Dean Casada have provided excellent leadership as the College begins planning for a desired increase in the next few years.

SCC has a lot of important data that presently is not widely shared, or, apparently, used in decision-making. This will need to improve as the project proceeds. Not yet available are weekly funnel data including numbers and percentages at each step of the process. Some extra help may be needed in this area since Admissions and Recruiting are in different reporting lines and the Radius software is not yet fully functional.

Communication with new students works fairly well except for the concerns mentioned above. Communication with returning students needs improvement as the only established messages seem to reference the next registration. Advisors are very interested in making improvements in both communication and intervention for current students, and have suggested possible improvements. This will need to be heavily considered in the retention portion of the project.

Marketing is another primary concern. While information about action items in order to enroll is conveyed relatively well, information on why to enroll is much less prevalent. This will need to be a priority in the recruiting portion of the project.

The website (based on the provided template) is in need of revision. Again more emphasis needs to be placed on the “why” instead of just the “how”.



Collaboration and cross-functional cooperation of all parties seems excellent due to appropriate direction from the College leadership and should provide a fertile ground for new ideas and a successful project.



Current Status and Performance Against SEM Standards

Evaluation of the SEM environment for SCC was conducted to understand its strengths and challenges. To develop and implement a successful SEM plan, the College must position itself to leverage its current strengths and shore up areas of challenge. Using Bontrager's seven purposes of SEM, the current position of the College was evaluated.

The College has established clear goals for the number and types of students needed to fulfill the institutional mission.

From 2011 to 2014, SCC has decreased approximately 3000 in student headcount enrollment. Much work has been done by the campus to recover from the loss and a number of specific target groups have been identified for increases. The data behind these choices has not been shared nor have marketing plans been provided. These targets will likely provide the basis for the recruiting portion of the project.

The College promotes students' academic success by improving access, transition, persistence, and graduation.

Access seems adequate for the service area, and six locations provide plenty of availability. SCC enjoys a good reputation for transition to four-year institutions as well as the job market. Persistence and graduation are concerns for the campus and need improvement. Led by the administration and the advising group, plans are in the works to provide better communication and intervention to improve both these categories.

The College promotes institutional success by enabling effective strategic and financial planning.

Though target groups have been identified, no specific plans for conversion of prospects in the categories to enrollees have been developed. Therefore, possible financial concerns are not identified. With recent budget reductions, it is likely that strategic financial planning will be a result of the project rather than a part of the project.



The College creates a data-rich environment to inform decisions and evaluate strategies.

SCC has a great deal of data available through its institutional research function and more is available from the system office. This data is not currently shared widely or apparently used in decision-making. This is an area of improvement that can be very helpful in completing the project. Weekly funnel data are not yet available and shared and this may be due to lack of familiarity with Radius software, or the organization of Admissions and Recruiting, or both. Information useful in the persistence and completion area is beginning to be collected and shared and may be very useful in the retention portion of the project.

The College Improves process, organizational and financial efficiency and outcomes.

Many business processes have been improved, work well, and are relatively easy for students to access. One exception is the communication with new students in the recruiting system. The Radius software is not really being used and communication is dependent on spreadsheets to move data into communication flows. This is an opportunity for real purposeful improvement if this deficiency can be rectified.

The College has strengthened communications and marketing with internal and external stakeholders.

After the interviews, it is obvious that internal communication is adequate, needs improvement but is improving. During the local PowerPoint presentation, there was very good interaction among the attending groups and most of the comments were very positive.

External communication, particularly marketing, is still not adequate and solutions really are not yet on the horizon. This should be a priority of the project.

The College has increased collaboration among departments across the campus to support the enrollment program

SCC teams seem to work well together and with the local project leadership. It will probably be a good idea to be sure that the cross-functional nature of the teams be continued and reinforced. Based on the good rapport shown during the interviews, there should be good interaction of the teams during the project.



Functional Area Readiness

Marketing

Standard	Institutional Performance/Comments
1. Marketing messages are clear, concise and related to student choice factors	No.
2. The institution's web site contains compelling text and forms clear reasons why choosing this institution benefits the student	No.
3. The institution has a communications plan for new student enrollment	Yes.
4. The institution has a communications plan for continuing student enrollment	No.
5. The advertising plan of the institution supports enrollment and is timed to support the recruitment plan	No.
6. The institution has a social media plan that supports enrollment and complements the advertising plan	The college uses social media but does not provide a comprehensive advertising plan with social media as a component.

Somerset has identified specific groups for increased enrollment but does not have a plan to push prospects toward an enrollment decision.

The website places more emphasis on “how to” rather than “why”. Also, the website seems to serve those who have accessed the site for information rather than having been referred there by other communication venues.

The communication plan for new students is somewhat hampered by admissions and recruiting reporting through different administrative lines. The communication plan for returning students is mainly concerned with advising and course selection rather than persistence and completion. Outcomes are not a focus.



There does not appear to be a comprehensive advertising plan. On campus events are advertised but not as a part of a comprehensive plan to enhance enrollment. Social media is used but again not as a part of planned communication designed to get the prospect to take a specific action.

Recommendations:

1. For each targeted group, create an enrollment plan including both recruiting and marketing as well as responsibility for next step completion.
2. Consider substantial revision of the website with emphasis on looks and marketing as well as providing information:
 - a. The site must include compelling reasons to enroll at Somerset and go beyond the transactions or steps.
3. Consider a closer tie between recruiting and admission communication lines.
4. Create a communication plan for returning students that contains references to “good things” at the college as well as the benefits of persistence and completion.
5. Create a comprehensive advertising plan that uses print, electronic, and social media in describing the college in the most positive manner possible.



Recruitment

Standard	Institutional Performance/Comments
1. The institution has a written recruitment plan	No. The campus has scheduled communications but has not attached them to specific goals, nor adopted milestones and other criteria for evaluation of the messages.
2. Recruiters are trained to provide clear, concise and consistent marketing messages to prospective students, parents/family and guidance personnel	No.
3. Recruiters use data to plan and monitor their work, adjusting outreach and follow-up based up on current and analyzed data	No.
4. On-campus events are tracked to understand trends in attendance, content and relationship to enrollment	Attendance is tracked but not the effectiveness of the activity in encouraging enrollment.
5. Research is conducted and measured to improve results annually	No.

With recruiting in a separate reporting line, a comprehensive recruiting plan with specific goals, messages and activities, milestones, and evaluation criteria is not available.

Recruiters showed interest in learning how to develop effective marketing messages. Difficulties with the lack of use of the Radius software are having a negative effect on this desire.

Current funnel data is not readily available, which would facilitate the evaluation and effectiveness of recruiting activities.

Attendance is tracked for on-campus events but not the effectiveness of the messages – which of them generated attendance nor how the programs enhanced the likelihood of enrollment at the college.



Recommendations:

1. Develop a comprehensive recruiting plan with specific goals, marketing, milestones, and evaluation criteria.
2. Provide training on how to develop targeted messages.
3. Develop a comprehensive weekly funnel report and distribute appropriately.
4. Create comprehensive reports for each recruiting activity to evaluate the effectiveness of messages and their effect on enrollment.



Admission

Standard	Institutional Performance/Comments
1. Application processing is efficient	Yes.
2. Application processing utilizes digital document management and workflow	Yes, within the limits of the provided software.
3. Admission policies are reasonable and matched to the mission of the institution	Yes.
4. Admission reports provide robust information and are produced and analyzed regularly (usually, weekly)	No. Reports are produced at infrequent intervals, and weekly processing monitoring is not regularly supplied.
5. Admission reports are shared with enrollment staff and institutional leadership	No. Since the needed reports do not exist, they cannot be distributed.

Admission processing is generally good although a great deal of regular human intervention occurs, rather than the desired level of automation. If additional modules of the purchased SIS software, such as report-writing tools, were activated, additional functionality could be provided electronically which would free staff for other tasks.

While some helpful data is collected and compiled, the important weekly funnel data is not available. Therefore, the needed monitoring is not done.

Since processing data is not widely shared, some areas of the campus are unaware of the current efforts in the admission processing function.



Recommendations:

1. KCTCS should activate, and deliver to the colleges, additional modules of the purchased SIS software.
2. Once delivered, the software should be installed and supervisory responsibility defined. This will require additional training for IT personnel.
3. After the software installation, appropriate reports should be created and distributed widely around the campus.



Records and Registration

Standard	Institutional Performance/Comments
1. Registration policies are reasonable and facilitate student enrollment in both degree and non-degree/continuing education courses and programs	Yes.
2. Transcripts requests are available to students online	Yes, through National Student Clearinghouse (NSC).
3. Transcripts requests are processed quickly and efficiently, leveraging technology to expedite and facilitate the fulfillment of requests	Yes, according to students.
4. The institution has clear transfer credit policies	Yes.
5. Technology and staffing support the efficient evaluation of transfer credit from other institutions	No. SIS transfer software needs to be fully activated.
6. Course scheduling routines are efficient and collaborative with academic areas	Yes.
7. The registrar is positioned to fulfill her/his role in establishing and maintaining the integrity of student records and in interpreting and enforcing academic policies	Yes.

Perceptions of the Registrar function are generally positive and the expressed feeling in the majority of interviews was that of competence by this office. The system delivered software related to transfer credit is not yet fully activated.

All transfer credit is manually processed, as if each course was new to the institution. This is highly inefficient, especially since PeopleSoft provides articulation tables and rules that expedite the processing of transfer credit. Although turnaround times are not excessive, staff can be utilized in other areas, making better use of their time. Looking further down the line, this process will be necessary to take advantage of electronic transcript data processing. This



emerging trend will become standard practice and automates the assignment of earned course credit to student academic history from digital student records data sent from other institutions.

Recommendations:

1. KCTCS should activate the transfer module of the SIS software and deliver to the colleges.
 - a. This includes the building and activation of articulation rules to the centralized course catalog.



Use of Data/Research

Standard	Institutional Performance/Comments
1. Data is used to support decision-making in all areas of enrollment	There is a great deal of data available that does not appear to be widely circulated or used regularly to make decisions.
2. Institutional staff and faculty have reasonable and appropriate access to data, including regular reports appropriate to their areas	No. Data is not readily shared.
3. Enrollment processes are measurable and evaluated to improve effective enrollment systems	No. There is too much manual activity involved to be effective in monitoring systems.
4. Environmental data is regularly collected and analyzed to plan enrollment	No. Data is collected but not analyzed.
5. Retention is studied to understand when and why students continue, transfer and complete degrees or fail to do so	Several initiatives have been started but the lack of a formal retention hierarchy limits the effectiveness of the activities.

Institutional Effectiveness and Research (IER) has prepared a great deal of data that has apparently been used to suggest a strategic direction for the college. As yet, this data has apparently not been shared widely on the campus (though the plan has) and detailed, measurable milestones have not been developed to support the goals of the plan.

Enrollment funnel data are not available and, therefore, are not used in monitoring the steps in the enrollment process. The provost's office has begun the process of creating this data by developing an "enrollment pipeline" which documents the various steps that need to be completed in order to constitute final enrollment.

A gap analysis has been completed but is somewhat general in nature and not detailed enough. It requires measurable goals, as well as strategies and tactics to make the plan work. Desired results and the underlying marketing messages are not yet available.



Much good work has been started in determining how to enhance the likelihood of retention to completion. Continuing to evaluate and improve this research will have a very positive effect on the project.

Recommendations:

1. Share collected data on a wider basis and require that decisions be based on the evaluation of this data.
2. Create and distribute a weekly funnel report including both numbers and percentages for each step.
3. Using the gap analysis as a starting point, create marketing messages for each targeted group and methods to track the effectiveness of each message.
4. Expand the retention research and add suggested activities for intervention at identified intervals.



Enrollment Infrastructure

Standard	Institutional Performance/Comments
<p>1. The institution has sufficient staffing to support its enrollment</p>	<p>Current staffing is barely adequate and would not handle an increased number of prospects if new marketing messages were installed. In addition, the current location of the recruiting function generates some friction in the funnel process.</p>
<p>2. Staff are trained for their current positions and continue to engage in professional development</p>	<p>Generally true. Training and professional development are on-going concerns, particularly with declining budgets.</p>
<p>3. The institution has assembled cross-functional teams to plan and evaluate enrollment on a continuous basis</p>	<p>The college has looked at the decline in its enrollment and has developed a strategic plan to address some issues. This has not been widely communicated to all areas of the campus. The SEM project will help with this need.</p>

While the college has done many good things in trying to enhance its enrollment, more robust activities are needed, particular in the areas of recruiting and marketing. Radius is not utilized in an effective manner and movement of files for communication with target groups requires too much manual intervention.

The separation of recruiting and marketing from admissions processing can certainly work but consideration of supervision and leadership is a paramount concern.

Training on local business processes is generally adequate. Information Technology (IT) personnel are not sufficiently trained on SIS functions to be able to effectively add marketing messages to current communication flows. The assignment and supervision of this function has not been defined.

There has been considerable committee work done in the development of the college strategic plan but there is no evidence that targeted, identified groups have been retained as permanent oversight entities.



Recommendations:

1. Consider additional resources for the recruiting/marketing function:
 - a. Add one additional recruiter with clear responsibility for high school, business and agency visits and fairs, as well as focused follow-up with prospects and applicants.
2. Consider adjusting reporting lines for recruiting/marketing.
3. Consider more training on system supplied software and more regular professional development.
4. Consider keeping the committees formed from the SEM project on an active and more permanent basis to monitor and assure accountability for the implementation and the results of the plan.



Use of Technology

Standard	Institutional Performance/Comments
1. The institution has appropriate enrollment technology (SIS, CRM, course scheduling, etc.) to support the scope and complexity of its operations	Performance varies. Several offices have done major work to provide working systems but they are more stand-alone than interactive.
2. There is adequate support to manage, maintain and upgrade institutional enrollment technology	No. Support is designed to come from the system level rather than local practitioners.
3. The institution's website is current, accurate and relevant to its audiences.	The website has been improved in recent years. The provided template needs updating and more emphasis needs to be added to marketing in addition to recruiting.
4. Business processes are well documented/mapped and updated on a regular basis.	Performance varies. Some areas are doing well, others could improve. There is not at present, a comprehensive, online, office procedures manual.

The delivery of software and training of staff on the purchased software from the system level is not adequate. While still thin in terms of total staff, Somerset has made improvements in its use of technology within the limits set by the system. However, most of the improvements require some manual intervention to actually get information to the prospect. This places even more stress on operations, which are already at the limits of current resources and personnel.

The website needs continued improvement with emphasis on marketing in addition to branding and recruiting. Prospects need to be shown why they should enroll, not just how to enroll.



Recommendations:

1. KCTCS should obtain better interaction and communication among its purchased systems.
2. Continue to improve systems and implement automation to eliminate the need for human intervention.
3. Continue to amend the website for ease of use and stress the “why”, not just the “how”.



Appendix A. Campus Interview Schedule

December 3, 2015

Day 1 Schedule December 3		
Time	Interviewees/Topic	Attendees
9:00-9:30	Meet to confirm project objectives	Tracy, Council Co-Chairs, Data Chair and Steering Team
9:30-10:00	Meeting with the Provost	Dr. Honeycutt
10:00-11:45	Meet all SEM members(overview)	All SEM members and other interested individuals
11:45-12:00	Break	
12:00-1:15	Lunch with Students	
1:15-2:00	Admissions/Call Center	Christy and Staff
2:00-2:45	PR/Marketing/Community Relations Recruiters	Cindy and Staff
2:45-3:45	Campus Tour	Holly/Donnia
3:45-4:30	Advising Center/ TRIO	Kim, Gail, Elaine, Trent, Dorothy and Staff
4:30-5:15	Academic Deans/Associate Deans	Roger, Lois, Dan, Nancy, Kim, Jon, Clint, Bruce, Linda

December 4, 2015

Day 2 Schedule December4		
Time	Interviewees/Topic	Attendees
9:00-9:30	Briefing	Tracy, Council Co-Chairs, Data Chair and Steering Team
9:30-10:15	Financial Aid Office/Business Office	Daniel, Tim and Staff
10:15-11:00	Registrar's Office	Paula and Staff
11:00-12:00	Demonstration of online services, PS, Radius, OnBase, Starfish, Clearinghouse(NSC), PTK College Fish	Admissions/Records/Recruiters/Advising Center
12:00-1:00	Lunch	
1:00-1:45	IT	Bruce and Staff
1:45-2:30	Data Reporting/Institutional Research	Clint and Staff
2:30-2:45	Break	
2:45-	Wrap Up	Tracy, Council Co-Chairs, Data Chair and Steering Team

