



## SEWARD COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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### **College sees industry certifications more than double** *Report to KBOR tracks steady success in multiple areas*

When you require students to demonstrate what they've learned, the results can be astonishing. That was the takeaway lesson in the numbers Dean of Academics Dr. Todd Carter presented to the Seward County Community College/Area Technical School Board of Trustees at the regular meeting Monday.

Students enrolled in SCCC/ATS programs that aligned with third-party technical credentials more than doubled their successes over a year's time. The number of credentials earned soared to nearly 500 in 2014, after hovering below the 200 mark for nearly five years.

"The pass rates are good," said Carter. "It's due to the increase in students taking the Certified Nursing Assistant exam, but also many others." In fact, Carter said, the college now requires students whose programs feed into industry certificates to take the appropriate professional exam upon completion. In the past, students often completed college course work but chose not to take professional exams because they had already obtained gainful employment in the field through internship experiences.

Even so, the requirement confirms success in three ways. Students know they've learned what is necessary for their chosen profession, whether that is respiratory therapy or corrosion technology, or anything in between. Employers confirm, through third-party certification, that the newly-minted graduates are ready to work. Finally, the people footing the bill, whether parents, students, or scholarship donors, know they have gotten their money's worth.

Other portions of the report Carter compiled for the college's Board of Regents Performance Agreement showed a steady uptick in student retention and success.

"We got approval of this last week, so it will go to the full Kansas Board of Regents for review," Carter said.

He noted the raw numbers can sometimes be difficult to interpret. For example, the college's tracking of student performance in English Comp I classes only applies to students who arrived with low-level language arts scores. Those students began in developmental classes, and were tracked for success when they qualified to take English Composition I.

"Our success rate in that group of people increased by 21 percent, which is huge," Carter said. "It shows that our focused efforts to make sure all students have basic competence in written communication are paying off."

The six statistics collected for the report included:

- \* Completion of certificates and degrees, up to 488 from 397 in 2012
- \* Student success in College Algebra, up to 81 percent from 75 percent in 2012
- \* Third-party technical credentials earned, more than double at 494, up from 173 in 2012.
- \* Success of students who began English studies with developmental-level classes and progressed to English Composition I, up to 65 percent from 46 percent in 2012.

\* Retention of first-year students who enrolled for a second year, up slightly at 64 percent from a baseline of 62 percent over the last three years' cohorts.

\* Full-time students who completed 24 credit hours over a two-year period, up to 69 percent from the baseline cohort average of 62 percent.

The initial report gained approval by the performance review group, and will now go through the full Kansas Board of Regents approval process, said Carter.

In alignment with the dramatic increase in industry certifications, Carter also reported that industry partnerships have filled this month's calendar. The Industrial Technology Division hosted the state's largest Manufacturing Day event in the state Oct. 2, with more than 400 participants from area high schools on campus. Seaboard Foods sponsored the lunch. Following that event, NACE, the worldwide organization for corrosion industry professionals, brought its annual rectifier school to campus for the 25th year running.

"We've got people registered to attend that from seven states, along with our own students," Carter said. "Seven students will receive scholarships from the NACE group."

In other business, with board member Sharon Hobble absent, the trustees voted unanimously to approve the naming of the circle drive as "Jo Ann Sharp Drive," in conjunction with the 21st Annual Foundation Party Auction. Sharp got the winning bid on naming rights, as she did the previous year, so her name will remain on the street sign.

The trustees also approved changes to Board Policy 619, which addresses paid leave for hourly-wage employees during the college's annual holiday closure. The amended policy gives hourly-wage employees an additional 3.5 days of paid leave between the Christmas and New Year's holidays.

"Based upon my observations, this is going to increase a sense of esprit de corps — team spirit and goodwill — among our employees," said SCCC/ATS President Dr. Ken Trzaska. "Past practice has dictated that only the hourly employees are required to use leave time for those days during the holiday break, when campus is closed. I'd like to have a policy that is fair to everyone."

The executive team calculated a total cash cost to the college of \$750 to \$800. The payoff in morale would far exceed the dollar amount, said Trzaska.

"When I mentioned this was on the agenda at our all-team meeting, there was pretty close to a standing ovation," he said.

"The executive team feels we'll get more from employees based on the positive feeling this generates, than if we did the opposite."

Trustee Marvin Chance asked whether the team had considered the hidden cost of the policy change.

"I know happier people work harder, but on the other side of the coin, those employees are going to have four days of leave time to take later in the year, when they weren't taking time off," he said, "and someone else is going to have to fill in and do that work. Are we going to have higher costs? It tends to revolve around."

Dean of Finance and Operations Dennis Sander noted that overtime pay will not be a factor, as the college uses a comp-time system rather than paying time-and-a-half.

"The other part of it is that we expect to see people step up and help each other," said Trzaska. "When everyone is seen as being on the same page, quite frankly, there's an environment created where the feeling is 'We're all in this together.'" Sander and Trzaska told the board the college will track productivity in the year that follows.

Dean of Finance and Operations Dennis Sander presented capital outlay equipment requests. The board also approved a bid for a no-till drill for the Sustainable Agriculture Program. The drill, to be purchased from Keating Tractor for \$15,277 with STEM grant funds, is an unusual size of 5'7" row spacing, and therefore received only one viable bid.

Dean of Student Services Celeste Donovan reported that enrollment numbers show a 6 percent increase for the year, in marked contrast to many other community colleges around the state.

Donovan noted plans to attend the Heartland Campus Safety Summit at Johnson County Community College in November, along with Director of Security Dennis Mulanax and Human Resources Director Deb Weilert.

Sander reported that an energy audit by the heating and cooling company Trane will occur in October. If the company finds significant savings opportunities, the college might partner with Trane to create energy use programs.

In his report, President Trzaska touched on several upcoming projects. These include:

- Refinement and simplification of the college's mission and vision statement and core values, "so that every single day on this campus, everyone can be aware of those," he said.
- Strategic long-term plans discussed by the executive team. "This includes looking at funding, which isn't necessarily going to get easier," he said, "so we have to look at ways to build something for the next generation."
- Improvements to the college's Web page, perhaps in conjunction with other colleges that are part of the EduKan consortium. "We're looking at ways to get better prices by working out a package deal," he said. "We aim to have information for you by December, with the goal of launching a new page in the spring semester."
- Professional Development plans for employees.
- Campus Crisis Plans, developed by the executive team and security personnel, "to keep our campus safe and secure."

Trzaska also noted he traveled to Roswell, N.M., to see the SCCC/ATS tennis team play in an invitation tournament. "That was an amazing time, cheering on our team, and it reminded me of why I do what I do," he said.

The next SCCC/ATS Board of Trustees meeting will be Nov. 2, 2015, in the board room at the Hobble Academic Building on campus.