# Annual Evaluation Report

## Southeastern Community College

## Year 4 | 2024

Department of Education
Title III
Award #: P031A200096

**SHAFFER**
*Evaluation Group*

# Southeastern Community College

# Title III Annual Evaluation Report

# January 2025

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Year 4

**Updated Orientation**
Orientation now organized by meta-major, giving students a more individualized and targeted experience.

**Student Success Advocates**
Reduced turnover in student success advocate positions has provided students and faculty a consistent source for support.

**Partnership with PACE**
Working with the Pathways for Academic Career and Employment (PACE) department has significantly decreased the number of undecided students.

**Post-Registration Survey Implemented**
This new survey captures real time feedback and enables quicker resolution of issues.

**PLANNED YEAR 4 ACTIONS** — **71%** **COMPLETED**

**OUTPUTS MET** — **83%** **COMPLETED/ ON TRACK**

## Successes

### Student Success Advocates (SSAs)
With more manageable caseloads, SSA turnover has reduced. Students have a single point of contact for questions, faculty have an additional resource, and students are more supported.

### Student Orientation
Orientation has been restructured by meta-major, providing students a sense of identity in their major as well as a more targeted orientation experience.

## Challenges

### SSA Resources
Despite lower SSA caseloads, students reported still feeling as though their SSA was overwhelmed or overloaded. This sentiment was echoed by faculty.

### Marketing
Students sense a disconnect between SCC offerings and what is being pushed at local high schools. Faculty have concerns about the website updates.

# Project

# Background

# PROJECT BACKGROUND

The goal of the Southeastern Community College (SCC) Title III project is:

**Goal 1: Successfully and sustainably implement the guided pathways framework.**

To accomplish this goal, SCC is using Title III funding to support four strategies with six objectives:

## Strategy 1: Mapping pathways to student end goals

Objective 1: All new program students will complete an educational plan in their first semester of college by 9/30/2025.

Objective 4: Students will enroll in and complete developmental courses at a rate of 10 percentage points over the baseline by 9/30/2025.

## Strategy 2: Helping students choose and enter a program pathway

Objective 6: Hire six student advocates in 2020-2021 to provide intensive and intrusive career planning, institutional navigation, academic advising, and general support services alongside clearly defined, well communicated, and easily accessible guided pathways for all of its students.

## Strategy 3: Keeping students on path

Objective 3: The rate at which targeted students are retained from their first year to their second year will increase by 15 percentage points over baseline by 9/30/2025.

Objective 5: Students will enroll in and complete college-level gateway courses at a rate of 10 percentage points over baseline by 9/30/2025.

## Strategy 4: Ensure students are learning

Objective 2: The rate at which targeted students complete a credential or transfer within 150% normal completion time (3 years) will increase 10 percentage points over the baseline by 9/30/2025.
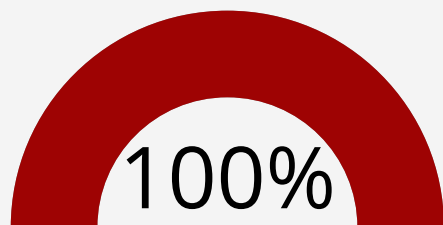
The purpose of this evaluation is to understand the project's impact on the institution and student outcomes, and to generate findings that help to strengthen the management of the project and lead to better knowledge of what works in producing the desired outcomes.

# Findings

# TO WHAT EXTENT WAS THE PROJECT IMPLEMENTED AS DESIGNED?

**100%**

**Planned Year 4 actions complete or in progress**

71% actions completed; 29% in progress

## Major implementation actions that occurred in Year 4:

### Strategy 1: Mapping pathways to student end goals

History was added as an additional transfer major during Year 4. Staff are working to develop guided pathways and when possible, replace specific courses with placeholders to allow students more flexibility and freedom of choice to meet requirements.

### Strategy 2: Helping students choose and enter a program pathway

Project staff are working with marketing faculty to improve communications about transfer information and career pathways, with website updates continuing. Additionally, the college application now has a place for incoming students to indicate if they are undecided. Project staff are partnering with the Pathways for Academic Career and Employment (PACE) department to provide individualized assistance for undecided students. Reducing the number of undecided students puts more students on guided pathways, which should improve student retention, graduation, and job placement. The student orientation (Blackhawk Kickoff) has been restructured so that each meta-major has its own program-specific open house time to meet with its faculty.

### Strategy 3: Keeping students on path

The student planning module has been implemented, reducing clerical demands on Student Success Advocates (SSAs). This has freed time for SSAs to have more meaningful and in-depth conversations with students, allowing SSAs to focus on guiding the students along their chosen pathway(s). Similar successes have been seen with the revised de-registration model, which was implemented in Fall 2024. With increased and deliberate communication, there have been fewer students needing to be de-registered than in previous semesters.

### Strategy 4: Ensure students are learning

A target has been established for each of the five core competencies at SCC. A project staff member attended an assessment conference, which has helped the staff establish best practices in assessments.

# TO WHAT EXTENT WERE PROGRAM COMPONENTS IMPLEMENTED ACCORDING TO PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS OR BEST PRACTICES?

**88%**

**Overall Score on Best Practices Rubric**
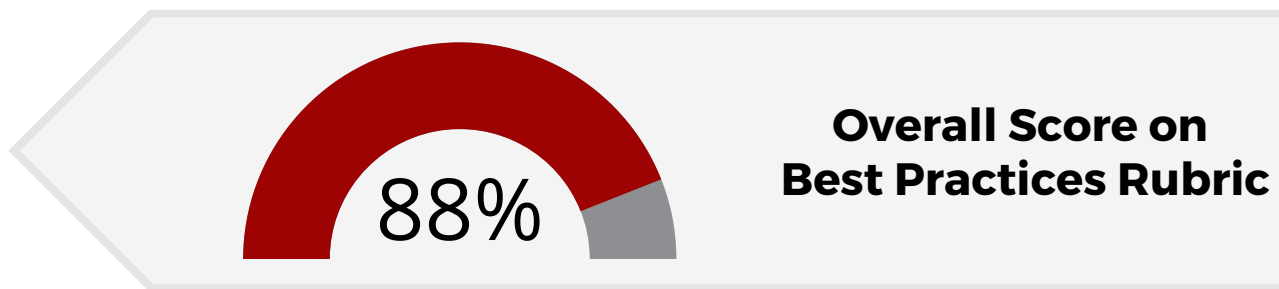
The guided pathways best practices rubric, previously developed during Year 2 by the evaluator, organizes 28 best practices into five categories ("Across Phases," "Clarify the Path," "Enter a Path," "Stay on the Path," and "Ensure Learning") to align with the guided pathways framework.

The evaluator assigns an annual rating to each best practice based on evidence provided through focus groups, interviews, and documentation. Scores are rated on a three-point scale: fully implemented, partially implemented, and not implemented. Summary of best practice scores by rubric category are presented in Table 1. Detailed scores for each category are presented in Appendix C.

## *Table 1. Summary Best Practices Scores by Category*

| Category | Score |
|---|---|
| Across Phases | 83% |
| Clarify the Path | 89% |
| Enter a Path | 88% |
| Stay on the Path | 100% |
| Ensure Learning | 67% |

# TO WHAT EXTENT WERE CAMPUS STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVED IN IMPLEMENTATION EFFORTS? WHAT WERE CAMPUS STAKEHOLDERS' OPINIONS ABOUT THE PROJECT?

## Faculty and Staff

Faculty have been involved in program mapping, and transfer majors and course development. They have also interacted with SSAs to support students, and there are faculty representatives serving on the Student Success Team Coordinating Committee (SSTCC). Faculty have shared positive feedback about the project and noted that it is easier to provide guidance to students, knowing that there is a specific person (the SSA) to assist them on their path. Faculty also shared that the SSAs were helpful to them, knowing where to go for help and concerns. College staff from multiple departments across the college serve on the steering team, providing input and organizing applicable work at the top levels.

## Student Success Advocates

Student Success Advocates (SSAs) had previously shared that they felt as though their voices were not being heard and that their caseloads were too high. With a change in leadership, a new supervisor has worked to increase awareness of SSA caseloads and needs, and SSAs now feel more supported and confident in their roles. Caseloads have decreased slightly and also feel more manageable to the SSAs.

## Student Feedback

Students have shared positive experiences about working with the SSAs. Student feedback after registration is now captured in real-time through an online survey. This fast data allows the project and college staff to identify any potential issues in real time, and address circumstances proactively, rather than waiting until there is a student problem that needs to be resolved.

# TO WHAT EXTENT HAS THE PROJECT ACHIEVED ITS INTENDED OUTPUTS/OBJECTIVES?

**SCC made progress on the following objectives to support the project:**

Made Progress On

**5** out of **6**

Objectives

**83.3%**

**Objective 1** **100%** New program students in FY 2023-24 completed an educational plan in their first semester of college.

| | |
|---|---|
| Year 4 (Fall 2024) | 100% |
| Year 3 (Fall 2023) | 100% |
| Year 2 (Fall 2022) | 100% |
| Year 1 (Fall 2021) | 99.7% |
| Baseline (Fall 2020) | 57.0% |
| Baseline (Fall 2019) | 0% |
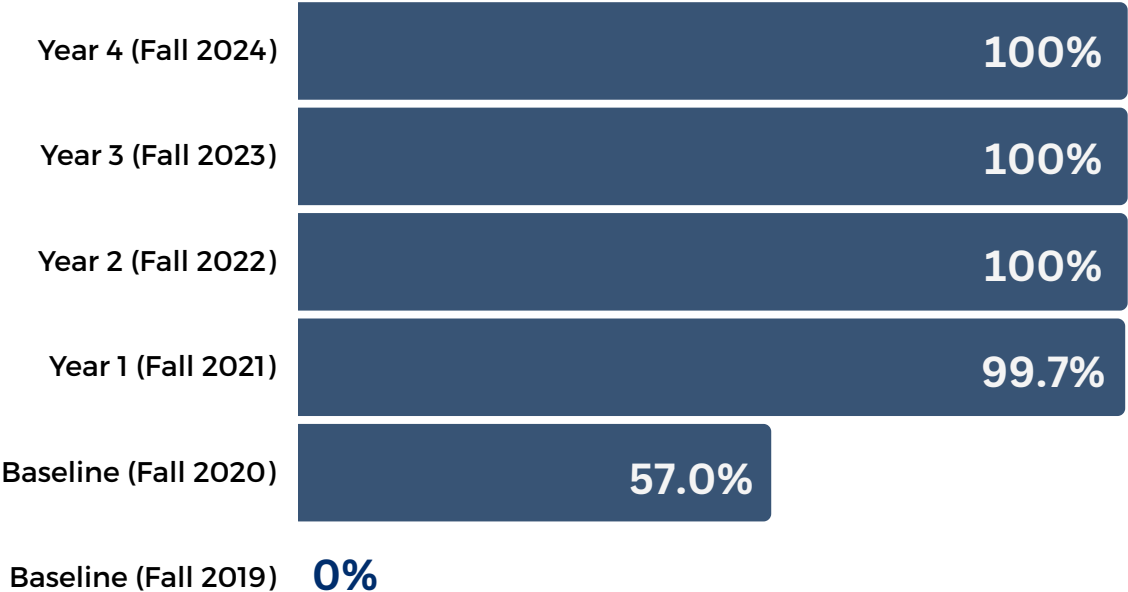
## Objective 2 — 45.9%

Fall 2021 students completed a credential or transfer within 150% normal completion time

| Period | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Year 4 (AY 23/24) | 45.9% |
| Year 3 (AY 22/23) | 45.1% |
| Year 2 (AY 21/22) | 41.9% |
| Year 1 (AY 20/21) | 40.2% |
| Baseline (AY 19/20) | 40.8% |
| Baseline (AY 18/19) | 38.1% |

## Objective 3 — 55.0%

Targeted students in Fall 2023 were retained in Fall 2024

| Period | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Year 4 (Fall 2023-Fall 2024) | 55.0% |
| Year 3 (Fall 2022-Fall 2023) | 53.9% |
| Year 2 (Fall 2021-Fall 2022) | 53.2% |
| Year 1 (Fall 2020-Fall 2021) | 53.2% |
| Baseline (Fall 2019-Fall 2020) | 51.5% |
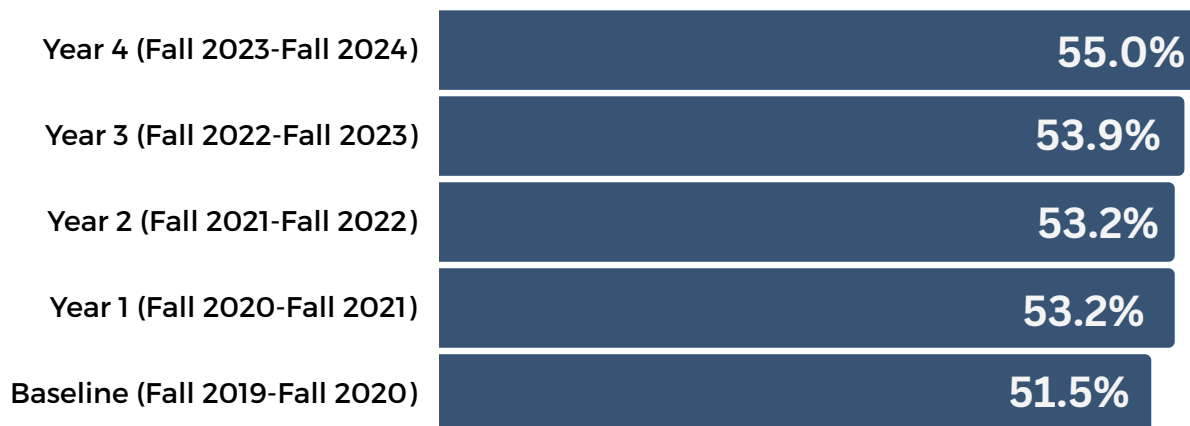
**Objective 4**

# 25.4% Students completed developmental Math

# 30.5% Students completed developmental English



Math    English

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 27.3% | 39.1% | 29.1% | 38.7% | 25.4% |
| 27.9% | 26.0% | 65.5% | 32.5% | 30.5% |

Baseline (AY 19/20)    Year 1 (AY 20/21)    Year 2 (AY 21/22)    Year 3 (AY 22/23)    Year 4 (AY 23/24)
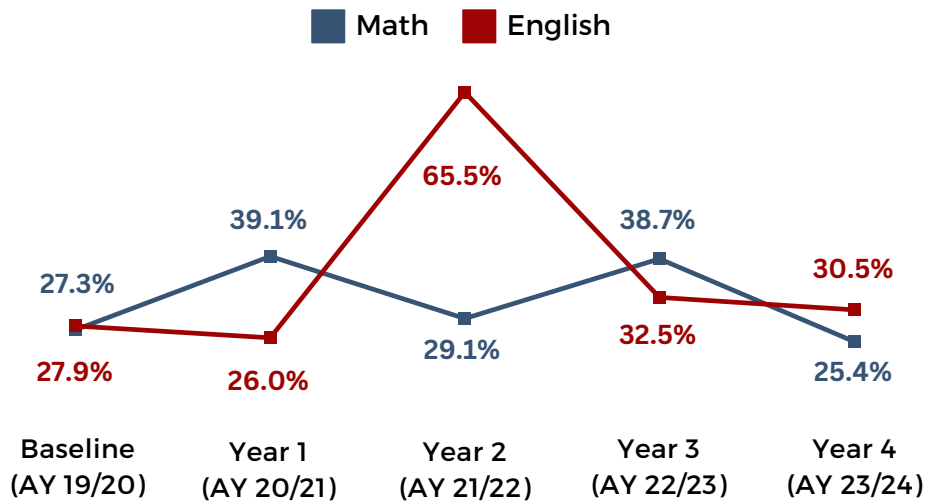
## Objective 5

**29.5%** Students completed one college level Math course

**46.9%** Students completed one college level English course



Math ■ English ■

| Baseline (Fall 2019) | Year 1 (Fall 2020) | Year 2 (Fall 2021) | Year 3 (Fall 2022) | Year 4 (Fall 2023) |

English: 46.7% — 45.0% — 48.1% — 47.5% — 46.9%

Math: 23.2% — 24.6% — 30.2% — 30.6% — 29.5%
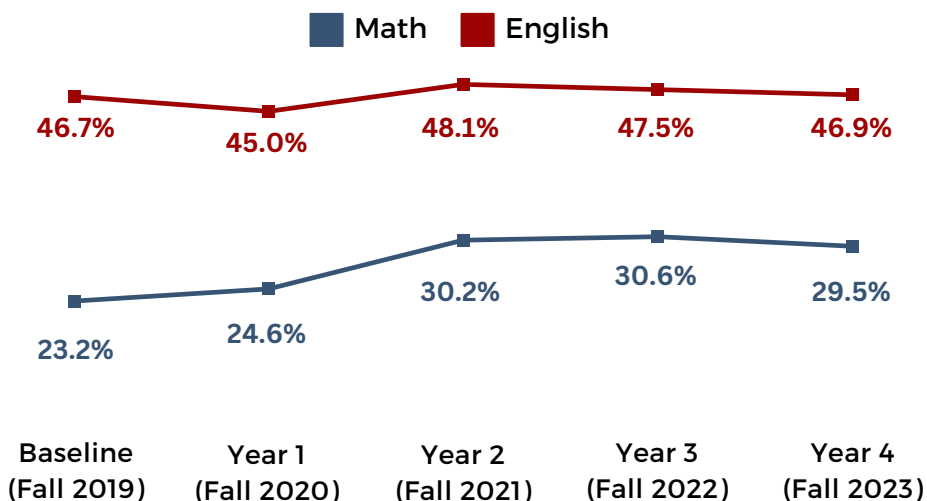
## Objective 6

**6** Student Success Advocates (on the 10-member team) are funded by this Title III grant

# WHAT SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES HAS THE PROJECT EXPERIENCED?

## Project Successes

Focus groups were conducted with all stakeholder groups (including students, SSAs, faculty, the steering committee, and college leadership) to understand the project's status, successes, and challenges.

There have been several significant successes with the Title III project at SCC. A success identified by every stakeholder group was the dedicated and personalized support that the SSAs are able to provide for students. Students indicated that they knew where to go to ask questions and appreciated personalized advising. All stakeholder groups have noticed increases in student success, and faculty appreciated the SSAs as a resource for students. Furthermore, all stakeholder groups reported a decrease in SSA turnover as a big success compared to previous years.

Another success noted across stakeholder groups was the decrease in student uncertainty, both in selecting and staying on a path. The guided pathways eliminate guesswork for students, and career exploration partnerships with PACE have helped to lower the number of undecided students.

This year, a post-registration survey was implemented, which has allowed for live, real-time improvement to processes as issues arise. Another element new to this year was transitioning to math corequisites. Faculty have reported positive outcomes, and this process get students to a gateway math course in their first year (rather than the need to complete three developmental education corequisites).

Finally, a newer success is the redesign of Blackhawk Kickoff and orientation. These have been restructured by meta-major, allowing students to connect more with the faculty and SSAs applicable to their meta-major and talk more specifically about their pathway.

### Factors Impacting Implementation

**The role of SSAs**

With decreased SSA turnover, students were able to receive more consistent support. Although the logistics of SSA responsibilities and size of SSA caseloads remain a concern, it was clear across all stakeholder groups that the SSA position has been a key factor in many of the project's successes. Multiple stakeholder groups associated the retention of SSAs with student retention and support. This is demonstrated by SCC's achievement of being the number one community college in Iowa for retention, and being one of the only state community colleges with high continuous enrollment across multiple (9) semesters.

# Project Challenges

Although SSA turnover stabilized, students reported feeling that their SSA was overwhelmed and sometimes rushed due to the large number of students they were supporting. Students had concerns about delayed responses and challenges connecting with their SSA via email. SSAs reported that the existing documentation requirements and administrative tasks detracted from time they would have otherwise spent directly supporting students. This was especially demonstrated with the need to manually enter degrees and certificates, which had to be entered one at a time. Faculty also shared that some SSAs were overloaded or located in less accessible areas, impacting their effectiveness in supporting students.

Related to this was a challenge of SSA placement. With multiple SCC campuses, SSAs reported that students not located at the main campus could get frustrated by having to meet with their SSA virtually while main campus students had the opportunity to do so in person.

Another set of challenges shared across stakeholder groups is related to marketing. Students shared that there is a disconnect between what SCC has to offer and what is being pushed at the local high schools. Students speculated that this came from the school districts' lack of understanding about SCC programs. Faculty described the new website as clunky and overwhelming, because it was difficult for users to navigate to find specific program information. Faculty felt that the ability to filter search results would help to solve this problem.

A reported challenge for faculty and leadership was lack of clarity in the processes and procedures for student success teams and SSAs. Faculty also faced challenges with scheduling Student Success Team (SST) meetings, especially when meetings conflicted with teaching schedules. There has been a reported lack of flexibility in meeting times, meaning that not all faculty can be accommodated. This was a challenge for faculty because they wanted more meaningful involvement and feedback mechanisms to ensure that their perspectives were considered in planning and implementation.

## Factors Impacting Implementation

### External factors

New federal financial aid regulations and FAFSA information delays have created challenges in adapting college records, processes, and systems.

# SUSTAINABILITY

The sustainability of SCC's efforts was exhibited in multiple ways during Year 4:

- Environmental support: Support for the project is strong, both internally at SCC and in the community at large. New community partnerships have strengthened college CTE programs.

- Partnerships: Partnering with local school districts in addition to community organizations such as Great River Health keeps the local community engaged with the accomplishment of SCC goals and invested in continued project success.

- Organizational capacity: Despite staff questions about continuing to fund particular positions after the grant, systemic changes have been well integrated into the college operations. College staff are committed to keeping new processes in place.

- Program evaluation: Commissioning an external evaluator for the project demonstrates a commitment to reflection and program evaluation to document results and inform actions for subsequent grant years.

## Impact on College

Enrollment and retention

- There has been an increase in student enrollment and retention rates, with SCC being the #1 community college in Iowa for retention.

- For local high schools that have an assigned SCC advocate, school staff have shared positive feedback, and concurrent enrollment from the high schools has increased and is more efficient.

- Orientation has been restructured to incorporate the meta-majors, with intended benefits to support retention, student success, and faculty expectations.

Quality of services

- Students are receiving more personal attention and direct communication throughout their time at SCC.

- Student success has increased, and interventions are timelier when they are needed.

# TO WHAT EXTENT HAS THE PROJECT MET ITS INTENDED OUTCOMES?

This project hopes to accomplish 15 outcomes by the year 2025. These data are not final until the summative report at the end of project implementation; however, these metrics can be used to track progress throughout the life of the project. SCC provided metrics to the evaluator.

*Note: Due to the probable effect of COVID-19 pandemic on 2020 baseline data, a second baseline alternative (2019) is listed where possible.*

**Outcome 1:** Increase % of new students that will complete an educational plan in their first semester of college

| | |
|---|---|
| Year 4 (Fall 2024) | 100% |
| Year 3 (Fall 2023) | 100% |
| Year 2 (Fall 2022) | 100% |
| Year 1 (Fall 2021) | 99.7% |
| Baseline (Fall 2020) | 57.0% |
| Baseline (Fall 2019) | 0% |
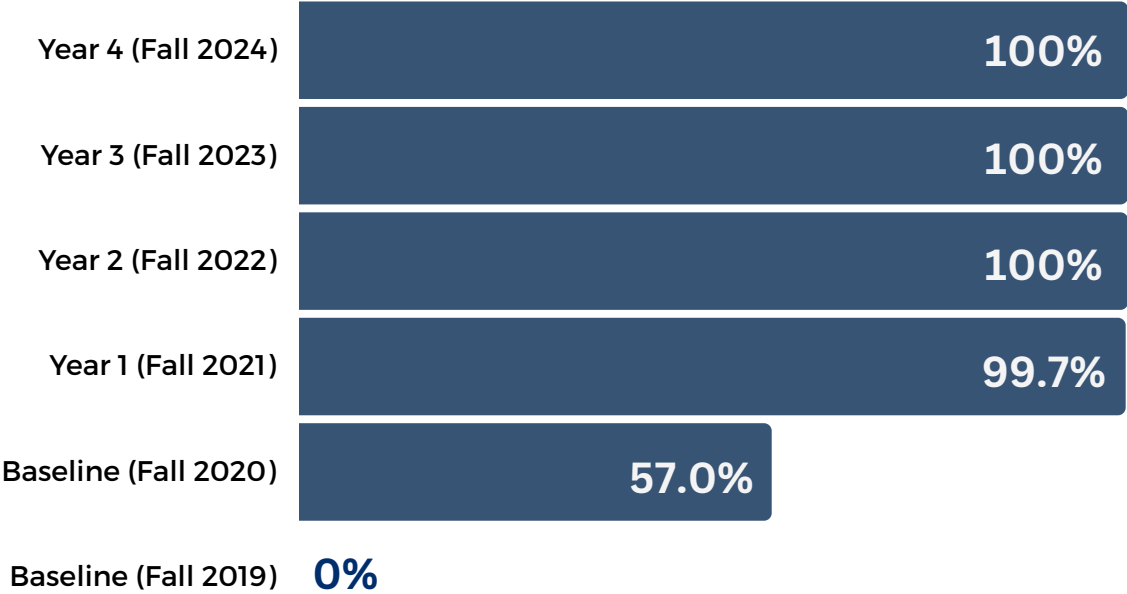
**Outcome 2:** Increase % of credit students assigned an individual Student Success Advocate/Advisor at the time of their matriculation to SCC

| | |
|---|---|
| Year 4 (Fall 2024) | 100% |
| Year 3 (Fall 2023) | 100% |
| Year 2 (Fall 202) | 100% |
| Year 1 (Fall 2021) | 99.7% |
| Baseline (Fall 2020) | 57.0% |
| Baseline (Fall 2019) | 0% |
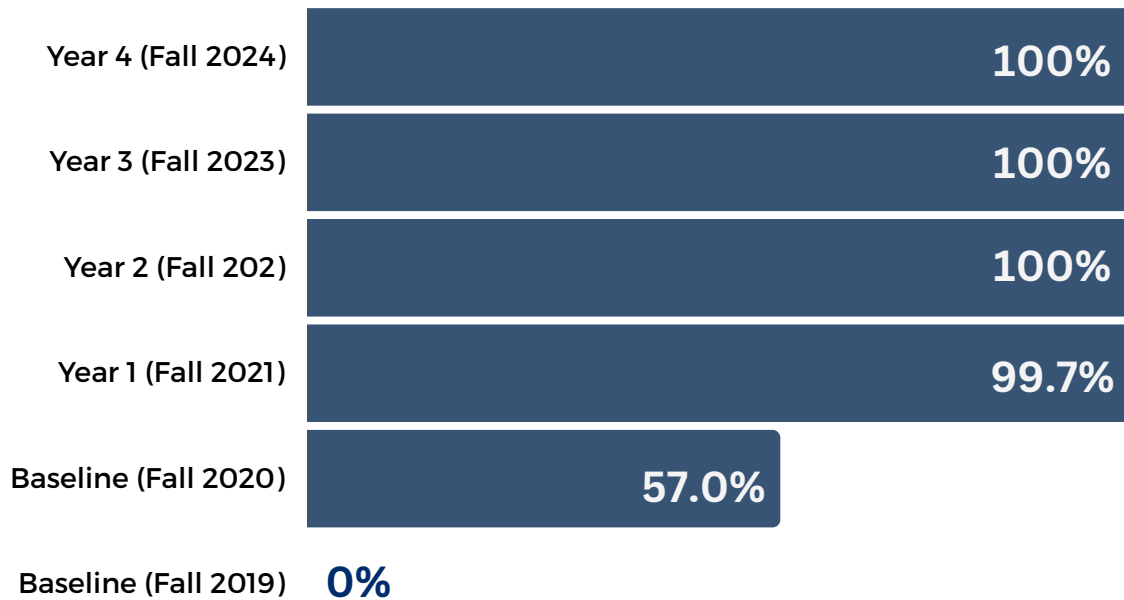
**Outcome 3:** Increase % of targeted students completing a credential or transfer within 150% of normal completion time

| | |
|---|---|
| Year 4 (AY 23/24) | **45.9%** |
| Year 3 (AY 22/23) | **45.1%** |
| Year 2 (AY 21/22) | **41.9%** |
| Year 1 (AY 20/21) | **40.2%** |
| Baseline (AY 19/20) | **40.8%** |
| Baseline (AY 18/19) | **38.1%** |

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**Outcome 4:** Increase the number and % of college-level credits completed by fall cohort students in their first full academic year compared to number and % attempted

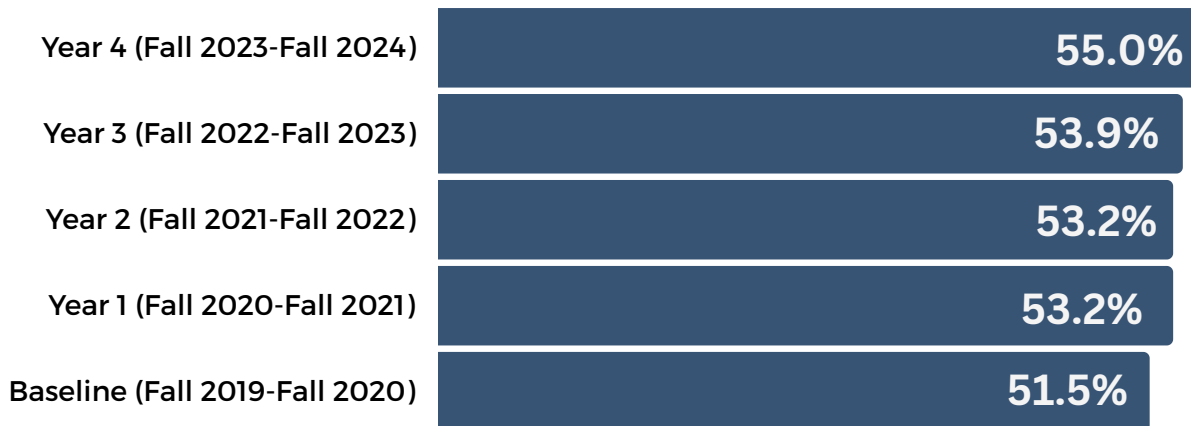| | |
|---|---|
| Year 4 (Fall 2023) | **77.7%** |
| Year 3 (Fall 2022) | **78.5%** |
| Year 2 (Fall 2021) | **75.6%** |
| Year 1 (Fall 2020) | **73.7%** |
| Baseline (Fall 2019) | **76.3%** |

**Outcome 5:** Increase % of targeted students that are retained from their first year to their second year

| | |
|---|---|
| Year 4 (Fall 2023-Fall 2024) | 55.0% |
| Year 3 (Fall 2022-Fall 2023) | 53.9% |
| Year 2 (Fall 2021-Fall 2022) | 53.2% |
| Year 1 (Fall 2020-Fall 2021) | 53.2% |
| Baseline (Fall 2019-Fall 2020) | 51.5% |

**Outcome 6:** Increase the number and % of fall cohort students who enrolled in at least one credit course in term 2

| | |
|---|---|
| Year 4 (Fall 2023-Spring 2024) | 78.0% |
| Year 3 (Fall 2022-Spring 2023) | 75.6% |
| Year 2 (Fall 2021-Spring 2022) | 76.3% |
| Year 1 (Fall 2020-Spring 2021) | 75.9% |
| Baseline (Fall 2019-Spring 2020 | 78.3% |
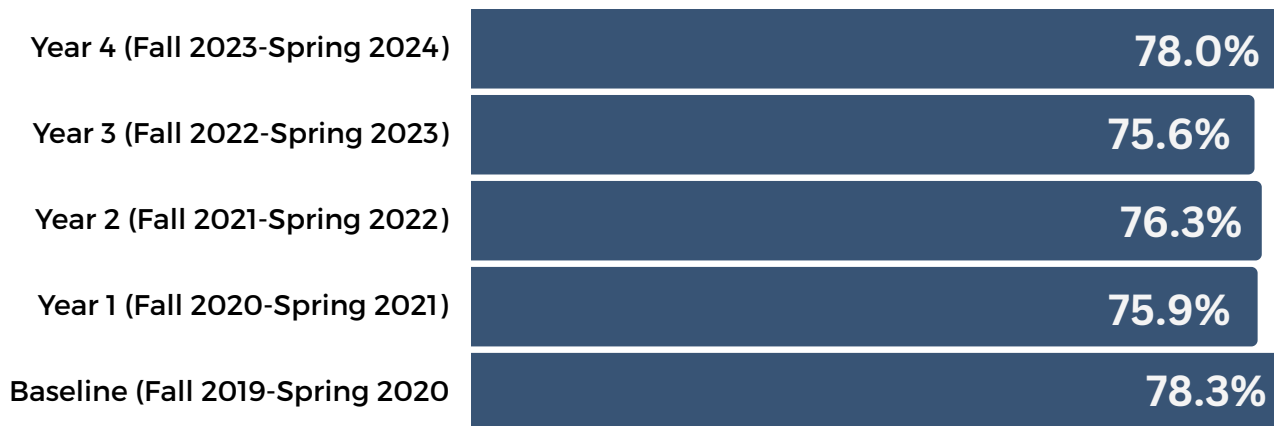
**Outcome 7:** Increase the number and % of fall cohort students who attempted and passed at least one college level math course in the first full academic year

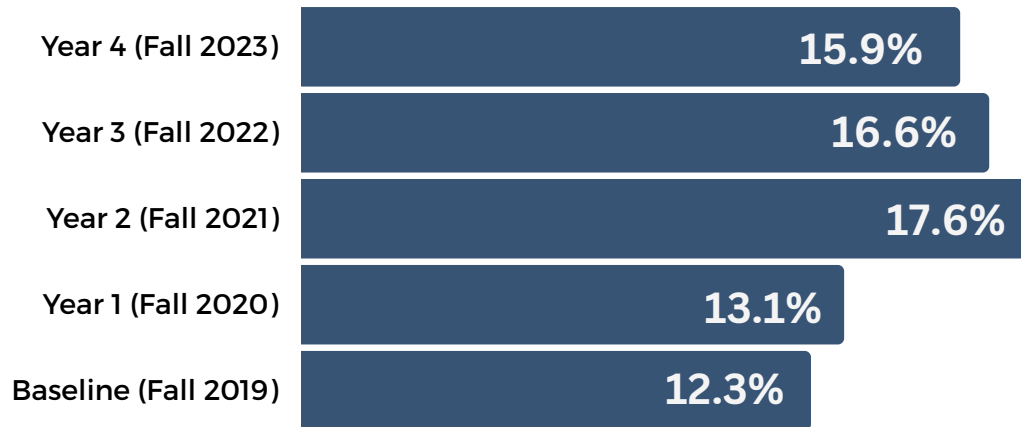| | |
|---|---|
| Year 4 (Fall 2023) | 29.5% |
| Year 3 (Fall 2022) | 30.6% |
| Year 2 (Fall 2021) | 30.2% |
| Year 1 (Fall 2020) | 24.6% |
| Baseline (Fall 2019) | 23.2% |

**Outcome 8:** Increase the number and % of fall cohort students who attempted and passed at least one college level English course in the first full academic year

| | |
|---|---|
| Year 4 (Fall 2023) | 46.9% |
| Year 3 (Fall 2022) | 47.5% |
| Year 2 (Fall 2021) | 48.1% |
| Year 1 (Fall 2020) | 45.0% |
| Baseline (Fall 2019) | 46.7% |

**Outcome 9:** Increase the number and % of fall cohort students who attempted and passed at least one college level math and English course in the first full academic year

| | |
|---|---|
| Year 4 (Fall 2023) | 15.9% |
| Year 3 (Fall 2022) | 16.6% |
| Year 2 (Fall 2021) | 17.6% |
| Year 1 (Fall 2020) | 13.1% |
| Baseline (Fall 2019) | 12.3% |

**Outcome 10:** Increase % of students earning 6+ credits in the first term

| | |
|---|---|
| Year 4 (Fall 2023) | 73.7% |
| Year 3 (Fall 2022) | 73.2% |
| Year 2 (Fall 2021) | 73.1% |
| Year 1 (Fall 2020) | 72.6% |
| Baseline (Fall 2019) | 77.47% |

**Outcome 11:** Increase # of students earning 12+ credits in the first term

| | |
|---|---|
| Year 4 (Fall 2023) | 52.8% |
| Year 3 (Fall 2022) | 51.2% |
| Year 2 (Fall 2021) | 51.5% |
| Year 1 (Fall 2020) | 45.8% |
| Baseline (Fall 2019) | 53.4% |

**Outcome 12:** Increase % of students earning 15+ credits in the first year

| | |
|---|---|
| Year 4 (Fall 2023) | 63.0% |
| Year 3 (Fall 2022) | 63.7% |
| Year 2 (Fall 2021) | 60.7% |
| Year 1 (Fall 2020) | 59.9% |
| Baseline (Fall 2019) | 64.7% |

▶▶ **Outcome 13:**  Increase # of students earning 24+ credits in the first year

| | |
|---|---|
| Year 4 (Fall 2023) | 47.7% |
| Year 3 (Fall 2022) | 45.2% |
| Year 2 (Fall 2021) | 45.6% |
| Year 1 (Fall 2020) | 45.1% |
| Baseline (Fall 2019) | 43.1% |

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▶▶ **Outcome 14:**  Increase % of students earning 30+ credits in the first year

| | |
|---|---|
| Year 4 (Fall 2023) | 25.8% |
| Year 3 (Fall 2022) | 22.5% |
| Year 2 (Fall 2021) | 26.5% |
| Year 1 (Fall 2020) | 23.1% |
| Baseline (Fall 2019) | 19.8% |

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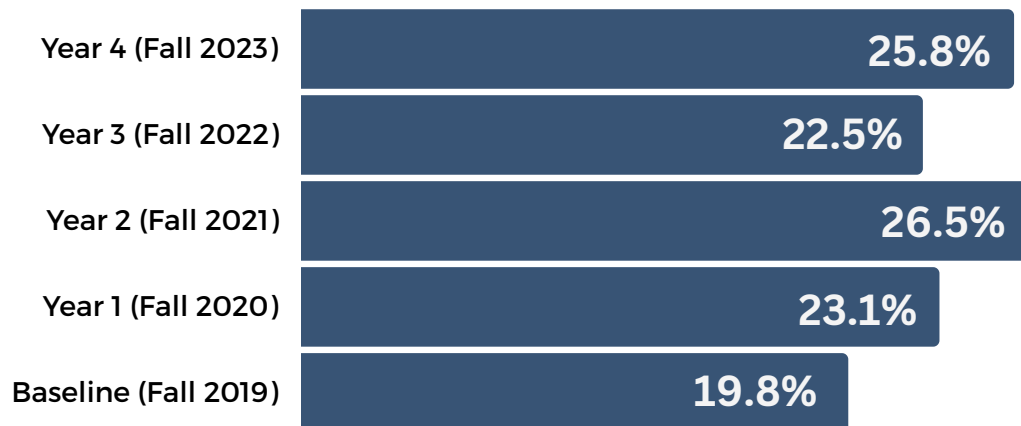
▶▶ **Outcome 15:**  Maintain six Student Success Advocates funded by this Title III grant

*Met: The most recent hire was in December 2023, there are six Student Success Advocates.*

# Conclusions & Recommendations

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# CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

## Strategy 1

Strategy 1 maps pathways to student goals. Objective 1 was completed in Year 2, and all new program students complete an educational plan in their first semester of college. SCC continues to make efforts towards progress on Objective 4, though current data show a decrease in the percent of students passing developmental math (25.4% in Year 4 compared to 38.7% in Year 3) and developmental English (30.5% in Year 4 compared to 32.5% in Year 3).

## Strategy 2

Strategy 2 supports students in choosing and entering a pathway. Objective 6 is complete, as SCC has hired six Student Success Advocates and continues to maintain the 10-member team. The Student Success Advocates (SSAs) are critical for advising and coordinating student supports. Faculty members have worked on program mapping, transfer majors, and course development, which are the paths' foundations.

## Strategy 3

Strategy 3 keeps students on their degree, certification, or transfer path. The college has continued to improve retention, as 55% of the 489 students enrolled in Fall 2023 remaining enrolled in Fall 2024. Additionally, 29.5% of students completed a college level (gateway) math course, surpassing the goal of 29% by the year 2025. For English, 46.9% of students completed the college level (gateway) course, nearly reaching the goal of 47.8%.

## Strategy 4

Strategy 4 is focused on ensuring that students are learning. During Year 4, 45.9% of Fall 2021 students completed a credential or transfer within 150% of normal completion time. This is an increase of 7.8 percentage points over baseline.

## Recommendations

SCC has met or is on track to meet most outcomes for all goals and activities. The evaluator highly commends the campus for efforts toward implementation and documentation of activities. Significant progress has occurred in Year 4, and the evaluator has no recommended changes for the final grant year.

# Appendices