Salish Kootenai College Academic Program Review

Reviewer's Report

Kasie Murphy-Brazil, Alberta Ramirez

1. **Provide a summary of the Program's status at this time, as determined from evidence contained in the Program Review document. Include current and historical enrollment patterns, general education courses taught by the department, the number of student credits generated by the department, and/or other pertinent information.**

Salish Kootenai College's Early Childhood Education, Early Childhood P-3, and Elementary Education Programs encompass the mission and vision of Salish Kootenai College. Salish Kootenai College's (SKC) education program facilitates instructional knowledge and skills for future teachers, with a clear focus on Indigenous teachers who are grounded in the culture, language, and connections to place of the Salish, Kootenai, and Pend d'Oreille people.

Historically, Salish Kootenai College's education program had a steady enrollment, but enrollment has recently declined and was further impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2013, student enrollment was at an all-time high of 122 students; in 2017, enrollment was 107, whereas the average student enrollment from 2020-2022 was 52. Student enrollment at SKC reflects a decline in teacher education that has occurred nationally and statewide since 2014: Montana has experienced a 45% enrollment decline in teacher preparation programs over the past nine years.

Salish Kootenai College's Education program has been an integral part of ensuring that highly qualified Native educators are teaching in the local community and throughout Montana and other states. The number of Native American educators in the seven public school systems located within the Flathead Indian Reservation has increased from three Native American educators in the 1980s to approximately 39 educators in 2023. SKC's Education Division is confident that there are well over 100 active SKC graduates teaching in the field today, which is a testament to the quality of education they received at SKC.

ECED, ECE: P-3, and Elementary Education: Enrollment 🟨 and Graduation 🟦

Program	2019		2020		2021		2022
ECED (AA)	15	0	7	2	8	0	11
ECED (BS)	11	11	6	3	7	1	14
ECE: P-3 (AA)	19	1	6	4	3	0	3
ECE: P-3 (BS)	9	2	9	2	6	1	3
ELEM (AS)	23	1	17	3	15	4	16
ELEM (BS)	9	0	12	7	1	1	7

	TOTAL	86	15	57	21	40	7	54

2. **Provide a summary of the program curriculum. Note whether the program meets current general education requirements, has an advisory board that reviews the curriculum, regularly reviews the curriculum, and other pertinent information.**

The Division of Education's (DOE) curriculum is student-centered and in alignment with SKC's mission objectives and Séliš, Ksanka and QÍispé ways of being. Additionally, the Early Childhood Education (ECED) curriculum has been developed to prepare students for the state's strict requirements for childhood centers.

The Education department's assessment was restructured in 2018 and 2019 to align with "Indigenous worldviews" and "Each student's personal growth as an educator." The processes to measure the success and readiness of the ECED students include a portfolio and critical assessments through course assignments aligned with InTASC standards.

The division has both external and internal curriculum assessments to measure curriculum effectiveness. The DOE has an advisory board that is made up of local stakeholders on the Flathead Indian Reservation that review the program on a quarterly basis. The group is composed of DOE graduates, teachers, principals, superintendents, cultural experts, and tribal government who seek to guide current DOE staff and faculty as well as evolve both the program and field experiences.

The division is required to submit a Title II assessment report each year that details student outcomes. This is a very detailed mandatory report that documents student progress in programs that lead to state certifications: because these programs require external reviews from both the federal (annual Title II reporting) and state (regularly scheduled OPI/BPE accreditation reviews) governments, SKC "counts these myriad data reports as its comprehensive assessment system in lieu of other assessment processes at the College".

Internal processes in place to assess curriculum include an interview system and a three stage conference process that is scored using a rubric that is in alignment to the Five Central Beliefs.

Some of the assessment modules are "Culturally revitalizing and sustaining instruction and curriculum will lead education to its promise of opportunity and equity" as well as "Teaching Aspirations" and "Teaching and Learning Aspirations." These data are evaluated by department faculty and are part of the overall assessment used to evaluate student progress, as well as program effectiveness. The records are archived and maintained by department faculty and overseen by the Department Chairs.

3. **Is the department externally accredited? If so, when was the last review?**

The division is externally accredited, and the last review took place in 2017. The results of this visit received exceptionally positive marks for all program components and procedures, with just one recommendation- to improve documentation of outreach and community engagement events. Since the review, the Division has made efforts to keep detailed records of all outreach activities in preparation for their next review that is scheduled for Spring 2024.

4. **When was the curriculum last reviewed and updated? How extensive was the revision? What was the rationale for the revision?**

The curriculum within all three Elementary Education degree tracks has made a few notable curricular changes to meet the needs of the students while ensuring a clear focus on perpetuating the culture and language of the local tribal nations. The Elementary Education program added language courses and a Native Language Emphasis track within their program to "better ensure meeting the needs of Native students and their families." The Elementary Education program also extensively revised its Student Portfolio system, emphasizing the Division's Five Central Beliefs while maintaining the Critical Assessments and national assessment standards.

Early Childhood Education (ECED) and ECE: P-3 adapted course schedules, including the addition of evening courses, to meet the needs of at-distance students and students who are employed. Partnerships were formed with other departments for curriculum development, and a resource room was created in coordination with the Business Education Division so that students could access professional dress. Endorsements were also created as program bridges between the two programs, allowing students greater professional opportunities.

<div align="center">5 Central Beliefs</div>

- Culturally sustaining and revitalizing instruction and curriculum will lead education to its promise of opportunity and equity.
- Learning communities foster the construction of knowledge.
- Reflective practice leads to the continuous flourishing of both teacher and student.
- Each learner's uniqueness, when valued and invited in all its diverse forms, enriches the learning community.
- Communication, critical thinking, cultural understanding, and citizenship are essential to effective teaching.

The responsiveness of the Education department to meeting the holistic needs of their students and community has been the driving force of the Education program. The Education program has

stated that "Its purpose is to train teachers to advocate for best practices that foster healthy relationships and engaged learners first, and content acquisition second. This is modeled in the program's unwavering dedication to candidate success through holistic advising and a balanced approach that values flexibility with accountability for its teacher graduates."

5. **Respond to the following items, indicating agreement/disagreement.**

	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
The department is engaged in efforts to recruit Students (Core Theme 1).	①	②	**③**	④	⑤
The department demonstrates efforts to increase student retention. (Core Theme 1)	①	②	③	④	**⑤**
There is evidence that the curricula are reviewed and revised as necessary to remain current and relevant (Core Theme 2).	①	②	③	④	**⑤**
There is evidence that assessment of student learning - using direct measures - is used to improve the program of learning (Core Theme 2).	①	②	③	④	**⑤**
There is evidence that the Program uses external feedback from a program advisory board or committee, labor market data, and/or student satisfaction surveys to periodically review and update the curriculum (Core Theme 2).	①	②	③	④	**⑤**
There is evidence that faculty members have appropriate experiential and educational qualifications (Core Theme 2).	①	②	③	④	**⑤**
There is evidence that the curricula reflects concepts of place-based education and the department is engaged in SKC's mission of cultural perpetuation (Core Theme 3).	①	②	③	④	**⑤**
The department is engaged with the community through service, research, grants, projects, or other activities (Core Theme 4).	①	②	③	④	**⑤**

The department is engaged in planning to increase ① ② ③ ④ ⑤
effectiveness and institutional mission fulfillment.

The department is engaged in the work of the college ① ② ③ ④ ⑤
through committee work or other significant contributions.

Comments:

1. **General comments about the Program Review document.**

   SKC's Education program is student-centered, grounded within a cultural paradigm, and committed to excellence. Data-informed decisions are made through consistent analysis of program design, assessment, recruitment, and retention. Highly qualified faculty have developed an interconnected relationship with their students and strive to meet the needs of the students within their program. Community-level efforts have connected pre-service and in-service educators throughout the reservation, ensuring valuable mentoring and professional relationships that last well beyond the classroom.

   The need for educators will continue to increase throughout our community, Montana, and the nation. SKC's Education programs continue to provide necessary training and education for students. Outreach and assessment of education initiatives, recruitment and retention, and close working relationships with Early Childhood Education programs will continue to impact SKC's Education program, ensuring its continued success.

2. **Noteworthy efforts or activities of the department:**

   The program boasts a 100% placement of graduates in full-time teaching positions in public schools or early childhood centers. Also of note was the division's consideration of student feedback via evaluations completed by graduates who noted that some aspects of the curriculum, namely the portfolio, were unmanageable. The portfolio process has now evolved into a three-part collaborative event in which the student can practically reflect on the relationships, experiences, and knowledge systems that led to their successes on their journeys to becoming educators.

   The department continually assesses and adapts its program to meet the needs of its students and community. This continual assessment and program changes adapt to meet the needs of the students and workplace settings. Fluctuating enrollment and program viability have created a directed focus on program recruitment and retention and delivery modes.

   There continues to be an impressive focus on retention efforts via several successful avenues. Office of Indian Education PD Grant programs (I-STEM, Bridges) are made available to all students, and offer incentives in the form of monthly stipends, so that students can focus on their studies without the stress and weight financial burdens can carry. Additionally, the creation of two integral new roles blossomed out of retention efforts: a Student Support Specialist and a Culture and Language Specialist. Both of these positions seek to mentor and support students in different

capacities. For example, the Culture and Language specialist seeks to serve "... culturally-connected students, [which] has conveyed to [students] that the Division values their Indigenous identity and strives for integration of language and culture into the educational experience of its students."

Also of note was the recent addition of five new 2+2 Articulation Agreements developed in Early Childhood Education as well as the creation and implementation of the Flathead Reservation Educator Support Hub (FRESH) induction plan to welcome and support new teachers to the profession as well as those new to the Reservation.

3. **Suggestions for improvement or increased effectiveness of the department:**

    SKC's Education department identified areas for improvement are the heavy workloads of the department faculty and staff; the viability of the ECE: P 3 program due to low enrollment; and inconsistent enrollment in the ELEM program.

    The Education Department identified the need to expand more efforts in recruitment through increased visits to schools, increased opportunities for dual enrollment courses for high school students, and prioritizing relationships with K-8 school leadership.

    The Department noted a shared goal of professional development in Indigenous Research Methodologies: consider approaching administration to encourage lowering faculty course load to participate in SKC's "Indigenous Research Certificate " program.

    One additional area for consideration could be to evaluate the current curriculum and assess the ability to integrate current SKC courses within other departments to lessen the burden regarding the current courseload of Education faculty.