



**Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
Commission on Colleges**

REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE

Statement Regarding the Report

The Commission on Colleges will make its determination on the accreditation of an institution based on the findings contained in this committee report, the institution's response to issues contained in the report, other assessments relevant to the review, and application of the Commission's policies and procedures. Final interpretation of the Principles of Accreditation and final action on the accreditation status of the institution rest with the Commission on Colleges.

Name of the Institution: St. Philip's College

Date of the Review: September 26-29, 2016

COC Staff Member: Patricia L. Donat

Chair of the Committee

Frank Friedman, President
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Part I. Overview and Introduction to the Institution:

St. Philip's College (SPC) was founded in 1898 by the Episcopal Church of the West Texas Diocese. The school opened in downtown San Antonio as a sewing class for daughters and granddaughters of former slaves. Since its beginning, St. Philip's has been an institution in transition, evolving from a parochial day school to a private junior college and finally into an accredited two-year college offering programs for students interested in transferring to a 4-year institution as well as for students interested in joining the workforce with a technical degree. In 1945, St. Philip's affiliated itself with the San Antonio Union Junior College District and has remained a public institution ever since.

St. Philip's College is a public, Level I institution, of approximately 13,000 students. It is the oldest of the institutions in the Alamo Community College District, having been designed to educate and train recently emancipated slaves.

Today, St. Philip's is a multi-campus institution with an open-door admissions policy that is continuing to meet the needs of the ethnically, academically and economically diverse population of San Antonio and the surrounding community. The institution is led by President Adena Williams Loston.

Student Profile:

Enrollment: 12, 954 (Fall 2016); 14% Full-Time, 86% Part-time; 57% Female, 43% Male; 24% Dual Credit, 64% Require Remediation, 63% Enrolled in Online or Hybrid Courses, 34% enrolled in Workforce Programs.

Ethnicity: 54% Hispanic, 11% African-American, 28% White, 6% other

As a federally designated Historically Black College, and as a Hispanic Serving Institution, St. Philip's mission is to provide an educational experience that stimulates leadership, personal growth, and a lifelong appreciation for learning and to empower its diverse student population through personal educational growth, ethical decision-making, career readiness and community leadership. SPC is a vital facet of the community, fostering excellence in academic and technical achievement while expanding its commitment to opportunity and access. The educational offerings include diploma, certificate, or associate (AA), (AS), (AAT), (AAS) degree programs.

Part II. Assessment of Compliance

A. Assessment of Compliance with Section 1: The Principle of Integrity

1.1 The institution operates with integrity in all matters. **(Integrity)**

The narrative and documentation provided by St. Philip's College demonstrate that the institution operates with integrity in all matters.

B. Assessment of Compliance with Section 2: Core Requirements

2.3 The institution has a chief executive officer whose primary responsibility is to the institution and who is not the presiding officer of the board. **(Chief Executive Officer)**

The President of St. Philip's College serves as the chief executive officer and has primary responsibility for the operation and administration of the institution. The President is not the presiding officer of the board.

Alamo Community College District (ACCD) policy B.2.1 Organizational Plan states that "each Alamo Colleges' President serves as the Chief Executive Officer of his/her respective college...". The Alamo Colleges job description for *President of the College* indicates that the President is responsible for "directing all operational areas of one of the colleges". It further indicates that the President is responsible to the Chancellor of the district (Alamo Community College District).

The Special Committee interviewed the President of St. Philip's College as well as the Chancellor and confirms that the President is the institution's chief executive officer. A review of the Alamo Colleges Organizational Chart, board minutes, and interviews confirm that the President is not the presiding officer of the board.

The Special Committee's review of policy along with interviews indicate that the President has appropriate authority to lead the institution.

C. Assessment of Compliance with Section 3: Comprehensive Standards

3.2.2 The legal authority and operating control of the institution are clearly defined for the following areas within the institution's governance structure: **(Governing board control)**

- 3.2.2.1 the institution's mission;
- 3.2.2.2 the fiscal stability of the institution; and
- 3.2.2.3 institutional policy,

The Board of the Alamo Community College District has the final authority to establish and interpret policies that govern the College District and within limits imposed by other legal authorities has complete and full control over the institutions that comprise the District.

The Special Committee reviewed board minutes, the Board Policy Manual, and interviewed board members and the College District Chancellor. The Special Committee determined that the Board of the Alamo Community College District has the responsibility for formulating broad public policy in community college education for each of the Alamo Colleges.

According to Texas Educational Code, Chapter 51, Sec. 51.352, "It is the policy of the state that the governing boards of institutions of higher education being composed of lay members, shall exercise the traditional and time-honored role for such boards..... and shall constitute the keystone of the governance". Further, the same statute instructs the board to appoint the president or other chief executive officer of each institution under the board's control and management and evaluate the chief executive officer of each component institution and assist the officer in the achievement of performance goals. Our review determined that such authority granted by the State of Texas was accomplished through the board's executive and administrative structure.

The Board of the Alamo Community College District functions as the board for each of the five colleges as well as for the College District to whom the Chancellor reports as the District's chief executive officer. The College presidents report to the Chancellor as prescribed by Board Policy, B.2.1.

3.2.7 The institution has a clearly defined and published organizational structure that delineates responsibility for the administration of policies. **(Organizational structure)**

St. Philip's College has a clearly defined and published organizational structure that delineates responsibility for the administration of policies. The organizational chart outlines the reporting structure of the college. The organizational chart is published in several places on the college's website as well as in the *Faculty Handbook*.

Interviews with the President, Vice President for Academic Success, Vice President for Student Success, and the Director of Institutional Advancement provided additional information regarding the institution's organizational structure and responsibilities for the administration of policies. The organizational structure appears appropriate for the overall management and operation of the college.

3.2.9 The institution publishes policies regarding appointment, employment, and evaluation of all personnel. **(Personnel appointment)**

The institution follows Alamo Colleges Human Resources policies and procedures for the appointment and employment of faculty and staff. The policies and procedures are published on the Alamo Board web site.

Through interviews conducted with a variety of faculty, staff, and administrators, the Special Committee verified that the institution is responsible for the hiring and evaluation process.

The institution uses Hiring Managers to select search committees. The faculty search committees are comprised of faculty from the institution. The search committee reviews applications and interviews qualified candidates. The committee makes a recommendation of one to five individuals to the President for full-time faculty positions. The President, Vice President, Department Chair and Dean then conduct a second interview. The President then submits the preferred candidate to the District Human Resources Office. There are also Hiring Managers for non-faculty positions. The Hiring Manager selects a search committee and applications are reviewed and candidates interviewed. The committee recommends one to three candidates to the Vice President and President. The hiring manager then submits the preferred candidate to the District Human Resources Office.

The Human Resources Department at the district is responsible for background checks, drug testing, and verification of academic qualifications. If the applicant satisfies the checks, Human Resources will notify the Hiring Committee Chair/President and send an employment offer to the selected applicant.

The institution publishes policies on evaluation of employees. Performance evaluations are prepared by institutional personnel. District Board Policy describes the individual responsible for the evaluations and the timing of evaluations. Department Chairs evaluate full-time faculty, Deans evaluate Department Chairs, supervisors evaluate part-time faculty, full-time faculty evaluate department chairs and supervisors of full-time non-faculty employees evaluate those employees. Interviews with hiring managers verified that the institution is following published policy. Copies of redacted evaluations were also provided to the Committee.

3.4.1 The institution demonstrates that each educational program for which academic credit is awarded is approved by the faculty and the administration. **(Academic program approval)**

Academic credit is awarded and approved by college faculty and academic administration. Alterations to existing curriculum and new program proposals are submitted to the Curriculum Committee, which includes faculty members, instructional deans and directors. The *Curriculum Committee Guidebook* outlines the review and approval process followed by the college. Supporting documentation includes Curriculum Committee minutes which document faculty involvement in the process. The Special Committee interviewed several groups of faculty, staff and academic leadership to determine the level at which SPC faculty are involved in the curriculum review and approval process. Interviews support the *Special Committee Autonomy Report* submitted by SPC. Discussions included examples of instances where faculty were able to implement change as needed.

- 3.4.4** The institution publishes policies that include criteria for evaluating, awarding, and accepting credit for transfer, experiential learning, credit by examination, advanced placement, and professional certificates that are consistent with its mission and ensure that course work and learning outcomes are at the collegiate level and comparable to the institution's own degree programs. The institution assumes responsibility for the academic quality of any course work or credit recorded on the institution's transcript. **(Acceptance of academic credit)**

The institution publishes policies for awarding credit in the institution catalog and on the institution's website. These policies contain required criteria for awarding, evaluating, and accepting credit for transfer, experiential learning, credit by examination, advanced placement, and professional certificates.

The institution uses the Center for Student Information (CSI) for processing incoming transcripts. CSI is an Alamo College District Office. CSI uses courses that are built in SHATATR (Banner transfer equivalency database) for courses previously articulated. The CSI also uses the Texas Common Course Numbering System (TCCN), the Lower Division Academic Course Guide Manual, and Workforce Education Course Manual to determine equivalencies not built in SHATATR. The Service Agreement between the Institution and CSI states "If an equivalency does not exist, relevant chairs and faculty members from the college will review the institution's course catalog and course syllabus (if available) and determine whether the course will be accepted. If accepted, the decision will be stored in the Course Equivalency List." The Committee interviewed the following personnel from the Center for Student Information: Director for the Center for Student Information, Process Function Manager and the Associate Director for CSI. These personnel reported that they are not following the procedures outlined in the Service Agreement. Courses that do not currently have an equivalency are not being sent to St. Philip's College chairs and faculty members for review.

Recommendation 1: The Committee recommends that the institution demonstrate responsibility for the academic quality of any course work or credit recorded on the institution's transcript.

- 3.4.5** The institution publishes academic policies that adhere to principles of good educational practice. These policies are disseminated to students, faculty, and other interested parties through publications that accurately represent the programs and services of the institution. **(Academic policies)**

The Special Committee reviewed transcripts for students with transfer credit from within the Alamo District and outside the Alamo District. Intra-district courses are included as institutional credit, rather than transfer credit, and only a district wide GPA is calculated on the transcript. An institutional GPA is not calculated. Interviews with the Registrar and financial aid personnel confirmed that the institution includes intra-district courses as institutional credit and that a separate institutional GPA is not calculated. These individuals also confirmed that the new transfer agreement with the Alamo District Colleges (dated August 29, 2016)

stating that transfer credit among the district colleges are transcribed as transfer is not being followed at this time and has not been implemented.

Recommendation 2: The Committee recommends that the institution follow generally accepted practices in higher education for the posting of transfer credit.

Faculty, staff and administrators indicated in interviews that they are considering the need for separate GPAs on the academic transcript. Currently the academic transcript has only an overall GPA (district GPA that includes all district credit). The institution does not calculate an institutional GPA. The calculation of the GPA has implications for academic standing, honors for graduation, degree GPA, and federal financial aid. The institution requires a 2.0 district GPA rather than institutional GPA for degree requirements.

Recommendation 3: The Committee recommends that the institution establish policies for GPA calculation in accordance with good educational practice.

- 3.4.7** The institution ensures the quality of educational programs and courses offered through consortia relationships or contractual agreements, ensures ongoing compliance with the *Principles* and periodically evaluates the consortial relationship and/or agreement against the purpose of the institution. **(Consortia relationships/contractual agreements)**

SPC has entered into consortia and contractual arrangements with local high school systems, system-wide colleges, and surrounding colleges and universities. The processes for initial approval and review of existing agreements ensure that these consortial agreements uphold the faculty qualifications and curricular quality of SPC.

The Vice President of Academic Success, academic deans and program directors, as well as the College Coordinator for High School Programs and College Director of High School Programs have the primary responsibility for contractual and consortial agreements.

A collaborative agreement, by way of Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), describes the evaluation of transfer credit between each institution and the Academic Course Agreements outline the necessary details to include course information, faculty qualifications and requirements, student requirements, and signature lines for final approval among all parties. The Special Committee interviewed College academic and high school program personnel. The College was able to produce additional documentation to verify that faculty credentials are reviewed for all SPC faculty as well as those that teach dual enrollment courses for SPC and those faculty teaching courses that transfer credit into SPC from Northeast Lakeview College (non-accredited College within Alamo College System, SACS/COC candidacy status).

- 3.4.10** The institution places primary responsibility for the content, quality, and effectiveness of its curriculum with its faculty. **(Responsibility for curriculum)**

Documentation provided and interviews conducted provides sufficient evidence that program approval, the primary responsibility for the content, quality, and effectiveness of the curriculum in the College's educational programs has been assigned to the faculty of SPC.

Revisions to and new program requests go through the College's *Curriculum Committee*, which is comprised of faculty members who, along with other committee members, are responsible for overseeing all requests for revisions to existing curricula, as well as new program proposals. The catalyst for new curricula may be recommendations from entities such as program advisory committees, industry representatives, faculty, staff, and administrators. The College makes changes as needed to meet the needs of the community, its students and program fit/need.

The College regularly reviews and ensures curriculum quality and effectiveness through a variety of processes and procedures to include the following:

- Student Learning Outcomes Committee
- Curriculum Assessment Plans
- Instructional Unit Review (3-year cycle)
- Institutional Student Learning Outcomes Assessment (two-year cycle)
- Observations
- Peer review
- Adjunct faculty input

There are indications that the board, through board policy, has required certain content (The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People) to be included in the curriculum. This is stipulated in Board Policy B.9.1. It appears that this bypassed the faculty review process.

Recommendation 4. The Committee recommends that the institution demonstrate that it places primary responsibility for the content of the curriculum with its faculty.

3.7.5 The institution publishes policies on the responsibility and authority of faculty in academic and governance matters. **(Faculty role in governance)**

Interviews were conducted with faculty and academic leadership. Faculty described their involvement in the strategic planning process and mission statement revision and approval. Faculty report that they feel they have opportunities for input, are regularly included in the decision-making process and have many options available to them to have their ideas or concerns addressed. The College most recently developed a process, "Feed the Tiger," whereby faculty and staff may provide input and make recommendations for improvement to College leadership. Faculty and academic leadership were able to provide the Special Committee with examples of ideas or concerns that have led to positive change within the College. Additional supportive documentation includes board policy and faculty job descriptions.

3.13.4 Reaffirmation of Accreditation and Subsequent Reports

3.13.4.b. Applicable Policy Statement. If an institution is part of a system or corporate structure, a description of the system operation (or corporate structure) is submitted as part of the Compliance Certification for the decennial review. The description should be designed to help members of the peer review committees understand the mission, governance, and operating procedures of the system and the individual institution's role within that system.

Alamo College Board Policy D.2.5 Hiring Authority, Status, Assignment and Duties states "All employees, except for internal audit department employees and the Board Liaison, are subject at any time to assignment, reassignment or transfer to vacant or new positions by the chancellor." It was confirmed that such a transfer was authorized by the chancellor for the position of vice president of St. Philip's College Southwest Campus. Placing the authority for such a transfer with the chancellor rather than the president of St. Philip's College is inconsistent with the actions of an autonomous college.

In addition, the employment contract is between the individual and the Alamo Colleges District and not between the individual and the institution for which the faculty/administrator was hired.

Recommendation 5: The Committee recommends that the institution retain its authority as a separately accredited unit for the appointment and employment for all institutional personnel.

The representation of institutional autonomy is unclear. This is evident in the following instances:

- Branding (language in College catalogs, website, College marketing materials, email) represents the district and not the separately accredited institution. For example, in all branded materials, Alamo Colleges is the predominant focus and the college name is secondary. In other examples, the college is omitted completely and the focus is on Alamo Colleges.
- College degrees conferred at each commencement ceremony are unclear. For example, the script read by the President at the commencement ceremony does not clearly confer the degrees on behalf of the college. In the language found in the script, it was unclear whether the entity conferring the degree was the institution or the district.
- Language in documents does not accurately portray the college and instead represents the district as if it were the educational institution. For example: memo templates, manuals, guidelines, consortia agreements, contracts, MOUs, minutes and agendas.

Recommendation 6: The Committee recommends that the institution accurately represents itself as a separately accredited institution.

D. Assessment of Compliance with Section 4: Federal Requirements

- 4.7 The institution is in compliance with its program responsibilities under Title IV of the most recent Higher Education Act as amended. **(Title IV program responsibilities)**

It is unclear if practices at the institution are appropriate in calculating and reporting student Satisfactory Academic Progress for federal financial aid purposes. In interviews with the District Director of Financial Aid, district office financial aid personnel, and the Registrar it was reported that the institution uses cumulative grade point averages to determine students' Satisfactory Academic Progress status for the awarding of federal financial aid. It was further reported that the cumulative grade point average is calculated only from coursework taken at the Alamo Colleges rather than from all coursework (transfer, district and institutional) completed by the student. A review of student transcripts confirmed that only Alamo College credit is used to determine cumulative grade point averages.

Recommendation 7: The Committee recommends that the institution demonstrate that it uses appropriate practices in the calculation of cumulative grade point averages in determining Satisfactory Academic Progress and for federal reporting in compliance with Title IV requirements.

Part III. Observations and Comments

APPENDIX A

Roster of the Special Committee

Dr. Frank Friedman – **CHAIR**
President
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Charlottesville, VA

SACSCOC Staff Coordinator
Dr. Patricia L. Donat
Vice President
SACS Commission on Colleges
Decatur, GA

Dr. Daisy W. Davis – **Co-Chair**
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Newton Campus Dean (Ret'd)
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Mr. James Cuthbertson, Chair
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Mrs. Mindy D. Glander
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Ms. Cay Lollar
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SACSCOC Staff Coordinator
Dr. Michael T. Hoefler
Vice President
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Decatur, GA

APPENDIX B

Off-Campus Sites or Distance Learning Programs Evaluated as Part of the Special Committee Review

APPENDIX C

List of Recommendations Cited in the Report of the Special Committee

CS 3.4.4, Recommendation 1:

The Committee recommends that the institution demonstrate responsibility for the academic quality of any course work or credit recorded on the institution's transcript.

CS 3.4.5, Recommendation 2:

The Committee recommends that the institution follow generally accepted practices in higher education for the posting of transfer credit.

CS 3.4.5, Recommendation 3:

The Committee recommends that the institution establish policies for GPA calculation in accordance with good educational practice.

CS 3.4.10, Recommendation 4:

The Committee recommends that the institution demonstrate that it places primary responsibility for the content of the curriculum with its faculty.

CS 3.13.4b, Recommendation 5:

The Committee recommends that the institution retain its authority as a separately accredited unit for the appointment and employment for all institutional personnel.

CS 3.13.4b, Recommendation 6:

The Committee recommends that the college accurately represent itself as a separately accredited institution.

FR 4.7, Recommendation 7:

The Committee recommends that the institution demonstrate that it uses appropriate practices in the calculation of cumulative grade point averages in determining Satisfactory Academic Progress and for federal reporting in compliance with Title IV requirements.