

EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

**College of the Sequoias
915 S. Mooney Blvd.
Visalia, CA 93277**

**A confidential report prepared for
The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges
Western Association of Schools and Colleges**

**This report represents the findings of the External Evaluation Team that visited
College of the Sequoias October 1-4, 2018**

**Kevin G. Walthers, Ph.D.
Chair**

NOTE: this page shall be added to the team report noted below, immediately behind the cover page, and shall become part of the final evaluation report associated with the review.

DATE: October 26, 2018

INSTITUTION: College of the Sequoias
915 S. Mooney Blvd.
Visalia, CA 93277

TEAM REPORT: Comprehensive Evaluation Report

This report represents the findings of the evaluation team that visited College of the Sequoias October 1 – October 4, 2018.

SUBJECT: Commission Revisions to the Team Report

The comprehensive External Evaluation Report provides details of the team’s findings with regard to the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies, and should be read carefully and used to understand the team’s findings.

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Summary of the External Evaluation Report

INSTITUTION: College of the Sequoias

DATES OF VISIT: October 1 – October 4, 2018

TEAM CHAIR: Dr. Kevin G Walthers

An eleven-member team visited College of the Sequoias (COS) October 1- October 4, 2018 for the purpose of determining whether the College continues to meet Accreditation Standards, Eligibility Requirements, Commission Policies, and USDE regulations. The team evaluated how well the College is achieving its stated purposes, providing recommendations for quality assurance and institutional improvement, and submitting recommendations to the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) regarding the accredited status of the College.

The evaluation team received the college's self-evaluation document and related evidence in a timely manner, a few weeks prior to the site visit. Team members found it to be a generally acceptable document that adequately described some of the processes used by the College to address Eligibility Requirements, USDOE requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission Policies. College faculty and staff worked diligently to assist the team in our work.

The team confirmed that the self-evaluation report was compiled through broad participation by the entire College community including faculty, staff, students, and administration. Further, it contained several self-identified action plans for institutional improvement as part of the Quality Focus Essay.

During the evaluation visit, team members conducted dozens of formal meetings, interviews, and observations involving College employees, students, and board members. Other, less formal interactions with students and employees took place outside of officially scheduled interviews, as did observations of in-session classes and other learning environments. Two open forums provided the community members and College personnel opportunities to meet with members of the evaluation team. The college provided teleconference sites for faculty and staff at the Hanford and Tulare campuses.

The team reviewed numerous materials supporting the self-evaluation report in the team room and electronically, including documents and evidence supporting the Standards, Eligibility Requirements, Commission Policies, and USDE regulations. Evidence reviewed by the team included, but was not limited to, institutional plans, program review procedures and reports, student learning outcomes evidence, distance education classes, college policies and procedures, enrollment information, committee minutes and materials, and college governance structures. Evidence was accessed via hard-copy in the team room and electronically via provided flash drives, internal College systems (e.g., eLumen, CurricuNet, TracDat), and the college's internal and public website pages.

The team greatly appreciated the enthusiasm and support from College employees throughout the visit. The team appreciated the assistance of key staff members who assisted with requests for individual meetings and other needs throughout the evaluation process. College staff met every request.

The team found a number of innovative and effective practices and programs resulting in a

number of commendations to the College. It also issued one recommendation to increase effectiveness.

Major Findings and Recommendations of the 2017 External Evaluation Team

Commendations

Commendation 1: The team commends the college for the development and implementation of the Student Success Program. The Program exceeds the standard for delivery of learning support services for disproportionately impacted groups. This shows deep commitment, supports learning and helps accomplish the mission of the institution. (II.C.1)

Commendation 2: The team commends the district for their implementation and engagement of the Hanford and Tulare Centers. These specialized yet comprehensive instructional centers also support all components of student services. The team also noted that both centers had impressive partnerships with their communities and area high schools. (II.C.3. and III.B.2.)

Commendation 3: The team commends the district for college-wide engagement in the planning and governance process. Over the past several years, the college clearly engaged all sectors and staffing levels across their three sites of the district in developing, understanding and effectively using their Model of Integrated Planning and the College of Sequoias Participatory Governance Structure. Most notably, the Model is dependent upon the effective and collaborative governance structure that has been embraced by all faculty, staff, administrators, and board members. The Team noted a spirit of trust, accountability and genuine participation that exceeds the ACCJC Standard on Effective Planning and Implementation. (IV.A.1)

Recommendation for Improvement and Compliance

Recommendation 1 (Effectiveness): In order to improve effectiveness, the team recommends that the college review its student complaint process to ensure that each step, including resolution, is properly documented and communicated to all parties (Student Complaint Checklist, ACCJC *Policy on Student and Public Complaints Against Institutions*).

Introduction

College of the Sequoias was founded in 1926, one of California's early community colleges developed in partnership with local school districts. The College was first established by the Visalia Union High School Board of Trustees as Visalia Junior College and offered the first post-high-school instruction to students in the area. College classes were housed at Visalia Union High School until the College moved to its own, newly constructed campus in the location it still occupies today. That same year, the College offered its first agricultural programs – the beginning of a comprehensive and vital agricultural program further developed a few years later through the establishment of the College farm in 1947.

In 1949, voters in the Tulare and Visalia Union High School districts voted to organize the area into a junior college district. Students suggested names for the newly formed District, and from this list the Board of Trustees selected College of the Sequoias, in honor of the region's Giant Sequoia trees and nearby Sequoia National Park. The District has provided access to higher education to the residents of Tulare and Kings Counties for more than 90 years. The District continues to grow through partnerships with the community. In 2011, the District opened the Hanford Educational Center, receiving official Center status in 2015. In 2013, the District opened the Tulare College Center.

Today, College of the Sequoias is a single-college district that encompasses 2,893 square miles, with 80 percent of the District's geographic boundaries in Tulare County, 19 percent in Kings County, and one percent in Fresno County. The District continues to be located in the center of one of the most productive agricultural regions in the world. Many of California's 200 commercially produced crops are grown in Tulare, Kings, and Fresno Counties, making agriculture the leading industry in the region.

Eligibility Requirements

1. Authority

The team confirmed that College of the Sequoias is authorized to operate as a post- secondary, degree-granting institution based on continuous accreditation by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). The ACCJC is a regional accrediting body recognized by the

U.S. Department of Education and granted authority through the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008.

The College meets the ER.

2. Operational Status

The team confirmed that the College is operational and provides educational services to more than 11,000 students enrolled in degree applicable, credit courses.

The College meets the ER.

3. Degrees

The team confirmed that the vast majority of courses offered lead to a degree and/or transfer. A majority of the College's students are enrolled in the 73 AA/AS degrees.

The College meets the ER.

4. Chief Executive Officer

The District's current chief executive officer is highly qualified for the position and has served as superintendent/president since July 1, 2018. His full-time responsibility is to the District; he possesses the requisite skills and authority to provide leadership for the District.

The Superintendent/President reports directly to the District Board of Trustees. The Superintendent/President does not serve as a member of the board nor as the board president. Since the last full accreditation visit, there was a change in the Superintendent/President position that was appropriately reported to the ACCJC.

The College meets the ER.

5. Financial Accountability

The District Office Accounting Office staff oversees District wide audits and is responsible for coordination of all site visits. The District also has a Central Financial Aid Unit that monitors and helps control the Perkins Loans default rates. The College demonstrates compliance with Federal Title IV regulations, and maintains its loan default rates within acceptable limits defined by the USDE.

The District annually undergoes an external financial audit by a certified public accountant which is made available to the public. Evidence shows that the audits were completed and are available to review on the District's website. Reports were available for review.

The College meets the ER.

Checklist for Evaluating Compliance with Federal Regulations and Related Commission Policies

Public Notification of an Evaluation Team Visit and Third Party Comment Evaluation Items:

- The institution has made an appropriate and timely effort to solicit third party comment in advance of a comprehensive evaluation visit.
- The institution cooperates with the evaluation team in any necessary follow-up related to the third party comment.
- The institution demonstrates compliance with the Commission *Policy on Rights and Responsibilities of the Commission and Member Institutions* as to third party comment.

[Regulation citation: 602.23(b).]

Conclusion Check-Off (mark one):

- The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.
- The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements, but that follow-up is recommended.
- The team has reviewed the elements of this component and found the institution does not meet the Commission's requirements.

Narrative:

The team confirmed that the College solicited third-party comment via open forums, email communication, website postings and public comment during a Board of Trustee meeting. The team found no third party comment related to this visit.

Standards and Performance with Respect to Student Achievement Evaluation Items:

The institution has defined elements of student achievement performance across the institution, and has identified the expected measure of performance within each defined element. Course completion is included as one of these elements of student achievement. Other elements of student achievement performance for measurement have been determined as appropriate to the institution’s mission.

The institution has defined elements of student achievement performance within each instructional program, and has identified the expected measure of performance within each defined element. The defined elements include, but are not limited to, job placement rates for program completers, and for programs in fields where licensure is required, the licensure examination passage rates for program completers.

The institution-set standards for programs and across the institution are relevant to guide self-evaluation and institutional improvement; the defined elements and expected performance levels are appropriate within higher education; the results are reported regularly across the campus; and the definition of elements and results are used in program-level and institution-wide planning to evaluate how well the institution fulfills its mission, to determine needed changes, to allocating resources, and to make improvements.

The institution analyzes its performance as to the institution-set standards and as to student achievement, and takes appropriate measures in areas where its performance is not at the expected level.

[Regulation citations: 602.16(a)(1)(i); 602.17(f); 602.19 (a-e).]

Conclusion Check-Off (mark one):

The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission’s requirements.

The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission’s requirements, but that follow-up is recommended.

The team has reviewed the elements of this component and found the institution does not meet the Commission’s requirements.

Narrative:

The College provided evidence that it has established institution-set standards for course completion, job placement rates for instructional programs, and licensure passage rates for instructional programs. Plans are in place for monitoring these student achievement measures and for communicating results.

Credits, Program Length, and Tuition Evaluation Items:

- Credit hour assignments and degree program lengths are within the range of good practice in higher education (in policy and procedure).
- The assignment of credit hours and degree program lengths is verified by the institution, and is reliable and accurate across classroom based courses, laboratory classes, distance education classes, and for courses that involve clinical practice (if applicable to the institution).
- Tuition is consistent across degree programs (or there is a rational basis for any program-specific tuition).
- Any clock hour conversions to credit hours adhere to the Department of Education’s conversion formula, both in policy and procedure, and in practice.
- The institution demonstrates compliance with the Commission *Policy on Institutional Degrees and Credits*.

[Regulation citations: 600.2 (definition of credit hour); 602.16(a)(1)(viii); 602.24(e), (f); 668.2; 668.9.]

Conclusion Check-Off (mark one):

- The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission’s requirements.
- The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission’s requirements, but that follow-up is recommended.
- The team has reviewed the elements of this component and found the institution does not meet the Commission’s requirements.

Narrative:

The technical review committee as well as the curriculum handbook has established a protocol for the review of all courses for length, depth, breadth, rigor, course sequencing, time to completion, synthesis of learning and minimum degree requirements. The institution does not have clock hour programs. The institution is mindful of scheduling courses to meet the needs of the students in all of its programs. The distance education subcommittee has established a protocol for the review of distance education courses. The institution has an infrastructure that is sufficient to maintain and sustain its distance education. The program review handbook is used to guide faculty and others to develop a comprehensive program review document.

Transfer Policies Evaluation Items:

- Transfer policies are appropriately disclosed to students and to the public.
- Policies contain information about the criteria the institution uses to accept credits for transfer.
- The institution complies with the Commission *Policy on Transfer of Credit*. [Regulation citations: 602.16(a)(1)(viii); 602.17(a)(3); 602.24(e); 668.43(a)(ii).]

Conclusion Check-Off (mark one):

- The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.
- The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements, but that follow-up is recommended.
- The team has reviewed the elements of this component and found the institution does not meet the Commission's requirements.

Narrative:

The team found policies for transfer of credit that meet the basic requirements of the Policy on Transfer of Credit. The team found that the policy is difficult to find, located primarily in the catalog. The team recommends that the college widen its disclosure of transfer policies to make it easier for students to locate.

Distance Education and Correspondence Education Evaluation Items:

- The institution has policies and procedures for defining and classifying a course as offered by distance education or correspondence education, in alignment with USDE definitions.

There is an accurate and consistent application of the policies and procedures for determining if a course is offered by distance education (with regular and substantive interaction with the instructor, initiated by the instructor, and online activities are included as part of a student’s grade) or correspondence education (online activities are primarily “paperwork related,” including reading posted materials, posting homework and completing examinations, and interaction with the instructor is initiated by the student as needed).

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The institution has appropriate means and consistently applies those means for verifying the identity of a student who participates in a distance education or correspondence education course or program, and for ensuring that student information is protected.

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The technology infrastructure is sufficient to maintain and sustain the distance education and correspondence education offerings.

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The institution demonstrates compliance with the Commission *Policy on Distance Education and Correspondence Education*.

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[Regulation citations: 602.16(a)(1)(iv), (vi); 602.17(g); 668.38.]

Conclusion Check-Off (mark one):

- The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission’s requirements.

- The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission’s requirements, but that follow-up is recommended.

- The team has reviewed the elements of this component and found the institution does not meet the Commission’s requirements.

Narrative:

The team reviewed policies for distance education, ensuring that courses were offered in alignment with the USDE and the Commission Policy on Distance Education and Correspondence Education. The team sampled distance education courses to ensure that faculty initiate regular and substantive contact with students. Student identity is verified through the college’s information technology infrastructure.

Student Complaints Evaluation Items:

- The institution has clear policies and procedures for handling student complaints, and the current policies and procedures are accessible to students in the college catalog and online.
- The student complaint files for the previous six years (since the last comprehensive evaluation) are available; the files demonstrate accurate implementation of the complaint policies and procedures.
- The team analysis of the student complaint files identifies any issues that may be indicative of the institution's noncompliance with any Accreditation Standards.
- The institution posts on its website the names of associations, agencies and governmental bodies that accredit, approve, or license the institution and any of its programs, and provides contact information for filing complaints with such entities.
- The institution demonstrates compliance with the Commission *Policy on Representation of Accredited Status* and the *Policy on Student and Public Complaints Against Institutions*.

[Regulation citations: 602.16(a)(1)(ix); 668.43.]

Conclusion Check-Off (mark one):

- The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.
- The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements, but that follow-up is recommended.
- The team has reviewed the elements of this component and found the institution does not meet the Commission's requirements.

Narrative:

The College has a policy on formal student grievances and publishes the procedures to file students complaints with the ACCJC and the California Community Colleges State Chancellor's Office. The college provided evidence of steps taken toward addressing complaints. However, the team found that evidence of steps taken were not always applied in a formal manner. Furthermore, the team was unable to verify resolution of complaints from documents in the file.

In order to improve effectiveness, the team recommends that the college review its student complaint process to ensure that each step, including resolution, is properly documented and communicated to all parties.

Institutional Disclosure and Advertising and Recruitment Materials Evaluation Items:

- The institution provides accurate, timely (current), and appropriately detailed information to students and the public about its programs, locations, and policies.
- The institution complies with the Commission *Policy on Institutional Advertising, Student Recruitment, and Representation of Accredited Status*.
- The institution provides required information concerning its accredited status as described above in the section on Student Complaints.

[Regulation citations: 602.16(a)(1)(vii); 668.6.]

Conclusion Check-Off (mark one):

- The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.
- The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements, but that follow-up is recommended.
- The team has reviewed the elements of this component and found the institution does not meet the Commission's requirements.

Narrative:

- Information about programs, locations, and policies is communicated to students and the public via the College Catalog, the Schedule of Classes, and/or the College website. The College website provides information about research and data gathering, planning, and the status on accreditation, including annual reports. The College does not misrepresent program costs or job placement and employment opportunities, offer money in exchange for enrollment, or guarantee employment in order to recruit students. Scholarships are awarded based on specified criteria to support students in the pursuit of their educational goals.

Title IV Compliance Evaluation Items:

- The institution has presented evidence on the required components of the Title IV Program, including findings from any audits and program or other review activities by the USDE.
- The institution has addressed any issues raised by the USDE as to financial responsibility requirements, program record-keeping, etc. If issues were not timely addressed, the institution demonstrates it has the fiscal and administrative capacity to timely address issues in the future and to retain compliance with Title IV program requirements.
- The institution’s student loan default rates are within the acceptable range defined by the USDE. Remedial efforts have been undertaken when default rates near or meet a level outside the acceptable range.
- Contractual relationships of the institution to offer or receive educational, library, and support services meet the Accreditation Standards and have been approved by the Commission through substantive change if required.
- The institution demonstrates compliance with the Commission *Policy on Contractual Relationships with Non-Regionally Accredited Organizations* and the *Policy on Institutional Compliance with Title IV*.
[Regulation citations: 602.16(a)(1)(v); 602.16(a)(1)(x); 602.19(b); 668.5; 668.15; 668.16; 668.71 et seq.]

Conclusion Check-Off:

- The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission’s requirements.
- The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission’s requirements, but that follow-up is recommended.
- The team has reviewed the elements of this component and found the institution does not meet the Commission’s requirements.

Narrative:

The College demonstrates compliance with Federal Title IV regulations.

Recommendation (Effectiveness): In order to improve effectiveness, the team recommends that the college review its student complaint process to ensure that each step, including resolution, is properly documented and communicated to all parties (Student Complaint Checklist, ACCJC *Policy on Student and Public Complaints Against Institutions*).

STANDARD I: MISSION, ACADEMIC QUALITY AND INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS, AND INTEGRITY

Standard I.A: Mission

Standard I.A: Mission General

Observations

College of the Sequoias has a Mission statement in place that is intended to reflect its educational purpose, student population, and its commitment to achieving student learning. The Self-Evaluation indicates that the Mission was developed through extensive campus dialogue and input and is reviewed every three years through the participatory governance structure at the College. The mission was approved by the Board of Trustees in August 2012. The mission statement is publicized throughout the college and through the catalog, and in the integrated planning processes.

Findings and Evidence

The College Mission statement was updated in 2015 using a district-wide process. The mission statement drives institutional planning and assessment through the Model for Integrated Planning. The college provides student learning programs and services that are aligned with its Mission (I.A.1).

The college has developed processes for analyzing how well it is meeting its mission through the implementation of its Model of Integrated Planning. Each program includes its own mission and goals in the Educational Master Plan, which align with the college mission and goals. The team confirmed that the Model of Integrated Planning serves as the basis for decision-making and the commitment of resources. Furthermore, the process utilizes program review and student learning outcomes to guide programs through an analytical review leading to planning goals. The process allows programs to demonstrate contributions to the overall success of meeting the college mission (I.A.2)

The college mission, vision and core values are used throughout the college in the decision-making process. The mission drives the college Master Plan and Strategic plan goals, which are used as the central planning documents for the college. Minutes and documents from shared governance committees demonstrate that the college provides resource augmentations through a system of prioritization built on the relevance to the institutional mission and Educational Master Plan goals. Program Review data are utilized to allocate budget to strategic goals based on assessment of program level data. The processes are exemplified in the Integrated Planning Model, in which the Mission is the foundation and includes creation of the District's Master Plan, District Goals, Program Review and Resource Allocation. The following metrics are used to assess the Mission: California Community College Chancellor's Office (CCCCO) Student Success Scorecard, Student Equity Plan, the Institutional Effectiveness Partnership Initiative, and the Districts institution-set standards. (I.A.3)

The District reviews its Mission periodically and aligns the college's strategic goals, budget allocation and metrics with it. The Mission is discussed in the Educational Master Plan 2015-

2025 (pp. 84-84) and under the College's Strategic Plan 2015-2018. Each goal has key performance indicators that support its effectiveness. The Board of Trustees approved the current mission statement in spring, 2015, after it was vetted through the college's participatory governance approval process. The mission was reviewed and updated in spring of 2018 with implementation to go into effect in January of 2019 so as to avoid a conflict with the accreditation process. (I.A.4, ER 6)

Conclusion

The College meets the Standard and ER 6. The team encourages the college to consider more explicitly identifying degrees offered and workforce certificates and the intended student population during the mission revision process.

Standard I.B: Assuring Academic Quality and Institutional Effectiveness

General Observations:

College of the Sequoias (COS) provides a broad range of academic programs, both transfer and career technical education, to support the college mission. Student support and success programs provide guidance and resources to enhance student success outcomes. Ongoing and regular assessments of program effectiveness are undertaken to assure academic quality and to plan for improvements. COS provides regular and ongoing opportunities for dialog across the campus community to address academic quality and institutional effectiveness.

Findings and Evidence:

The college uses several communication tools to keep staff, faculty, the community and students informed. Email updates, Board meeting minutes, the COS website, the Giant Fact Book, semi-annual Dialog Days and other avenues provide information on academic quality and institutional effectiveness. Participatory governance groups also communicate and disseminate information through regular processes and procedures. The Giant Survey provides opportunities for staff and faculty feedback to COS. (I.B.1)

Student Learning Outcomes are regularly defined and assessed. Training in SLO and PLO review practices is available to faculty members, including in-person and online training options. Information from student learning outcomes assessments informs annual program reviews. Outcome assessments for student support services via the Student Support Services Survey informs the college on needed programs and services. The COS Master Plan is also reviewed and revised annually to reflect results of assessments and goals for continuous improvement. (I.B.2)

The college uses institution-set standards developed through the shared governance processes to measure progress toward improvement. Information on methodology used to create these standards and updates to standards is readily available through the Institutional Research Office and posted on the COS website. Disaggregation of data allows examination of results for student groups by ethnicity and other demographic factors and student statuses. (I.B.3)

COS utilizes data warehousing and reporting via Argos and makes publicly available the Tableau reports of data analyses that are used in program reviews, SLO/PLO/ILO assessment, General Education assessments, and evaluation of CTE outcomes. Specific to CTE, COS also uses LaunchBoard data from the Chancellor's Office. Continuous assessment occurs through annual program reviews. Outcomes Assessment staff and Institutional Effectiveness staff make qualitative and quantitative data findings readily accessible and digestible. Data findings are utilized by the Distance Education Committee and other relevant groups working toward improvement in academic quality. (I.B.4)

The college maintains regular PLO, ILO, SLO assessment cycles and conducts regular reviews of student success. Further evidence of student achievement is noted in review of student research samples. Student success rates are compared by modality for online and in-person classes, as well as for student status including evening and day students, and for part time and full time students. Student characteristics including gender, age, first time college and first-generation status are also compared in analyzing outcomes. Outcomes by location (centers and the main campus) are also compared. (Standard I.B.5)

Disaggregation of data is carried out. Strategies initiated by the college to close performance gaps among identified groups include the Student Success Program. In this program, students receive more intensive and frequent counseling than the general population of students as well as the opportunity to attend field trips, workshops, and other activities. Programs are available across all COS delivery sites. The COS Equity Plan and the college Strategic Plan address long range improvement plans. (I.B.6)

An Integrated Planning Process occurs across the institution to ensure the college mission is being

addressed and accomplished. Resource allocation requests to address academic quality and effectiveness follow this model, with the goal of continuous improvement. Academic Services and Board policies and administrative procedures are reviewed on a five-year cycle. (I.B.7)

Communication of outcome results is robust. Reports are publicly available through the institutional research and planning data base via Argos, and available for interested parties through Tableau reporting. TracDat is used to store outcomes data. The multiple avenues of communication at COS (email, website, Fact Book, Giant survey, department and division meetings, convocation and Flex events, the online catalog, presentations at area high schools, community meetings, and others) provide opportunities for review of assessments and evaluations. (I.B.8)

A thorough evaluation and planning process for resource allocation occurs through Integrated Planning processes. Staff and faculty are familiar with the Integrated Planning Model, and regular communication occurs through multiple communication modalities to ensure updates and changes to processes are shared. Participatory governance processes allow for representation from various constituency groups. (I.B.9)

Conclusions:

The college meets the standard.

Standard I.C: Institutional Integrity

General Observations

The college communicates with students and the public through its website, printed messages and through public events on and off campus. Information of use to students is primarily found in the Catalog, which can be found on the website. Information about learning outcomes are available for students within the course schedule search function and information about outcomes assessment are public on the webpage.

Procedures and the Mission Statement are reviewed on a regular schedule, which allows for input from all constituency groups on the campus. The college communicates information about its accreditation status on its website. Policies on academic freedom and integrity are in place.

Findings and Evidence

The College of the Sequoias (COS) publishes a comprehensive Catalog, which includes information on its mission statement, degree and program requirements and learning outcomes. The Catalog describes extensive student support services; including financial aid and learning services such as the library. All specific items required by ER 19 and ER 20 are included in the Catalog. The Catalog is available on the website. In addition to the Catalog, information is shared by committees and in reports with students and the public. Accreditation information is available one-click off the main webpage. The college has established processes for ensuring published information is accurate. (Standard I.C.1 and I.C.2)

Institutional and general education learning outcomes are published in the Catalog. Course level learning outcomes are easily found through the online course schedule. Course level outcomes are published on course syllabi. Assessment reports from course level student learning outcomes were publicly available on the Outcomes Assessment webpage, although finding the Outcomes Assessment page itself was difficult, requiring the use of the search box. The college reports student achievement data publicly and the reports are available on the webpage. (I.C.3)

Information on degree and certificate requirements are easily discovered in the Catalog. Students can monitor their progress through Degree Works. (I.C.4)

Administrative Procedure 4210 articulates that policies and procedures are regularly reviewed on a five-year cycle. A review of the policies on the website shows that student services and academic policies have been reviewed within the last five years, however the other categories of procedures are behind schedule. For example, many of the human resources procedures have not been reviewed in ten years. The Catalog is reviewed annually to ensure accuracy. (I.C.5)

Information for students about fees and expenses are included in the Catalog. Additional section costs for materials can be found in the course schedule. The Net Price Calculator allows students to estimate total costs. The bookstore website has excellent functionality which allows students to find out textbook costs for purchase or rental by section. (I.C.6)

Board Policy 4030 and Administrative Policy 4030 make clear the institution's commitment to academic freedom for all faculty and for the protection of free speech in interactions between students, faculty, staff, and administration. Information on the use of public forum space for students and faculty is included in the Catalog. (I.C.7)

Policies are published for student and employees that promote honesty and academic integrity. The Catalog outlines student responsibilities, discipline processes and grievance procedures.

The Institutional Code of Ethics, Administrative Procedure 3050, encourages faculty to avoid forcing personal values and beliefs on others and Administrative Procedure 4030 articulates the College's strong support for academic freedom. (I.C.8)

Faculty evaluation procedures for full and part-time faculty are articulated in the COSTA Master Agreement. The COSTA Master Agreement allows for different student evaluation tools, to be chosen by the faculty member. This means that not all students are consistently asked if the instructor was receptive to student views and opinions, although one of the optional forms includes this question. Having both the student and faculty evaluation templates include questions on this issue would be advisable. (I.C.9)

The college does not seek to instill specific beliefs or world views upon students. (I.C.9 and I.C.10)

I.C.11 is not applicable.

The college discloses accreditation information one click away from the main page of the web site. The college complies with ACCJC requests and timelines for documents. Information from external accrediting bodies for specific programs (for example, the Certified Nursing Program) is provided on the accreditation webpage. Information about accreditation is shared with the college and the community in public events and publications. (I.C.12 and I.C.13)

As a publicly funded non-profit institution, the college does not contribute to a parent organization or to investors. (I.C.14)

Conclusion

The college meets this Standard.

STANDARD II: STUDENT LEARNING PROGRAMS AND SUPPORT SERVICES

Standard II.A: Instructional Programs

General Observations:

The College of the Sequoias (COS) offers a large breadth of instructional courses and programs at the Visalia campus and the Hanford and Tulare Centers. Programs lead to student obtainment of certificates, degrees and/or transfer to 4-year institutions while maintaining alignment with the mission of the college.

COS has well established process for ensuring educational quality and high educational standards. This is maintained through a integrated planning process that includes assessment of learning outcomes tied to resources necessary to maintain effectiveness in course offerings and programs. A systematic program review process includes review and discussion of student achievement data. “Dialogue Days” provide for broad discussion within and between programs. The curriculum review process is robust and well integrated into the discussion of academic rigor and quality.

Course offerings are student centered to allow students to complete their educational goals in a timely manner. Programs are designed for a 2-year completion of certificates and/or degrees. The number of degrees and certificates offered is appropriate with the size of the institution. Courses are scheduled in a variety of learning modalities; face-to-face, on-line, hybrid, and by synchronous interactive television. Faculty teaching distance education courses must meet a certification requirement. Pre-collegiate level instruction is offered to allow students a pathway to reach college level courses.

Findings and Evidence:

The college’s programs align with the mission of the institution, are appropriate for higher education, and meet the identified student learning outcomes and that lead to certificates, degrees, the workforce or transfer. COS’ Curriculum Committee ensures the rigor and appropriateness of course content. The Catalog displays a wide breadth of courses and programs that directly reflect the stated mission of the College. Student learning outcomes are reviewed by the Curriculum Committee and assessed by faculty with assistance of the Outcome Assessment Committee and Instructional Council. The annual program review process includes a report of progress on both student and program learning outcomes as part of the review. (II.A.1)

The Faculty Enrichment Committee provides a variety of professional development opportunities for the faculty. Faculty are encouraged to discuss the relationship between instructional improvement and teaching modes both through the evaluation process and workshops. The Office of Research, Planning and Institutional Effectiveness provides student, course and program data for each unit to discuss. Both faculty and administrators discuss success data as a part of the program review process.

The College systematically reviews courses and programs to meet generally-accepted academic and professional standards through the Curriculum Committee. Review of curriculum is on an established 5-year cycle and a 2-year cycle for CTE courses. Board and administrative policies on course and program development establish the faculty as experts in the relevant disciplines. Program development and reviews start at the department level. Review of existing or new programs includes alignment with the College mission and strategic plan, labor market data, transfer requirements, and distance education needs to ensure that all curriculum meets professional standards. (II.A.2)

The identification and assessment of learning outcomes is a faculty driven process. Student learning outcomes are published in the Catalog, schedule of classes, on the Outcomes Assessment website, and within the official course outline of record. Results of assessment for student outcomes are recorded in TracDat and course outlines of record can be found within Courseleaf. Review and assessment of outcomes is established is formalized in institutional procedures and cycle within the program review process. Course syllabi are required to match the official course outline of record. Course syllabi are required to be submitted to the appropriate division dean's office each semester. Syllabi are provided to students on the first day of each course. The inclusion of learning outcomes on the syllabi are monitored through the faculty evaluation process. (II.A.3)

The College has pre-collegiate level curriculum and has a course numbering system that allows students to assess the level of the course quickly. This numbering system is evident in both the schedule and Catalog. Pre-collegiate courses use the same curriculum approval process as collegiate level courses. Pre-collegiate courses are developed to help students matriculate into college level courses. This is evident by District Objectives in which the goal is to increase course success and completion rates in pre-collegiate courses to assist in success of students in a pathway to the college level courses. The College reviews and approves learning outcomes through the Curriculum Committee process. The Student Equity Plan aligns with the District goals to provide necessary student support services, such as tutoring, for basic skill courses. (II.A.4)

The College has degrees and programs that follow practices common to American higher education. Board policies and administrative procedures set standards for the length and rigor of all programs in alignment with applicable California Title 5 regulations and the District mission. The Curriculum Committee and Instructional Council review faculty submission of courses and programs to evaluate the breadth, depth, rigor, sequencing, time to completion, and synthesis of learning in each submission. (II.A.5)

The College reports certificate and degree requirements in the Catalog and on the website. The Curriculum Committee upholds District policies to ensure that programs meet requirements for credit hours for courses within programs. The Instructional Council reviews scheduling of student program courses based on student need data and program completion pathways. The Office of Academic Services receives input from deans and directors, provosts, counselors, and faculty members to assist in development of schedules. (II.A.6)

The College uses a variety of delivery modes, teaching methodologies and provides learning support services to meet needs of a diverse student population. The District Master Plan specifically addresses goals related to student equity and success which are assessed annually in the District's Strategic Plan and Student Equity Plan. Delivery modes include traditional face-to-face instruction, fully online, hybrid, and some synchronous interactive television instruction between campus locations. The District has established an Administrative Procedure for Distance Learning as well as a Distance Education Committee. The Faculty Enrichment Committee offers trainings and workshops on teaching methodologies. For example, there is a brown bag series to discuss teaching topics. The Online Teaching Certificate Program sets standards for online teaching and showcases innovative teaching practices. (II.A.7)

The District does not have any department-wide course or program evaluations. It is noted that some CTE programs may require licensure exams by an outside licensure body but that no courses within the District utilize these scores as part of the grading criteria. (II.A.8)

The College awards course credit, degrees and certificates based on student attainment of learning outcomes in courses and programs. Learning outcomes for courses reflect knowledge, skills and abilities of students upon completion of course. Units of credit awarded are consistent with institutional policies that reflect generally accepted norms or equivalencies in higher education. The District has established board policies and administrative procedures for unit-credit-hour calculations that follow both state and federal guidelines. (II.A.9)

The College makes transfer-of-credit policies available through the Catalog and website. The Articulation Officer works with Curriculum Committee to establish transfer credit to other institutions through mechanisms such as ASSIST and the C-ID numbering system. The District accepts credit by exam according to Title 5, Section 55050, and publishes this policy in the Catalog. The Catalog states the policy for incoming credit for Advanced Placement Exams, College Level Exam Program Exams, and military service. The District has established articulation agreements with local high school in accordance with an administrative procedure. (II.A.10)

The College established core competencies for all instructional programs in communication, critical thinking and questioning, global awareness, and personal and professional development. Program level outcomes are mapped to these five Institutional Learning Outcomes. The program level outcomes are published in the Catalog and on the Outcomes Assessment website. Outcomes are mapped by faculty and the assessment is summarized in program review. The District assesses each Institutional Learning Outcome over a five-year cycle with results published on the Outcomes Assessment website. (II.A.11)

The District's Articulation Officer and the General Education Committee, a subcommittee of the Curriculum Committee, are responsible for review and maintenance of the District's general education policy and plans. General education is a component of an associate degree, with a minimum of 18 units of general education required for graduation. General education patterns for both CSU and IGETC are evaluated for compliance by the Articulation Officer. The

assessment of courses that meet the general education pattern are evaluated by the GE Committee by utilization of learning outcome data. (II.A.12)

The District offers 73 associate degrees, 39 certificate of achievement, and 43 skills certificates that each contain a major core or areas of specialization. Faculty establish core competencies within each of these programs to meet the requirement of at least one area of inquiry or an interdisciplinary core. All courses and programs have established learning outcomes and assessments which can be found on course syllabi, Outcomes Assessment website or Catalog. (II.A.13)

The District's CTE programs demonstrate technical and professional competencies through a variety of measures, including student learning outcomes tied to industry standards, external licensure pass rate, and employment data. CTE programs maintain advisory committees made up of industry professionals. The District utilizes the Student Success Scorecard for data on median wages for CTE graduates as well as employment data provided by the CTE Launchboard. (II.A.14)

The District has a policy on program discontinuance. Students maintain Catalog rights at their point of enrollment and may complete under those guidelines to reduce negative impacts to their academic progress. The Curriculum Committee, as part of the curriculum review process, leads the impact analysis to other programs, and time-to-completion. (II.A.15)

The District regularly and systematically evaluates and improves quality of instructional programs through their program review process, SLO assessment and curriculum review for all modalities of teaching. Program review is aligned with district mission and serves as the basis of any resource request. The program review process is consistently followed for all college programs. The District works to meet local community needs and, as such, has developed not-for-credit community education courses and programs which are evaluated by the District's Training Resource Center. (II.A.16)

Conclusion

The College meets the Standard.

Standard II.B: Library and Learning Support Services

General Observations:

The District supports student learning and achievement by providing on-campus and online library and learning support services for basic skills, transfer, and career technical students as well as faculty and staff. Learning support services provide resources for District academic programs and includes the Library; Tutorial Center; Writing Center; Math Lab; Mathematics, Engineering, Science Achievement; Academic Center for Excellence; and the Language Center.

The Learning Resource Center mission to provide resources and support for transfer, occupational, and basic skills education and to promote information competency for lifelong learning, closely reflects the mission of the College.

The Learning Resource Center has over 53,000 print book titles and 26,000 eBooks in its collection (available to view via Online Computer Library Center Worldshare System). Collections among Visalia, Tulare, and Hanford can be shared by request through the Interlibrary Loan. Online collections are available 24-hours a day, ensuring accessibility for all students.

Librarians conduct orientations and serve as a liaison to faculty in their assigned areas. Students can meet with librarians face-to-face or communicate via e-mail. Lib Guides and virtual library tours are available online. All students are required to take a library course as part of the GE pattern or pass the Information Literacy Exam.

The College provides academic support to students through the Writing Center, Tutorial Center, Math Laboratory, Math Engineering Science Achievement program, Academic Center for Excellence, and the Language Center. Individual and group tutoring, Supplemental Instruction and the online NetTutor are available at all campuses. Hanford provides tutors in key areas and offers on-demand tutoring for the less common subjects. NetTutor addresses needs that do not fit into the timeframe of traditional tutoring or for which no face-to-face tutor is available.

Tutoring services are offered through many offices. In order to better coordinate the various tutoring opportunities, the college recently created a new administrative position (Associate Dean, Educational Support Services).

Technological support is available from a centralized Help Desk and an IT person is housed at each Center. This provides students with the support that they need to access library materials and learning support/tutoring.

Findings and Evidence:

College library and learning resources are sufficient in quantity and quality to serve students. Most of the resources are available at all three of the campuses and those that are not are available online.

The College has a decentralized model of tutoring, bringing tutoring closer to students and their programs. This model presents challenges with communication among programs and with helping students navigate the large array of services. To facilitate coordination, the college created a new position, Associate Dean of Educational Support, to coordinate the services (II.B.1 and ER17).

The College relies on the expertise of discipline and library faculty to maintain sufficient learning equipment and materials. The Librarian Liaison Program pairs library faculty with discipline faculty to facilitate conversations about appropriate materials acquisitions and for

weeding of out dated materials in each discipline. In 2016-2017, over 50 outreach meetings occurred between liaisons and faculty members, resulting in 177 reserve textbook orders to be placed. Librarians use credible and professional publications to help identify potential purchases for collection management.

Librarians actively pursue relevant professional development opportunities including attendance at California Conference on Library Instruction (CCLI) workshops, Internet Librarian conferences and ACCJC conferences. Librarians serve on campus-wide committees. Librarians, lab and tutoring staff participate in program reviews, which allows for their units to request resources. (II.B.2)

The District evaluates library and learning support services through student satisfaction surveys, usage reports from the library management system, as well as headcounts. After a survey of students, additional weekend hours at the library were added at the Visalia campus. The Library Liaison Program tracks contact with discipline faculty. Students take an evaluation survey following every library instructional session. Data from these sources are compiled and discussed at Dialog Day. Student learning outcomes are assessed in library courses.

The Writing Center evaluates comparative data of users and non-users of the Center to determine successes and areas for improvement. The Math Lab, Language Center, and Tutoring Center evaluate data from usage reports, evaluations, and Program Review. Reports compare students making use of tutoring resources to those who do not. The reports are produced by program, disaggregated by campus and are available on the COS website. The College leverages BSSOT funds to support the Academic Center for Excellence and the Augmented Instruction programs. The student success data collected from these areas informs the training of faculty and tutors as well as scheduling.

All units use Student Learning Objective and Student Service Objective data to evaluate programs and make recommendations for change. The College makes extensive use of comparative data on tutoring and similar programs to inform decision-making. The team positively acknowledges the College's plan for future action with regards to the development of additional service area outcomes for assessments of learning support services. (II.B.3)

The District's library and learning support services maintain contractual agreements with a variety of educational technology and service providers. For example, the College ensures accessibility of services through NetTutor and Online Computer Library Center Worldshare Management Services. All contractual services are evaluated annually. Contracts are kept on file in the Administrative Services office and MOUs are maintained electronically by the Learning Resource Center director and maintained in the Office of Student Services and Business Services.

Librarians and library staff maintain the collections. The Lost Book Report allows library staff to identify and discuss needs. Book security is further enforced through 3M magnetic strips inserted into each book. Computer access is password protected.

Equipment maintenance is accomplished through a five-year cycle for technology refreshment. Equipment is anchored by locked cables. The Information Technology Department maintains serial numbers, make and model of all technological equipment. (II.B.4)

Conclusion:

The College meets the Standard.

Standard II.C: Student Support Services

General Observations

College of the Sequoias (COS) is a comprehensive community college that offers the traditional student services one would expect to find at a California community college including Counseling, Admissions & Records, Financial Aid, DSPS, EOPS and CalWORKS. The College has programs geared toward meeting the needs of its diverse student community such as TRiO, Puente Project, MESA, International Students, and Veterans Services. The College offers a Student Success Program which is a unique way of addressing the needs of disproportionately impacted groups.

The College offers services at the main Visalia campus and one-stop service counters at the Tulare Center and Hanford Center. Services are provided in person by appointment and on-line. Distance learning support services include live-chats via webcams for the Writing Center, Tutorial Center, Math Lab, and the Language Center.

The employees at COS have a genuine interest and passion to serve students. It is evident that a culture of shared decision making, consultation and evaluation is maturing. The leadership is strongly committed to following established policies and procedures to ensure successful implementation of activities and achievement of set goals and objectives.

Findings and Evidence

The College uses self-evaluations, program reviews and student services outcomes data to annually evaluate the effectiveness of its services and programs, set goals, and to meet the accreditation standards. All units and programs have completed service area outcome assessment and program reviews. (II.C.1-2)

Comprehensive services are provided at all three campuses. The team noted that the student population might benefit from a more clearly published hours of service availability, regardless of means of delivery or location. (II.C.3)

Co-curricular activities support the mission of the institution. The College has a strong commitment to its athletic program and it serves as a focus for the community by providing opportunity for participation and access to facilities and activities. (II.C.4)

The College offers counseling and advising in different locations, times and modalities. The College advises students on paths to follow to complete degrees, certificates and transfer goals. The College shares this information with students via their specialized programs, the website and counseling sessions. The College will enhance their ability to provide better guidance to students from the new implementation of DegreeWorks. The team noted that the college could more prominently publicize its transfer policy to help students understand the criteria for accepting credits for courses taken at other higher education institutions. (II.C.5)

The College adheres to admissions policies consistent with its mission that specify the qualifications of students appropriate for its programs. The standards are published on the College's website, in the Catalog and are shared with students via the outreach team. The College has positive relationships with their service area high schools, who help coordinate the onboarding of their new students. (II.C.6)

The College has made new recommendations on assessment and placement based on changes to the California law governing course placement into English, ESL and mathematics. This is a

work in progress. (II.C.7)

The College uses the Banner Document Management System and has established multiple firewalls to maintain and backup records permanently, securely and confidentially. (II.C.8)

Conclusion

The College meets the Standard.

Commendation: The team commends the college for the development and implementation of the Student Success Program. The Program exceeds the standard for delivery of learning support services for disproportionately impacted groups. This shows deep commitment, supports learning and helps accomplish the mission of the institution. (II.C.1)

STANDARD III: RESOURCES

Standard III.A Human Resources

General Observations:

COS follows strict guidelines for faculty and staff hiring in alignment with the Human Resource protocols as outlined in the various District practice manuals. The process for hiring competent personnel is comprehensive, collaborative, and multifactorial. The primary focus is on screening, accredited degree attainment, and sufficient training in the designated areas of expertise. These prerequisite steps are necessary components to ensure that qualified personnel are selected for hiring. Observed and confirmed during interviews is that faculty ethnicity does not mirror the current student demographics. However, the Human Resource Team also expressed that equitable hiring and diversity recruitment are at the forefront of search efforts, with widespread national outreach strategies to seek diverse candidates. Announcements, job availability, and descriptions are published in the Human Resource website, and are all available for public viewing. After hiring, notable efforts to support new staff include a comprehensive orientation program consisting of a five-day boot camp focusing primarily on campus operations. Relevant topics include: tenure review processes, teaching and learning strategies, college resources, and technical support. To further support new hires, the VPI routinely meets with staff to ensure that needs and questions are addressed.

Findings and Evidence:

COS Human Resources Employment practices ensure that highly qualified personnel are recruited and retained. Sequential steps are followed that include: robust outreach, adherence to minimum qualifications, and multi-tiered interviews. The hiring committee evaluate the candidates on specific criteria. These procedures and criteria are codified in the various hiring manuals, protocols, and procedures that include: Management, Faculty, Confidential Employee, and Classified Employee Hiring Procedures, plus the COSTA and the Academic Senate faculty hiring agreements. Criteria for job descriptions are collaboratively reviewed and revised as necessary to detail the scope of practice and responsibility for available positions. All information is available for public viewing in the District's website. (IIIA.1; IIIA.2)

To ensure adequate numbers of full time, adjunct and part time staff, the District's personnel, budgeting, and selection processes are part of the Integrated Planning process. The Faculty Obligation Number is analyzed annually to determine any unmet need for faculty positions. The number of faculty hired each year is determined by Program Reviews and analysis of the Faculty Obligation Number. After review of the data, a recommended number of faculty is hired each year. The District has fulfilled the Faculty Obligation Number each year by hiring the appropriate number of faculty to maintain the requirement. (IIIA.7; ER14)

To ensure optimal skill level and qualifications, in accordance with COS Human Resources procedures, administrators undergo the same rigor and scrutiny for hiring as faculty and must also meet the minimum qualifications. The Management Employee Hiring Procedures contain information on the recruitment and selection of management employees. Appropriate degrees for all faculty and administrators are reviewed to ensure that transcripts and degrees are from accredited institutions. Equivalency is determined by committee collaboration and assessment. (IIIA.3; IIIA.4)

Interviews confirmed that all staff, tenured, tenure track and classified faculty undergo formal evaluations on a scheduled basis. The goal of evaluations is to acknowledge excellent performance, identify areas that need improvement, and intervene with an improvement plan if necessary. To this end, Deans are trained on the proper preparation of the improvement plan with attention to timelines, specific goals, and measurable outcomes. The Tenure Facilitator created a comprehensive website with resource materials for all Tenure and Tenure Track faculty, Deans and Administration. The classified staff facilitator has also established a distinct, efficient system for tracking the evaluations for classified staff.

Adjunct faculty are evaluated the first semester, and afterwards, at least once during every six semesters. After hiring, probationary faculty are evaluated annually; tenured faculty are evaluated in a peer process every three years. Managers and confidential employees are evaluated on an annual basis through a three step process. Classified staff evaluations are evaluated annually. All evaluations are filed in the employee personnel file. (III.A.5)

Part time and adjunct faculty orientation, evaluation and oversight criteria are codified in the District and College of the Sequoias Adjunct Faculty Association/University Professional and Technical Employees (COSAFA/UPTE) Master Agreement. The COSAFA outlines the policies and employment practices for adjunct faculty. Adjunct faculty undergoes the same rigor and evaluation criteria for teaching as tenured staff, albeit on a different schedule and timeline.

Efforts are made to integrate adjunct faculty into the colleges' culture and campus life. This includes inclusion into participatory government, enrichment activities, professional development, and program review. Additionally, there are events specifically designated for adjunct faculty. From this, survey data is gleaned to determine satisfaction from all parties which has been favorable. (III.A.8).

There is a sufficient number of qualified staff to support the educational, technological, physical and administrative operations of the institution. The Resource Allocation Model is a central component to planning and serves as the guide to ensure that a sufficient number of faculty is positioned for operational needs. Senior management identifies available funds for personnel as requested through the Program Review Process. Policies, procedures and data indicate that a sufficient number of administrative staff support the mission and purpose of the institution. Additionally, there is an adequate number of experienced administrative staff to support college functions. (ER8; III.A.9; III.A.10)

Personnel policies are available for information and review. Master Agreements for each bargaining unit are published on the Human Resources Website. The District follows the written procedures and policies included within each Agreement. (III.A.11)

A climate of inclusion and acceptance for faculty and students is a priority. The College offers webinars that support diversity. The Equal Employment Opportunity Plan is active in supporting diversity and employment equity. All prospective candidates fill out a diversity statement as part of the application process. (III.A.12)

The written code of professional ethics is the Institutional Code of Ethics and the consequences of violating policies are detailed therein. (III.A.13)

Professional development opportunities for full and part time faculty occur through a variety of methods, communicated through the Faculty Enrichment Committee. These include Flex Day workshops and enrichment activities. Professional development also exists for Council and

Management that occurs through the District Institutional Planning Process. (IIIA.14)

Personnel records are kept confidential in a secured location. (IIIA.15)

Conclusions:

The College meets the Standard.

Standard III.B: Physical Resources

General Observations

The District provides leadership and planning collectively for all three sites. Planning includes the Districts Educational and Facilities Master Plan 2015-25, the Five-Year Construction Plan, the District's Space Inventory, and Institutional Program Review process along with many other plans and review processes that consider the adequacy, effectiveness and safety at the district facilities.

College of the Sequoias operates in three primary locations.

- The Visalia Campus, established in 1926, moved to its current location in 1940. The 2008 Visalia Improvement District bond, Measure I provided for renovations including improving access, safety, security and accessible facilities on the main campus.
- The Hanford Educational Center, opened in 2010, is a full-service center in Hanford that houses the college's police and fire academies. The Center is part of a joint project of the City of Hanford and the Hanford Joint Union High School District. The facility was built with the Measure C, the \$22 million 2006 Hanford Improvement District Bond.
- The Tulare College Center, opened in 2013, is also a full-service center and houses the college's agriculture programs. The facility was built with the Measure J, the \$60 million 2008 Tulare Improvement District bond.

Findings and Evidence

The College provides sufficient and safe resources for students and employees that is conducive to learning. Facilities at all locations were noted as effective, well maintained and accessible indicating equitable physical resources across all locations. The team especially noted the facilities at the two Centers were models of effectively integrating the needs of the community, critical student services and instruction within limited space.

College planning, reporting and inventory maintenance, in addition to on-going safety testing and training, help to assure safe and sufficient physical resources that support and assure the integrity of programs and services. The College completed an internal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance audit for the Visalia campus resulting in a "Transition plan" for improving access, safety and security. The team identified that this ADA audit approach is a notable sample of the continuous facilities planning focusing on improvements. (III.B.1.)

The Educational and Facilities Master Plan 2015 – 2025 guides the districts on-going planning at all locations. In addition, annually the college analyzes space inventory and facility needs through its Five-Year Construction Plan. This process includes updating Final Project Proposals (FPPs) and considering new Initial Project Proposals (IPPs) for state consideration for projects identified and prioritized in the Facilities Plan. (III.B.2)

An integral part of the Annual Institutional Program Review process is planning for facilities and equipment that support the respective programs and services under review. The Facilities team assists with proposed improvements by analyzing requests and projecting the potential fiscal impact. Facilities administration also regularly reviews campus facilities at all sites for potential

upgrades, sufficiency and for making more effective use of existing facilities to support programs and services. In addition, the Facilities team has developed a Total Cost of Ownership Plan for the Visalia campus which considers all building components, repair and/or replacement needs. The Facilities Department also meets regularly to review the safety of all physical resources and conducts preventative maintenance audits on equipment, lighting and vehicles.

Plans are current and appear to reflect thoughtful, grounded, and reasonable facilities planning activities. Once needs are identified through the comprehensive planning process, allocating resources for facilities and all other matters, is discussed at their Budget Committee using the Districts Above-Base Resource Allocation Rubric. The committee uses data, rationale, and links to District objectives in analyzing each allocation request.

These multi-layered planning and assessment processes, in addition to the thoughtful resource allocation process, exhibit a practice of systematic analysis and continuous improvement. It is clear the college has prioritized recommendations developed through established processes and evaluation rubrics help inform decision-making by the Superintendent/President and the Board of Trustees. (III.B.3)

The College assesses, prioritizes, and improves facilities through their Facilities Master Plan, the Five-Year Construction Plan, their Total Cost of Ownership report and other internal reports. The team noted that The Total Cost of Ownership Report for the Visalia campus, which includes projections of future costs for necessary repairs and/or replacements, connects not only to long-term planning, but is a useful tool to assist with shorter term requests by providing the details to help advocate for necessary budgets in the RAM process. All these plans are updated by the Facilities Department as new facilities and/or major equipment is added. (III.B.4)

Conclusion

The College meets the Standard.

Commendation: The team commends the district for their implementation and engagement of the Hanford and Tulare Centers. These specialized yet comprehensive instructional centers also support all components of student services. The team also noted that both centers had impressive partnerships with their communities and area high schools. (II.C.3. and III.B.2.)

Standard III.C: Technology Resources

General Observations

The college's technology resources sufficiently meet the needs of students and employees. The college maintains a refreshment cycle for hardware and technology requests flow through the program review process. Professional development opportunities are offered to enhance employee skills with and knowledge of technological resources. An active Technology Committee and Technology Department work together to provide needed services.

Findings and Evidence

The Technology Department supports hardware and software needs for students and employees across all three campuses. The Technology Committee is a governance committee, that takes input from all constituency groups while planning for changes. Surveys of employees show a high level of satisfaction with technology at the college. As noted in the Technology Department Program Review, this is an area which can always use additional human resource support, but the department currently has adequate resources. (III.C.1)

The Technology Department has established Service Area Outcomes and has made improvements in wi-fi availability based on a gap assessment of an outcome. Technology planning is integrated into the program review process and into the Strategic Plan. The Technology Committee is currently working to revise the Technology Master Plan. Refresh cycles are in place (and funded) to continuously update infrastructure and software as needed. (III.C.2)

Through the program review process, units may request technology hardware and software. All requests must be tied to course or program learning outcomes. Requests are ranked by the deans and then by the Instructional Council. Examples of funded technological resources from March of 2018 range from the purchase of hardware to be used for notifications during emergencies to a machine that creates identification badges.

The college has technology staff at all three of its locations and employee technology needs can be addressed through the online helpdesk work order system. Data security plans are comprehensive and information about security is distributed to all employees. Work in the spring of 2018 to establish guidelines for closed captioning of media resulted in revisions to Administrative Procedure 5141. The revised procedure is working through the governance process this fall. Updating this procedure is an example of collaborative and inclusive decision making which will improve outcomes for students. (III.C.3)

The college supports student technology needs through a student helpdesk in the Learning Center at the Visalia campus. Students at the centers can bring technology questions to the library at each location. The new employee technology training checklist is a useful tool to assist new employees in coming up to speed on important systems. A wide range of training activities are available to faculty and staff, including trainings on newly purchased Office 365. (III.C.4)

The college has policies in place on accessible media, accepted technology use, the website, distance education, social media usage and intellectual property. All the procedures have been recently reviewed and updated. (III.C.5)

Conclusion

The College meets the standard.

Standard III.D: Financial Resources

General Observations

The District has managed its financial resources carefully and maintains its unrestricted general fund reserve fund balance above the percent minimum required by the college's Board Policy. The district budget development process, including the Resource Allocation Manual, is comprehensive, documented and transparent. The budget process begins with Program Review, then departments request one-time above-base additions. Above-base allocations and new staff positions are vetted following processes outlined in the Resources Allocation Manual, Integrated Planning Manual and the District Governance Manual.

Finding and Evidence

Each year the annual budget and resource allocation process involves input from governance groups and ensures that resources are sufficient to support and sustain instructional programs and services and to improve institutional effectiveness. The Vice President Administrative Services and fiscal staff develop a Fiscal Solvency Projection for presentation and discussion at the Budget Committee. (III.D.1.)

The College Mission serves as the foundation of all planning and budget allocation. The Mission describes the intended student population and the services the college provides to the community. The Mission drives the Master Plan, the Strategic Plan and all financial planning. The college has policies and administrative procedures that provide the processes establishing sound financial practices and financial stability. Policies and Administrative procedures are scheduled to be reviewed every five years. Financial information is effectively distributed throughout the college including all-constituent budget forums, presentations at the Budget Committee and presentations at the Board of Trustees meetings. (III.D.2.)

The District has clearly defined guidelines, timelines and processes for planning and budget development. These processes engage participation from governance groups across the college including the District Governance Senate, the District Budget Committee, the Instructional Council, Student Senate and ultimately the Board of Trustees. (III.D.3.)

The Districts' Resource Allocation Manual defines the processes for financial planning and budget development, including an assessment of financial resources available, initially based on the Governors proposed state budget released in January each year. This assessment involves compiling a Fiscal Solvency Projection with each budget cycle, followed by the adoption of a Tentative Budget and Final Adoption Budget. (III.D.4.)

The Districts' internal control system includes a hierarchy based approval system for requisitions and budget transfers, as well as separation of duties for position control, time reporting and payroll. Additional controls over all purchase orders of \$10,000 or more require the approval of the Vice President of Administrative Services and all journal entries are approved by the Chief Accounting Officer or the Director of Budgets and Categorical Accounting. Internal controls are reviewed regularly. In addition, monthly budget reports are presented to the Board of Trustees. (III.D.5.)

The Districts' financial documents are reviewed by several sources including an independent audit, the state chancellor's office and bond rating agencies. Financial documents are disseminated through the Budget Committee and at Board of Trustee meetings and other venues. The financial documents reflect appropriate allocation and use of financial resources to

support the college's programs, services and general operations. (III.D.6.)

College of the Sequoias is audited annually by independent external auditors. The audit is reviewed at the Board of Trustees meeting and distributed. There have been no findings for many years. Any audit findings would be timely and effectively addressed as evidenced by the district's response to their last finding (in the 2010-11 fiscal year-end audit).

The District and their external auditors regularly evaluate financial and internal controls. The Fiscal Services Department participates in the annual program review process. The department creates and assesses service area outcomes as part of that process. In addition, the Fiscal Services staff participate in a review of the documentation narratives regarding internal controls in conjunction with the annual external audit. (III.D.8.)

The District has established policies and procedures requiring a sufficient reserve as part of the budget preparation. The policy requires a six percent minimum. The Board of Trustees has supported increasing reserves as evidenced by their annual priorities. In 2018 the board approved a 21.3 % reserve balance.

Fiscal Services monitors actual and projected cash flow in addition to providing quarterly cash and fund balance updates to the Board of Trustees.

The District participates in three Joint Powers Authorities (JPAs) to assist with Workers Compensation, Property & Liability Insurance and Health Insurance benefits. All three JPAs maintain shared risk reserves. (III.D.9.)

All District finances, including categorical funds and financial aid funds, are closely monitored by the Fiscal Services Department and the Vice President of Administrative Services. This includes the Director of Budgets and Categorical Accounting overseeing all program budgeting, journals and certifying the quarterly reports. All contracts and agreements are reviewed and approved by the Vice President of Administrative Services.

The COS Foundation is monitored by the Fiscal Services department, including reviewing monthly bank reconciliations. (III.D.10.)

The District budgets for short-term and long-term financial solvency. As part of the budget development, the district analyzes debt for potential repayment or refunding opportunities.

The District strategically plans for other long-term liabilities, including increasing PERS and STRS costs and OPEB liabilities. For PERS and STRS, the District has budgeted two years in advance for the annual increases. This has helped their Budget Committee understand the need for budget and also provided for one-time budget savings until the increased rates are effective. Regarding OPEB, the District has established an irrevocable trust and is very close to being fully funded. The District anticipates completing the funding based on their current actuarial by the end of this fiscal year. (III.D.11.)

Potential building maintenance, repair and replacement costs are addressed by the Facilities Department by developing and annually updating their Total Cost of Ownership Plan. The Plan consider all building at the College and its two centers. The District uses their Resource Allocation Model (RAM) to request funds to periodically allocate toward facilities needs.

The District plans for future liabilities and sets aside funding to strategically address needs. Health insurance costs are managed through health insurance cap for all employee groups. At the end of each fiscal year, the District calculates other future liabilities including compensated

absences, vacation liability and the faculty-banked leave liability. Resources for payment of these obligations are budgeted as part of the Resource Allocation Model. (III.D.12.)

The District annually assesses their local debt and allocates fiscal resources for the repayment. Most of the locally incurred debt has been retired and remaining debt payments are budgeted in the unrestricted general fund on an on-going basis until fully retired. (III.D.13.)

The District uses its financial resources with integrity in a manner consistent with the intended purpose of the funding source. Policies, Administrative Procedures and operating processes (including internal controls) are in place to ensure that all funds are processed properly and in compliance with requirements. The Bond Oversight Committee's annual report and the annual bond audits verify that bond funds are used in accordance with their intended purposes. (III.D.14.)

The District monitors compliance with the federal and state accounting regulations for grants. In addition, the District maintains an inventory of assets purchased with federal funding. The independent external auditors regularly audit federal programs for compliance. The auditors provide a Report on Compliance for Each Major Program.

The District proactively manages financial aid practices and procedures to ensure default rates are within federal standards. The District is also proactive in engaging students to provide information, guidance or counseling on student loans. First-time borrowers are required to participate in a Loan Entrance Counseling workshop presented by the Financial Aid Office staff, and to remain eligible for student loans while attending the College, students must meet Satisfactory Academic Progress. (III.D.15.)

The college maintains procedures and approval requirements for contractual agreements with external entities. The Vice President of Administrative Services monitors, reviews and authorizes non-instructional contracts for alignment with District goals and objectives and for compliance with state and federal laws. Instructional contracts are monitored and reviewed by the appropriate area administrator and the Vice President of Academic Services and are approved by the Board of Trustees. (III.D.16.)

Conclusion

The college meets the Standard.

STANDARD IV: LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Standard IV.A: Decision Making Roles and Processes

General Observations

The College seems committed to collective decision making that is accomplished through an established participative process. Ideas are welcomed and brought forth by the various shared governance groups. Protocols and guidelines for participatory governance structures are codified in the various practice manuals.

Findings and Evidence

Collaboration and innovation is supported by an established systematic participative governance structure. This structure includes the District and Administrative Procedures that define the process for operation. Collaborative decision making occurs between the governing board, administrators, faculty, staff and students. Individuals are encouraged to bring forth ideas on planning and policy. Individuals can initiate the review of any policy or propose new policy by submitting a request. Codified in District policy manuals are three methods that describe a process whereby individuals bring forth ideas: Model for Integrated Planning; Districts Governance and Decision Making and Integrated Planning, and Resource Allocation Manuals. The Board of Trustees recognizes the Student Senate as the voice for students and provides opportunities to impact and provide input to policies and procedures that impact student learning.

All college constituencies demonstrated not only a clear understanding of the resource allocation process through the Model for Integrated Planning, there was clearly widespread support for the process. Faculty, students and staff alike were able to clearly articulate the process by which decisions are made, demonstrating transparency and participation in decision making. The college has placed a graphic description of the model in dozens of locations across campus – it can be found in all meeting rooms, common areas and office suites. (IV.A.1; IV.A.2)

Administrators and faculty have significant roles in institutional governance and collaborate on pertinent issues. Administrative and faculty roles are clearly described in the Districts Governance and Decision-Making Manual, as well as board policies and administrative procedures. Written job descriptions define the faculty scope of practice and responsibility. Board Policy and administrative procedures provide structure and parameters. (IV.A.3)

The District Curriculum Committee is tasked with reviewing and approving faculty recommendations for curricular changes as well as substantial changes to existing programs. Board policy clearly describes the role of faculty in curriculum matters. (IV.A.4)

Board and instructional governance ensures that relevant perspectives are considered. The Governance and Decision Making Manual describes the processes for participatory decision-making. The B/P and A/P on Participation in Local Decision-Making describes the collaboration process with the Academic Senate. (IV.A.5)

Broad-based communication to the College occurs through a combination of sources including: electronic media, websites, postings, charts, publications, and various manuals. (IV.A.6)

Leadership roles, governance, and decision making are regularly evaluated to assure integrity

and effectiveness. Governance groups complete a year-end governance evaluation with evaluation questions that include confirmation that scheduled meetings occurred and include reports of committee members' attendance and committee accomplishments. These reports are posted online for District wide information and are included in the Superintendent/President's information report to the Board of Trustees. (IV.A.7)

Conclusions:

The College meets the Standard.

Commendation: The team commends the district for college-wide engagement in the planning and governance process. Over the past several years, the college clearly engaged all sectors and staffing levels across their three sites of the district in developing, understanding and effectively using their Model of Integrated Planning and the College of Sequoias Participatory Governance Structure. Most notably, the Model is dependent upon the effective and collaborative governance structure that has been embraced by all faculty, staff, administrators, and board members. The Team noted a spirit of trust, accountability and genuine participation that exceeds the ACCJC Standard on Effective Planning and Implementation. (IV.A.1)

Standard IV.B: Chief Executive Officer

General Observations

The College is led by a CEO who reports directly to the District's five-member board. The CEO has the principal responsibility for overseeing all areas of the institution. The current CEO assumed his role in July of 2018, taking over for a superintendent/president who was instrumental in addressing the serious accreditation issues found in 2012. Board members and constituent groups were in agreement that the college now operates in a completely transparent manner and that relations on campus are as good as they ever have been.

Findings and Evidence

Following the accreditation sanctions from 2012, the CEO led a transformative program to ensure that college decision making processes met accreditation standards. This included the development of the Integrated Planning Model that has become a highly visible tool for the entire campus. (IV.B.1)

The CEO's restructuring of the administrative team has improved the college's effectiveness. Board members commented on the success of placing administrators in positions where they could be most successful and recruiting talented senior administrators to ensure that board goals were effectively implemented. Deans and senior administrators take leadership roles as co-chairs in district governance committees. (IV.B.2)

The team found the college to be a collegial environment that works together to set goals, establish values and honor a culture of shared governance. Every conversation about the culture on campus included someone saying that the college's positive culture is predicated on the shared belief in the Integrated Planning Model. The CEO provides regular updates to the whole campus, including email updates that are available to the entire campus. (IV.B.3)

The accreditation process included a wide array of participants. The team found that the campus widely understood the role of accreditation and valued the process. Faculty and administrators displayed ownership of accreditation-related matters, with deans and vice-presidents serving as co-chairs a variety of committees. The Board demonstrated that they were well prepared by the regular updates provided by the CEO. (IV.B.4)

The CEO works with a senior administrative team and an extended cabinet group that provides effective oversight and internal controls. The college as a whole appears to understand the macro-level budgeting issues and the process for requesting additional resources through the Integrated Planning Model. (IV.B.5)

The CEO is well traveled across the district. The CEO maintains a schedule that allows him to formally present student outcome data to each high school district on an annual basis. The CEO is an active member of two local Rotary clubs, and regularly gives presentations to service clubs, chambers of commerce and other civic groups. (IV.B.6)

Conclusions

The college meets the standard.

Standard IV.C: Governing Board

General Observations

The Governing Board consists of five elected members and one student member. Through extensive involvement in activities at the local, regional, state, and national level, the Governing Board stays informed about concerns and issues relevant to governing the College of the Sequoias. This involvement enhances Governing Board members' understanding of education policy and practice.

Through establishing policies aligned with the College's mission statement, the Governing Board has ultimate authority for educational quality, legal matters, and financial integrity. The Governing Board assures the quality, integrity, and effectiveness of student learning programs and services by publishing its policies, protocols, and code of ethics; participating in professional development; assessing its own performance; staying informed and involved with accreditation; and selecting and evaluating the Superintendent/President.

The Superintendent/President reports directly to the Governing Board and has delegated authority to implement and administer board policies. The Superintendent/President is held accountable for the operations of the District/College through regular performance evaluations.

Findings and Evidence

Board policy 2200 and the Integrated Planning Model define the authority of the Board and identifies the role of faculty, staff and students in the district's decision-making process. The Board receives regular updates on matters concerning curriculum, budget and other matters relevant to the provision of a college education. (IV.C.1)

The COS board members have a long history of service, with the most junior member having served for 12 years. They are committed to working together and function as a board in the best interest of students. Board members rely on the CEO to implement policy and have set out clear priorities that are published on the college website. (IV.C.2)

BP 2431, CEO Selection, establishes that in the event of a CEO vacancy the Governing Board will establish a search process. BP 2435, Evaluation of Superintendent/President, establishes a policy that the superintendent/president will be evaluated at least annually. The team found that the board conducts annual evaluations of the superintendent/president. (IV.C.3)

The five-member board is elected by district, with one district located completely within the city of Visalia and the other four spanning across rural Tulare and Kings County. As evidenced by the support of the centers in Tulare and Hanford, the Board sets aside regional differences to work in the best interest of the college. (IV.C.4)

The college maintains a policy system that mirrors the uniform policy numbering system developed by the Community College League of California. Policy updates are in progress and the superintendent/president is working with the board to update all policies through the shared governance process. (IV.C.5)

Board Policy 2010 outlines the size and requirements for holding office as a trustee. Board Policy 2200 outlines the role of a trustee and Board Policies 2310 and 2330 provide guidance for meeting dates and voting rules. (IV.C.6)

The Board adheres to its own policies and bylaws in conducting business. (IV.C.7)

The team found evidence that the Board regularly receives reports on student outcomes. The CEO provides weekly updates to the board and formal presentations (e.g., Student Success Scorecard and IEPI goals) are made at regularly scheduled board meetings. (IV.C.8)

The Board engages in annual retreats, training from a variety of state and local organizations and attendance at conferences sponsored by the Community College League of California (CCLC).

The Board conducts an annual self-evaluation. Training includes college processes, accreditation matters and how to comply with California's open meetings law. (IV.C.10)

The Board maintains Board Policy 2710, Conflict of Interest, and 2715, Code of Ethics. Each board member demonstrated an understanding of the role and limitations of a trustee. (IV.C.11, ER 7)

The team found unanimous agreement among board members that authority is delegated to the CEO. Through regular contact, reports and an annual evaluation, the board holds the CEO accountable for operation of the college. The team found that the board members were aware of the importance of allowing the CEO and shared governance structure to function independently. (IV.C.12)

Board members demonstrated knowledge and understanding of the accreditation process. Board members indicated that the process was important to keep the college moving in a positive direction. Board members participated in the development of the college's accreditation report and offered support for helping the college improve. (IV.C.13)

Conclusions

The college meets the standard.

Quality Focus Essay Feedback

The team reviewed the Quality Focus Essay provided by the College. The QFE outlined a program to improve the transition from basic skills to transfer level math and English courses. In the time between completion of the QFE and the team visit, the state of California enacted new laws requiring direct placement of students into transfer level courses.

The team notes that while this component of the QFE may no longer be relevant, the spirit of the project to better evaluate and support students remains in place. The team is confident that the college engage in a process to determine how to best support the spirit of the QFE.