EVALUATION REPORT

College of the Sequoias
915 South Mooney Boulevard
Visalia, CA 93277

A Confidential Report Prepared for the Accrediting Commission
For Community and Junior Colleges

This report represents the findings of the evaluation team that visited
The College of the Sequoias on October 15 through October 19, 2006

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College of the Sequoias

Team Roster

October 15 – 19, 2006

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SUMMARY OF EVALUATION REPORT

INSTITUTION: College of the Sequoias

DATE OF VISIT: October 15-19, 2006

TEAM CHAIR: Robert M. Harris, Ph.D.
                Vice Chancellor, Los Rios Community College District

A ten-member accreditation team visited College of the Sequoias from October 15 - 19, 2006 for the purpose of determining whether the institution continues to meet accreditation standards; evaluating how well the college is achieving its stated purposes; analyzing how the college is meeting the commission standards; 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.

On August 14, 2006, ACCJC conducted a workshop for team chairs and received a copy of the "Team Chair Manual," "Accreditation Reference Handbook," "Guide for Evaluating Institutions," "Distance Learning Manual" and "Team Evaluator Manual." In preparation for the visit, team members attended an all-day training session on September 7, 2006 conducted by ACCJC and discussed the evolution of standards, the 2002 standards, themes and standards, and characteristics of evidence. In the afternoon, we talked about the roles of evaluators and the team chair using the "Guide to Evaluating Institutions" and preparing the evaluation report using the "Team Evaluator Manual." Each team member reviewed the entire self study and addressed several questions. Each was then assigned to specific standards and was asked to address several questions in order to fully prepare for the visit.

All of the team members were provided with webpage and flash drive access to all the evidence supporting the self study. The team members then identified individuals or groups they wanted to meet with during the visit. The College scheduled all of these meetings in advance and, once we arrived, scheduled any additional meetings at our request. On October 15, 2006, the team met for three hours to collectively review the self study report and discuss the process we would utilize to develop and finalize our recommendations.

During the four day visit, the team met with numerous groups and individuals, including the Academic Senate, Curriculum Committee, governance bodies, students, faculty, staff, and administrators. Four members of the team met the five-member governing Board members for an hour. In addition, team members held two publicized sessions open to all members of the college committee. Team members appreciated the candor of employees, members of the Board, and students throughout the visit.

Major Findings and Recommendations of the 2006 Team

The following six recommendations are made as a result of the October 15-19, 2006 Team:

1) The team strongly recommends that the college establish a positive campus climate through an inclusive dialogue that embodies a culture of respect, civility, and trust to improve institutional decision-making, planning, and effectiveness. (Standard IB.1; Standard IIIA.1d, IIIA.4c; and Standard IVA.2, IVA.2a, IVA.2b, IVA.3, and IVA.5)

2) The team recommends that the college engage all campus constituent groups in an institutional decision-making and planning process, which is linked and central to the college mission. The process should be an ongoing, effective, and systematic cycle of evaluation, integrated planning, resource allocation, research, and re-evaluation. This cycle should include such processes as curricular development, program review, and assessment and allocation of technological, physical, financial, and human resources.(Standard IA.4, IB.3, IB.4, IB.6, IB.7: Standard IIA.1; IIA.2, IIB3, IIB4, IIC2; Standard IIIA6, IIIB2, IIIC2, IIID1, IIID.2g, IIID3)

3) The team recommends that the college develop, review, and measure student learning outcomes in all of its courses, programs, degrees/certificates, the general education pattern, and institution-wide practices. (Standard IB.1, Standard IIA.1c, IIA.2a, IIA.2b, IIA.2e, IIA.2f, IIA.2g, IIA.2h, IIA.2i, IIA.3, IIA.6a, IIB.1, IIB.4, IIC.1a, IIC.2; Standard IIIA.1b, IIIA.1c; and Standard IVA.1, IVA.2b, IVB.1b)

4) The team recommends that the College provide the full range of support and instructional services to all students and staff in all of its learning environments. The College must devote appropriate staff, facilities, and budget resources to support instruction, learning, and staff development. It must provide training for staff in diversity awareness, technology applications, and distance education. Additionally, the institution must improve the quantity, currency, depth, and variety of its library resources. (Standard IIA.2e, IIA.2f, IIA.4, IIB.1, IIB.3a, IIC.1a, IIC.1c, IIC2, Standard IIIA.5a, IIIA.5b, IIIA.5, IIIB.2, IIIC.1, IIIC.1b, IIIC.1c)

5) The team recommends that the College focus on the needs of its diverse populations both on campus and in the community, including new students, non-traditional populations, and persons of limited English ability. The College must pay particular attention in all of its learning environments to the needs of persons with disabilities, including access to facilities, services, instructional materials, and print and electronic media. The College should ensure that its public representations are universally accessible. (Standard IA.1, Standard A.1a, IIA.1b, IIA.2d, IIA.6c,IIB.3a, IIB.3b, Standard IIIA.4a, IIIA.4b)

6) The team recommends that the College develop a process by which all policies are regularly reviewed and updated to meet Accreditation Standards, including, but not limited to:
    *   Tenure Review
    *   Hiring & Evaluation processes (management, classified, and faculty)
    *   Employee Professional Ethics
    *   Board policy concerning Ethics Policy violation

- Boardmanship Training & Development
- Accommodations for students and staff
- Academic Honesty Policy

(Standard IB.1, II.B.1, II.B.2c, Standard IIIA.1d, IIIA.4, IIIA.4c, and Standard IVA2, IVA2a, IVA2b, IVA.3, IVA.5. IVB.1f)

ACCREDITATION EVALUATION REPORT FOR COLLEGE OF THE SEQUOIAS

Comprehensive Evaluation Visit
October 15-19, 2006

INTRODUCTION

College of the Sequoias is a comprehensive community college offering transfer, vocational/technical and basic skills classes and programs supporting students' achievement of their educational goals. The college serves the communities of Kings, Tulare and Fresno counties. The college was established in 1926 and has occupied its current location since 1939. The current enrollment is approximately 10,600 students on the campus and at eight off-campus sites including the Farm and the Hanford Center.

Since the last accrediting visit in October of 2000, the College of the Sequoias campus has continued to change with the completion of a new Music Building and a Learning Resource Center. Additional portable buildings have been located on the Visalia campus to accommodate a number of different programs including Computer Services, Academic Services and the CSU Fresno Center.

The communities in the college's service area have continued to increase faster than the population of the State of California. The unemployment rate for Kings and Tulare counties is about 15% which is significantly higher than for the state. As of Fall 2004, enrollment at the College of the Sequoias was 10,616. The California Community College Research and Planning Unit predict College of the Sequoias enrollment will climb to 15,100 by 2012. The College of the Sequoias has 157 full time faculty, 30 administrators and 161 classified employees.

While College of the Sequoias reported progress in their Focus Midterm in 2003 and in their Progress Report in 2004, the visiting team was informed by all the constituencies that the campus climate was negative and the lack of trust and respect between the constituencies and the Board of Trustees made it difficult, if not impossible, to accomplish the recommendations of the 2000 accreditation team. The constituencies stated on a number of occasions that for over a decade contentious labor negotiations created an environment where they were unwilling to work together including on the self study. This environment started to change with the hiring of the Interim Superintendent/President in 2005 and the hiring of the new Superintendent/President in July 2006. The change in climate was observable everywhere we went on campus with all constituencies including the Board of Trustees.

The most recent College of the Sequoias accreditation self study process was initiated in March 2004 and completed in July 2006. The self study was concise and honest. The College provided extensive documentation in print and electronic form. However, planning agendas were relatively sparse and, in some cases, lacked substance. Many of the planning agendas specify no recommendations. Additionally, it is not clear to what extent the structures described in the various sections are actually being used at the institution.

The accreditation team would like to provide the following commendations:

The college has shown great foresight in acquiring property immediately adjacent to the Visalia campus and land in Hanford and Tulare for educational centers.

The Student Development Director was particularly impressive, inspiring students to learn and use their leadership skills.

The state of the art Student Health Center is a model for other community colleges throughout the state.

The college has recently embraced a collaborative approach to bond drives with other community colleges in the area, rather than competing for scarce dollars.

The faculty, staff, administrators and Board of Trustees of the college are in the process of redefining their roles and embracing more positive interactions.

The visiting team was particularly impressed by the knowledge and vision of the Agricultural Division Chair at the Farm.

The Administrator in charge of Facilities and his Safety Committee are proactive and very responsive to issues as they are identified on campus.

The Child Care Center is an impressive facility both in physical layout and in the programs provided for children.

Team Evaluation of Institutional Responses to 2000 Recommendations

The 2000 accreditation team provided seven recommendations to College of the Sequoias. The college's 2006 self study does address each recommendation; however, the 2006 accreditation team notes that in several cases, the responses are incomplete or perfunctory.

Recommendation #1: Coordinate and integrate the various college planning processes and develop a comprehensive educational master plan.

The 2000 team provided two integrated recommendations on strengthening the College of Sequoias' planning efforts: (1) coordination and integration of all institutional planning processes within the educational master plan and (2) focus on institutional outcomes assessment, in particular, student learning outcomes and their relationship to institutional effectiveness and accountability.

With regard to (1), the College has identified key institutional committees with planning responsibilities and has approved four critical elements of the planning process (e.g., institutional performance indicators). Other related institutional task forces, such as the Annual Planning Task Force, have developed planning documents and research data to support these planning activities, with Program Review Reports informing the evaluation of programs and services. All these planning documents were then synthesized into the current Educational Master Plan, 2005-2006, Blueprint for the Future.

Notwithstanding these developments, the college still needs to develop across-the-board coordination and a clear, explicit delineation of how each planning activity is integrated with the overall institutional mission, goals, and objectives. Several key strategic components to address institutional effectiveness are not in place, including a continuous cycle of evaluation and improvement to measure the effectiveness of educational programs and support services and a thoughtful integration of all planning processes.

Recommendation #2: Place greater focus on institutional outcomes assessment, in particular student learning outcomes, as they relate to institutional effectiveness and accountability. Campus leaders from all constituency groups need to take proactive efforts in this area.

With regard to (2), College of the Sequoias has instituted a Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) Committee with representatives from each constituent group. This Committee has primary responsibility for developing qualitative information on learning outcomes to share with colleagues and to assist in their implementation and assessment. Importantly, the SLO Committee has recommended, and the Campus Curriculum Committee has adopted, changes to the Course Outline form, requiring the identification of student learning outcomes and assessment methods on all new and revised curricula. However, the College is still at the beginning phases of identifying student learning outcomes at the curricular and program review stages, with dialogue occurring within the various college committees and departments, not comprehensively nor campus-wide.

Recommendation #3: **Review the faculty evaluation process including tenure review of faculty, and implement appropriate changes with all due speed.**

The comprehensive visit conducted in 2000 recommended a review of the faculty evaluation process, including tenure review of faculty and implementation of appropriate changes, with all due speed. While the college has made progress in reviewing and revising the faculty evaluation process, and the new system has been implemented, there is no evidence that discussion about tenure review has occurred, and no changes have been made to the tenure review process. In spite of faculty disengagement and lack of time due to contentious labor negotiations, the faculty should have addressed the tenure issue.

Recommendation #4: **Demonstrate that issues of staff diversity in hiring and training are major priorities, and commit appropriate attention and resources to effect change.**

The demographics of College of the Sequoias show a wide disparity between the ethnic composition of the student body and that of faculty and administrators. Furthermore, while there has been improvement in the diversity of faculty, an overall plan to address this disparity does not appear to be in place.

The college has a faculty and staff diversity committee and a staff development committee. However, flex days have been reduced to two days a year, and the majority of flex hours are fulfilled by divisions meetings. Overall, the college provides very little diversity awareness and training for either students or staff.

Recommendation #5: **Further develop and refine the budget development process to ensure that the college community understands the process, particularly pathways for funding requests and approvals, and that appropriate levels of user-friendly financial information are communicated to members of the college community. It is also recommended that the budget development process be streamlined by reducing the number of procedural junctions where submittals, reviews, revisions, and recommendations begin and end. In addition, it is recommended that the college further develop linkages between planning and budget processes.**

In response to the recommendation to refine the budget development process, making it more transparent to the campus community, the college has created a Budget Book that is widely available. The college has a budget committee, but this committee has been without a chair for a few years. Although the college has a program review process and a yearly update to this process, it is not clear that these processes are used for institutional planning and the development of college budget priorities.

Recommendation #6: **Communicate more proactively and publicly Governing Board actions in relationship to revisions of policies, and processes and outcomes of their self-evaluation and the evaluation of the superintendent/president.**

The comprehensive visit in 2000 included the recommendation that the Board of Trustees be more proactive in its communications regarding policy changes and processes, outcomes of the board self-evaluations, and evaluation of the CEO. The college now requires that all policy changes go through the College Council, where three readings are required before submission to the Board for consideration. The College Council has representatives from all campus constituencies, and their agendas and minutes are widely available on campus. Once the Board has approved a policy change or addition, the campus is notified via email, and the policy is placed on the college's website.

Recommendation #7: Review the participatory governance structure comprised of the College Council and the extensive number of committees. The focus of this review should be on streamlining and simplifying the process to facilitate more direct access and communication between constituent groups and the superintendent/president.

The final recommendation of the 2000 team was that the college review its participatory governance structures to streamline, simplify, and improve communication between constituent groups and the president. In response to this charge, the College Council has reviewed the structure of the College Council and the institutional standing committees. One result of this review is that the Superintendent/President is now the Chair of the College Council.

The college has provided no evidence that the number of committees have been reduced from those that existed in 2000. Having the Superintendent/President serve as Chair of the College Council was a good first step in addressing a lack of direct access and communication between campus groups and the CEO, but the process appears to have stopped there until the arrival of an interim president.

It is clear to the visiting team that while the college has adjusted some processes, it has yet to address fundamental issues related to Recommendation #7. The results of the Board's self-evaluation were communicated to the campus community in 2003 as was the process and content of the CEO's evaluation. Yet no evidence was provided to the 2006 team that communications to the campus community occurred on either process in 2004 or 2005 or at any point prior to 2003. Response to this recommendation seems minimal.

Eligibility Requirements

1. **AUTHORITY**

   The team verified that the College of the Sequoias receives the California Community College's approval of its programs and services and is accredited by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges of the Western Association for Schools and Colleges. The College is authorized to operate as an educational institution and to offer undergraduate education for transfer to four-college institutions.

2. **MISSION**

   The team verified that the College of the Sequoias has a mission statement that was revised and adopted by the Board of Trustees in January 2006. The College mission statement defines the institution's commitment to achieving student learning and is included in both print and electronic publications.

3. **GOVERNING BOARD**

   The team verified that the College of the Sequoias has a functioning governing board responsible for the quality, integrity, and fiscal stability of the institution. The board is composed of five elected members from the five geographical wards that comprise the District. In addition, the board has one student representative and is sufficient in size and composition to fulfill all of its responsibilities. The board is an independent policy-making body that reflects the constituent groups and public interest in its decisions.

4. **CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

   The team verified that the College of the Sequoias has a chief executive officer who was appointed by the governing board. The chief executive officer is responsible for administering the policies adopted by the board and executing all board decisions.

5. **ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY**

   The team verified that the College of the Sequoias has the administrative staff to support its mission and purpose, programs and services. There are several vacant administrative positions which are currently staffed with interim personnel. All administrative personal meet or exceed the minimum qualifications for the positions they hold.

6. **OPERATIONAL STATUS**

   The team verified that the College of the Sequoias is operational and offers courses at the main campus, the College Farm, and the Hanford Center and in various high schools throughout the District.

7.   DEGREES

The team verified that the College of the Sequoias offers 66 Associate of Arts/Science degree programs and 71 vocational certificate programs. Nearly 95% of the student population is enrolled in credit programs.

8.   EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

The team verified that the College of the Sequoias degree programs are compatible with its mission, are based on recognized postsecondary fields of study, and have sufficient content and rigor. The institution is currently working on incorporating student learning outcomes at the curricular and program levels.

9.   ACADEMIC CREDIT

The team verified that the College of the Sequoias awards credit for coursework using the Carnegie Standards, as defined in Title V of the California Education Code.

10.   STUDENT LEARNING AND ACHIEVEMENT

The team verified that the College of the Sequoias is in the process of developing student learning outcomes for all its courses and programs, as well as formulating assessment tools that would measure these outcomes.

11.   GENERAL EDUCATION

The team verified that the College of the Sequoias degree programs require the completion of 18 units of general education courses in oral and written communications, analytical thinking and computational skills, natural science, humanities, and social and behavioral sciences. These courses are designed to ensure breadth of knowledge and to promote intellectual inquiry.

12.   ACADEMIC FREEDOM

The team verified that the College of the Sequoias faculty and students are free to examine and test all knowledge appropriate to their discipline or area of major study as judged by the academic and educational community in general.

13.   FACULTY

The team verified that the College of the Sequoias employs 157 full-time faculty members. The faculty members are qualified to conduct the institution's programs and meet state mandated minimum requirements. Faculty duties and responsibilities are described in the Faculty Handbook and in the COSTA Master Agreement.

14.	STUDENT SERVICES

The team verified that College of the Sequoias provides adequate student services for all main campus students, although adequate services need to be provided for students attending various off-site locations.

15.	ADMISSIONS

The team verified that College of the Sequoias has adopted and adheres to admissions policies and procedures consistent with its mission that specify the qualifications of students appropriate for its programs.

16.	INFORMATION AND LEARNING RESOURCES

The team verified that the College of the Sequoias provides specific long term access to sufficient information, learning resources, and services to support its mission and all of its educational programs.

17.	FINANCIAL RESOURCES

The team verified that the College of the Sequoias documents a funding base, financial resources, and plans for financial development adequate to support student learning programs and services, to improve institutional effectiveness, and to assure financial stability.

18.	FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

The team verified that College of the Sequoias annually undergoes and makes available an external financial audit by a certified public account.

19.	INSTITUTIONAL PLANNING AND EVALUATION

The team verified that the College of the Sequoias provides basic planning for the development of the institution. The College will need to more closely link planning processes to budgetary considerations.

20.	PUBLIC INFORMATION

The team verified that the College of the Sequoias publishes information, in print and electronic format, in its catalog, class schedule, and other publications, concerning the college's purposes and objectives, admission requirements and procedures, rules and regulations affecting students, degrees offered, degree requirements, etc. In addition, the college distributes annual publications that focus on program accomplishments and student graduates.

21.   RELATIONS WITH THE ACCREDITING COMMISSION

The team verified that the College of the Sequoias adheres to the eligibility requirements, standards and policies of ACCJC, describes itself in identical terms to all of its accrediting agencies, communicates any changes in its accreditation status in a timely manner, and agrees to disclose information required by ACCJC to carry out its accrediting responsibilities.

Accreditation Themes

- **Dialogue:** The visiting team noted that, until very recently, inclusive, civil, productive dialogue across constituencies has not been manifest on the college campus since the last accreditation visit. The team also noted evidence of such dialogue beginning to occur once again with the change in college leadership. Most recently, progress toward an agreement with the faculty association signals a positive trend in communication patterns. Significant dialogue will need to occur in achieving the Commission's standards in such areas as college wide planning and resource allocation; the development of learning outcomes at the institutional, degree, program, and course level; providing full access to instructional and support services for all students in all venues; developing policies for crucial college processes, such as tenure review and program review; and addressing the needs of the diverse student body, staff, and surrounding community.

  The dialogue that needs to occur will aid the college in reestablishing a positive campus climate, as described in Recommendation 1, in which respect, civility, and trust underlie discussion occurring in all campus forums and help to build a spirit of community that will aid the campus in meeting the Accreditation Standards.

- **Institutional Integrity:** The visiting team was provided with print and electronic data in advance of the visit, which greatly facilitated initial analysis. During the visit, team needs and requests for information were supplied promptly. In face to face visits on campus, faculty, administrators, staff, students and board members appeared to be candid in their responses to team questions and were willing to discuss mistakes made and plans to put the acrimonious past aside and move ahead. The team affirms that Standard IVA.4 is met: "The institution advocates and demonstrates honesty and integrity in its relationships with external agencies. It agrees to comply with Accreditation Commission standards, policies, and guidelines, and Commission requirements for public disclosure, self study and other reports, team visits, and prior approval of substantive changes."

  The development of policies as described in Recommendation #6 will demonstrate the institutional integrity of the College to its community members. In particular, the formulation or refinement of an Employee Professional Ethics Code, an Academic Honesty Policy, and a Board policy concerning Ethics Policy violations will make visible to the college community the institution's regard for issues of equity and diversity. The development of a process for regular review of these policies will ensure that the College continues to demonstrate this regard.

  In addition, the College needs to address the accessibility of its print and electronic publications, as per Recommendation #4.

- **Student Learning Outcomes:** The visiting team noted that the college has begun the process of integrating Student Learning Outcomes into its course outlines. Some departments are also developing SLO's for programs and certificates. Faculty is modifying the curriculum submission forms and process to ensure that Student Learning Outcomes are an

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institutionalized part of the curricular development process and, by extension, the Program Review process. Discussion in meetings of the Academic Senate and the Curriculum Committee, as well as individual meetings with department chairs and faculty members, show that many faculty members are interested in developing SLO's.

The College needs to ensure that all departments and programs consistently include Student Learning Outcomes in their curricular processes, including requiring the identification of SLO's for approval of curriculum outlines. Additionally, the documented assessment of these outcomes needs to occur consistently throughout departments and be used for continuous improvement. Finally, Student Learning Outcomes need to be identified, reviewed, and evaluated at the institutional level, affirming that the campus culture, as a whole, embraces the concept and underlying philosophy.

- **Planning, Evaluation, and Improvement**: As per Recommendation #2, the team notes that the institutional planning and budget allocation processes are insufficiently linked. The team recommends that the college provide evidence of " . . . a systematic cycle of evaluation, integrated planning, implementation, and documented re-evaluation," in which research evidence and resource allocation are inextricably linked. Planning agendas for Standard I indicate that the College is aware of deficiencies in this area and motivated to address them.

  The size of the Institutional Planning Committee (ten members) and the limited breadth of representation indicate that the institution needs to highlight the importance of the planning process and the commitment of its leadership to that process. As the campus commits itself to reestablishing a positive climate, we would expect that community members would reaffirm the value of participation and the contributions that each can make by a greater degree of participation on the Institutional Planning Committee.

- **Organization**: Leadership changes at multiple levels at the College have begun to address the issues of trust and respect that have severely impacted the campus climate over the past decade. The visiting team noted in various meetings and informal conversations the positive, energetic discussions that will fuel the important work that lies ahead for the college in meeting the Accreditation Standards. Appropriate organizational structures are present to facilitate these discussions.

  The visiting team noted that the college needs to dedicate this newly committed energy to producing and supporting student learning and demonstrate in documented evidence that that learning has taken place.

- **Institutional Commitments**: The visiting team noted that the College's mission statement has been recently reviewed and revised. The team found that the college provides high quality education consistent with the institutional mission and goals. Although still in the process of institutionalizing Student Learning Outcomes, College of the Sequoias is clearly committed to supporting student learning and student success. Conversations with students and staff bear out this commitment.

Reports of the four standards and related recommendations are as follows:

STANDARD I
Institutional Mission and Effectiveness

A. Mission

General Comments

Since the last accreditation visit in 2000, College of the Sequoias has revised the institution's mission statement, incorporating student learning as a primary focus. In November 2005, the College Council, the college's participatory governance committee, approved the amended statement; subsequently, in January 2006, the Board of Trustees formally adopted the current mission statement. (Standard IA.1-2)

Although the mission statement is published in the General Catalog, on the College of the Sequoias website, and in much of the planning documentation of the Institutional Planning Committee, consistency remains an issue. The team recognizes that publication deadlines of many documents preclude inclusion of the most up-to-date versions; however, every effort should be made to ensure that all print and electronic publications, particularly those that receive widespread community exposure, reflect the most current mission statement. (Standard IA.2)

A review of supporting documentation and interviews with various campus groups verify that the mission statement has undergone annual evaluative review by the Institutional Planning Committee, with the most recent iteration developed to provide the foundation for all planning and decision-making activities. (Standard IA.3; Standard IA.4) Nonetheless, both the Self-Study and the Accreditation survey indicate, and the team concurs, that while the majority of faculty, staff and management (82-86% of respondents) believe that the mission statement is appropriate to the existing student population, a distinctly smaller percentage (43-47% of the respondents) of the student body agreed with that assessment.

Importantly, based on the Accreditation survey, a significant percentage of faculty and staff respondents (62-67%) did not believe that the mission statement provides the fundamental and underlying basis for decision-making nor guides the development or evaluation of programs and services. (Standard IA.4) The team acknowledges that the College has experienced extended controversies that have excluded consistent and informed input and involvement from the entire campus community, possibly skewing survey results.

Findings and Evidence

Although the College annually revises its mission statement to reflect learning outcomes and the current needs of its student population, there is little substantive evidence that institutional linkage of student learning outcomes to mission and to all decision-making actions exists. A perusal of documented evidence and interviews with the College staff indicate that College of the Sequoias has multiple documents that not only outline a variety of institutional planning processes and procedures, but also summarize individual and departmental efforts to develop student learning outcomes. The

team is in agreement with the College's intent to re-examine and clearly re-define the relationship of the mission statement to decision-making activities, planning processes, and institutional and program student learning outcomes. (Standard IA.)

Conclusions

The College of the Sequoias should review and strengthen its mission statement so that it is the basis of all campus activities, including the development of Student Learning Outcomes. The College would greatly benefit from a comprehensive in-depth analysis of all components related to achieving its overall mission. The College must make a concerted effort to incorporate campus-wide dialogue at all levels of institutional decision-making. This broad dialogue needs to occur within a continuous evaluation cycle in order to fully and effectively support its educational programs and student services. The active participation of all constituent groups is paramount. The College of the Sequoias must demonstrate in its planning and practice clear linkages between student learning outcomes, planning processes, and mission statement. (Standard IA.1-4)

B: Improving Institutional Effectiveness

General Comments

The Self Study report indicates that dialogue about continuous improvement of institutional processes and student learning occurs in both formal and informal settings. At College of the Sequoias, formal dialogue about student learning occurs in a number of different campus committees and during various processes instituted across campus. The established processes include program review, course outline review, and faculty evaluation. An example of more informal opportunities is the "Conversations in Writing group, where interested faculty gather to discuss issues relevant to success in writing courses." (Standard IB.1)

The Self Study also notes, "Institutional goals with measurable objectives were developed through a collaborative effort of campus constituencies; however the evaluation of these goals is not always consistent. In some cases, the evaluation was not performed every year. The evaluation relies on the participation and input from the entire campus community and, at times, the input has not been forthcoming. This makes it difficult to assess whether there is a lack of progress or whether there is a lack of documentation of progress towards achievement of goals and objectives. " (Standard IB.2)

The Self Study report discusses ". . .concerns at the institutional level with regard to goals implementation and resource allocation. The Institutional Planning Committee has had many discussions regarding the effectiveness of goal planning efforts. Discussions have also centered on the lack of goals delegation to individuals who are then provided the resources (staffing or funding) to implement these goals." (Standard IB.3)

Additionally, the Self Study report states, "It is difficult to assess the effectiveness of resource allocation. There are not clearly defined methods to assess impact of resource allocation on institutional effectiveness." (Standard IB.4) While constituent groups share information, it is not clear that the information is used to improve institutional effectiveness. (Standard IB.4) The Self Study also

reports that ". . .while the College has made progress informally assessing the effectiveness of its planning and resource allocation processes, the lack of a formal process indicates the need for improvement in meeting this standard. " (Standard IB.6)

In reviewing the Self Study, it does not appear that the institution assesses its evaluation mechanisms through a systematic review of their effectiveness to improve instructional programs and student services. The College needs to demonstrate the linkage between goal setting and the use of data collected to assess progress of institutional goals. (Standard IB.7)

Findings and Evidence

Evidence indicates that the College conducts program review, but research on student achievement data is not systematically applied. Little evidence exists that data collected is used for planning, improvement of institutional effectiveness, or identification of intended student learning outcomes. Research data related to student learning is focused on the Partnership for Excellence data, and the analyses of data seem to be compartmentalized. The College refers to program review as the method for achieving the mission, but the application and assessment of this process is not consistent. (Standard IB.2)

The Institutional Planning Committee discusses College goals and common themes of several College plans, but evidence of student learning outcomes being a part of that discussion is lacking. Some faculty and managers are aware of and are working to identify and develop assessments for Student Learning Outcomes, e.g., English, Agriculture. However, evidence of using the assessment results for analysis of educational quality or changing activities to improve intended outcomes is lacking. The dialogue that exists does not seem to focus on improvement. (Standard IB.1-2)

Evidence of a systematic decision-making process that would support a consistent cycle of evaluation at the College is not observable. This cycle should include review of areas such as institutional research, curriculum development, student learning outcomes development and assessment, instructional programs, allocation of physical and human resources, student support services, library and other learning support services, including broad-based input by appropriate constituencies. (Standard IB.3-4, IB.6-7)

Although the team identified an institutional research newsletter, an annual data survey, and some additional information regarding student and staff demographics, evidence that the College uses documented assessment results to communicate quality assurance to appropriate constituencies for institution and program performance was lacking. (Standard IB.5)

Conclusions

Program reviews are used at some levels and, in 2003, goals and objectives were developed. However, evidence that the content of these reports has developed into implementation is lacking. The College has appropriate committees, but decision-making processes are not clear. This lack of clarity affects accountability, resource allocation, continuous improvement, and institutional effectiveness. The College needs a systematic approach to the collection and use of student learning outcomes data to

improve educational quality for general and applied instructional programs and student support services.

A comprehensive institutional analysis should include such areas as: institutional and departmental goals and objectives, planning activities, program review results, quantitative and qualitative research data, and statistical information. Such examination would necessarily incorporate student learning outcomes at each collegiate level from curricular offerings to Board policy decisions; other essential instructional and student support areas, such as human and technological resources and fiscal and facilities needs, would be integrated into this institutional analysis. The College should communicate each planning and evaluation phase clearly and broadly to community and campus constituent groups with continuous opportunities for critical feedback and improvement efforts.

The team concludes that the College needs to sustain a comprehensive and on-going institutional evaluation and program review to assess all courses and programs for relevance, appropriateness, achievement of intended learning outcomes, currency, and plans for future needs. In addition, the College needs to examine its evaluation mechanisms on a regular basis. (Standard IB.1; Standard IIA.2a-2b, IIA.2e-2f; Standard IIA.3, IIA.3d)

Recommendation 1: Improving Institutional Effectiveness

The team strongly recommends that the college establish a positive campus climate through an inclusive dialogue that embodies a culture of respect, civility, and trust to improve institutional decision-making, planning, and effectiveness. (Standard IB.1; Standard IIIA.1d, IIIA.4c; and Standard IVA.2, IVA.2a, IVA.2b, IVA.3, and IVA.5)

Recommendation 2: Institutional Decision Making and Planning

The team recommends that the college engage all campus constituent groups in an institutional decision-making and planning process, which is linked and central to the college mission. The process should be an ongoing, effective, and systematic cycle of evaluation, integrated planning, resource allocation, research, and re-evaluation. This cycle should include such processes as curricular development, program review, and assessment and allocation of technological, physical, financial, and human resources.(Standard IA.4, IB.3, IB.4, IB.6, IB.7: Standard IIA.1, IIA.2, IIB.3, IIB.4, IIC.2; Standard IIIA.6, IIIB.2, IIIC.2, IIID.1, IIID.2g, IIID.3)

Recommendation 3: Student Learning Outcomes

The team recommends that the college develop, review, and measure student learning outcomes in all of its courses, programs degrees/certificates, the general education pattern, and institution-wide practices (Standard IB.1, Standard IIA.1c, IIA.2a, IIA.2b, IIA.2e, IIA.2f, IIA.2g, IIA.2h, IIA.2i, IIA.3, IIA.6a, IIB.1, IIB.4, IIC.1a, IIC.2; Standard IIIA.1b, IIIA.1c; and Standard IVA.1, IVA.2b, IVB.1b)

Recommendation 5: Access and Diversity

The team recommends that the College focus on the needs of its diverse populations both on-campus and in the community, including new students, non-traditional populations, and persons of limited

English ability. The College must pay particular attention in all of its learning environments to the needs of persons with disabilities, including access to facilities, services, instructional materials, and print and electronic media. The College should ensure that its public representations are universally accessible. (Standard IA.1, Standard A.1a; Standard IIA.1b, IIA.2d, IIA.6c, IIB.3a, IIB.3b; Standard IIIA.4a, IIIA.4b)

Recommendation 6: Polices and Procedures

The team recommends that the College develop a process by which all policies are regularly reviewed and updated to meet Accreditation Standards, including, but not limited to:
- Tenure Review
- Hiring & Evaluation processes (management, classified, and faculty)
- Employee Professional Ethics
- Board policy concerning Ethics Policy violation
- Boardmanship Training & Development
- Accommodations for students and staff
- Academic Honesty Policy

(Standard IB.1; Standard IIIA.1d, IIIA.4, IIIA.4c; Standard IVA.2, IVA.2a, IVA.2b, IVA.3, IVA.5. IVB.1f)

STANDARD II
Student Learning Programs and Services

A. Instructional Programs

General Comments

College of the Sequoias offers a comprehensive curriculum leading to degrees, certificates, employment, and transfer to other institutions. These courses support the mission of the college and are approved by the campus Curriculum Committee. (Standard IIA.1). Regardless of location or means of delivery, all courses are reviewed by the Curriculum Committee (Standard IIA.1). In addition, vocational programs benefit from advisory committee review or external evaluation. (Standard IIA.2b)

The college offers a small number of online, simulcast, and televised/video distance education courses. Distance education courses are consistent with the educational mission of the institution, i.e., helping students achieve their transfer and/or occupational objectives. The Curriculum Committee approves all distance education courses and ensures that the academic standards for these courses are the same as those for other educational experiences offered by the institution. (Standard IIA.1, IIA.1b, IIA.2d)

The college's program review process was established in 1998/1999 and, over a five-year cycle, all college programs were reviewed. For the second cycle of the process (2003/2004 to present), the College simplified the format and included more program data; a section on SLO's was also added. Program review procedures are clear and available on the website. The college uses program review to document the currency of courses and programs. (Standard IIA. 2.a, IIA.2b, IIA.2e). In addition to the regular cycle of program reviews, annual updates are prepared for all programs.

Primarily as a result of college "initiators", SLO's have begun to be addressed at the college. With the guidance of the SLO Committee, the support of division chairs, and a new course outline format for curriculum, faculty are beginning to consider how SLO's can be developed for their curricula. Informal dialogue about SLO's has begun at the institutional level and is beginning to occur in various departments on campus. A SLO Committee composed of representatives from nearly all divisions has been in place for a few years; it provides resources and training to interested faculty and regular and frequent communication on campus progress to all staff. The development of SLO's has been very gradual, but faculty members are aware of and have a general knowledge about SLO's. (Standard IA.1a, IIA.1b,IIA.1c, IIA.1f, IIB.1)

Virtually all College curricula are designed by qualified faculty members and systematically approved by the college Curriculum Committee, which is chaired by a faculty member. The Committee has established an Internet-based tool for proposing new courses that will eventually make all course outlines of record readily available to the college community. (Standard IIA.2 a, IIA.2b.)

Findings/Evidence

The variety of courses in the College of the Sequoias curricula meets a wide range of student interests. All courses are expected to be reviewed and updated every five years for currency; however, in fact,

many of the course outlines are very out-of-date. Vocational programs use advisory committees to ensure current curriculum and provide input on the employability skills of students. (Standard II.A.2 a, IIA.1b, IIA.2f)

The program review process, in place for several years and completed by every program on a five-year cycle, is accepted on campus as a means of reviewing programs through department dialogue, reflecting on demographic and student achievement data, considering assessment of SLOs, documenting the status of regular course review, developing plans for the future, and identifying needed resources for improvement. The new format for the current cycle is easier to use and has added SLO assessment as a component. (Standard II.A.2 a, IIA.2b, IIA.2.e, IIA.2f)

Although a current cycle of program review is in process, some program reviews have not met target dates for completion. Up to this date, there is limited evidence that the recommendations from program review have direct impact on resource allocation decisions and little confidence that this will occur. In addition, evidence that the concept of SLO's and assessment has been addressed adequately in program reviews to date is largely lacking. (Standard IIA. 2 b; IB.4; Standard IIID.1a, IIID.1d)

The College of the Sequoias Farm is a model educational facility that provides students with real-life, hands-on learning experiences. The learning experiences made available to students at the Farm adequately prepare them to obtain employment in the agricultural industry. The Farm is an excellent example of a state of the art educational facility. The college works closely with community agriculture and industrial leaders in planning and evaluating its vocational programs. The agricultural program has established, but not begun measuring, student learning outcomes for many of its courses. (Standard IIA.1, IIA.3, IIA.5).

Although a significant program of courses is offered off-site in Hanford, it is not possible for students to complete a degree or certificate at that site. Most classes taught in Hanford are taught by adjunct faculty; library resources at the site are substandard; and student support services are minimal. The community is very supportive of the value of this program. (Standard IIA.1, IIB.1, IIC.1)

The institution, which first began offering online classes in 1996, is expanding its online offerings and hiring a coordinator to assume overall responsibility for distance education. The team notes that student success rates have historically been significantly lower for online classes than for on-campus classes at the college. As the college moves forward with these initiatives, it must address several matters that the team has documented. In particular, the team found that the college neither offers professional development nor requires formal training for faculty who wish to teach online courses. It does not require formal peer evaluation of these courses. The college has no procedures to ensure that distance education courses are accessible to disabled students or that the faculty have the technical support to make their online classes accessible. It does not provide adequate and reliable helpdesk support to distance learners or instructors and it does not ensure that distance learners have full access to the same student services as on-campus learners. (Standard IIA.1a, IIA.1b, IIA.2 a, IIA.2d, IIB.1, IIB.3a, IIC.1c; Standard IIIA.1, IIIA.5a, IIIC.1b)

At the same time, the college has recently approved five SLO's for the general education pattern. Attention to SLO's has not occurred with regard to degrees/certificates. Other than the SLO's Committee, primarily composed of interested volunteers, there is no evidence of an intentional

campus-wide dialogue on student learning. There are "pockets" of progress, for example, the English department, the Psychology department, the Nursing department, and some vocational courses, where SLO's are identified through dialogue, faculty in a few cases are addressing assessment of SLO's, as well. Progress on the assessment of SLO's is lacking. Of greatest concern is the absence of a coordinated plan for completion of SLO's throughout the curriculum and, with that, the identification of a person who is directly accountable for this effort. (Standard IB.1, Standard IIA.2a, IIA.2b, IIA.2c, IIA.2f, IIA.2g, IIA.2h, IIA.2i)

The Curriculum Committee has resumed its activities following a contentious period in which it did not meet for over a year. With an improved campus climate, the Committee has taken a strong leadership role in integrating student learning outcomes into new course proposals and course revisions. It has established a policy requiring Curriculum Committee review of each course at least once every five years. It has approved a new information competency component for English 1, and it intends to develop criteria for consistency in awarding unit values to lecture, lab, and activity courses. (Standard IIA.1 a, IIA.1b, IIA.1c, IIA.2 a, IIA.2, IIA.2c, IIA.2d, IIA.3, IIA.6a, IIA.6b, IIA.6c; Standard IVA.3)

The college's public representations, including both print and internet media, are accurate and consistent. However, these representations are not universally accessible to persons with disabilities or limited English ability. (Standard IIA.6c.)

The general education pattern meets the standard with regard to the course requirements for a degree.

Conclusions

The program review process, as amended for the second cycle, is a strong procedure. However, the process needs credibility with the faculty, direct impact on improvement in student learning, and priority for needed resources to effect that improvement. (Standard IB.1, IB.3; Standard IIA.2d, IIA.2e, IIA.2f)

It is essential that all course outlines be current and regularly reviewed within the prescribed five-year cycle. (Standard IIA.2f)

The college needs to provide comparable support services at all sites and for students learning in all learning modalities. (Standard IIA.1, IIB.1, IIC.1)

The Team recommends that the college establish, measure, and evaluate student learning outcomes for its distance education courses and programs. The college must also ensure that distance learners and instructors have the support necessary to achieve comparable rates of success comparable with those of on-campus learners. (Standard IB.1; Standard IIA.1a, IIA.1b, IIA.2d, IIB.1, IIB.3a, IIC.1c; Standard IIIA.1, IIIA.1c)

A meaningful, intentional campus-wide dialogue as a means of improving student learning is at the heart of the accreditation standards. This comprehensive dialogue has not occurred at the College of the Sequoias. In addition, despite the good efforts of numbers of faculty, a coordinated plan is not in

place to complete and assess SLO's for all courses, programs, and degrees/certificates in a timely manner. (Standard IB.1; Standard IIA.2a, IIA.2b, IIA.2f, IIA.2h, IIA.2i)

Curriculum review and approval is vital for every educational institution. Irrespective of the reasons, a one-year hiatus in the academic life of the college is unprofessional. The Team strongly recommends that the college improve its campus climate such that the Curriculum Committee is able to function normally. (Standard IVA.3)

The college should ensure that its public representations are universally accessible. (Standard IIA.3)

B. Student Support Services

General Comments

Student support services at College of the Sequoias are available to meet a broad range of student needs. There are a number of programs and services in place that provide support and encouragement to students as they pursue their educational goals. A program of note is LISTO (Liberal & Integral Studies Transfer Opportunity), which is funded by the U.S. Department of Education, and is specifically designed to attract, retain, and transfer students, particularly students who are low-income and underrepresented in higher education. (Standard II B.3)

Through observations and interviews, it was evident that staff members are well trained professionals who care about student success. The student interviews provided further evidence of this high level of commitment and service. For example, students are proud of the college's 3,000 square foot, state-of-the-art Student Health Center, which is a model for other community colleges throughout the state, as well as the space provided for the Associated Student Body government and student activities. The latter facility is spacious and has two student lounges and several offices for ASB elected officers and the 47 clubs on campus. The team feels that the Student Health Center testifies to the importance placed on meeting student needs.

Findings/Evidence

College of the Sequoias meets most provisions of Standard II.B. Student Support Services maintains student records permanently, securely, and confidentially with backup files (Standard IIB.3f); has validated all of its placement instruments (Standard B.3e); provides an environment that encourages personal and civic responsibility (Standard IIB.3b); designs and maintains appropriate programs that support diversity (Standard IIB. 3d); and evaluates and trains its counselors (Standard IIB.3c.). However, while Student Services strives to meet the needs of students through a wide array of services, some members of the campus community expressed concern about access to some of those services.

Of specific concern are issues of accessibility for students with disabilities including: the lack of access to technological forms of instruction, the college's web pages, and instructional media; elevated or uneven sidewalks that are difficult for students using wheelchairs bound students to navigate; and doors that, while meeting minimum ADA requirements, are not accessible to certain segments of the college's population. In addition, students at the "Hi-Tech Center" reported that computers used for assistive technology are not very reliable. (Standard IIB.)

Students also expressed concern about inadequate counseling services. On the recent Accreditation Survey, students gave the counseling department low ratings because they "can't get in" to see a counselor, and the hours of operation are not "student friendly." Furthermore, evening students struggle to see counselors because the office is open just one night a week (Standard IIB). For their part, counselors expressed a mounting concern that, even though their program review and annual updates have documented the need for replacement of two recent retirees, the budgetary constraints of the college have not allowed this to occur.

The team noted that one problem is the current delivery model of counseling students one-on-one versus group counseling with new students. This delivery model does not lend itself to helping first semester students go through and finish the matriculation process (i.e. assessment, orientation, counseling/advisement, and the creation of student educational plans). Students, especially English Language Learners, need the help, guidance, and support of a counselor; however, many first semester students interviewed reported being allowed to bypass counseling/advisement and creation of student educational plans once they had viewed the orientation video. The team found that some new students choose classes with only the help of family, relatives, or friends.
(Standard IIB.)

Another area of concern is college publications. Although, for the most part, general college information, requirements, policies, and references can be found in the college catalog and schedule of classes and on the college website, both the catalog and schedule of classes were missing important information, such as the academic honesty statement (Standard IIA.7b.) and the student grievance and complaint policy and procedures (Standard IIB.2c).

When reviewing the catalog and schedule for major policies affecting students, the team noted that the October 15, 2003 progress report submitted to the commission indicated that the Academic Senate would adopt a policy defining academic honesty and disseminate this policy to various constituencies by fall 2001. This remains an outstanding planning agenda item, and no progress has been made since 2000 (Standard IIA.7b). In addition to concerns regarding the academic honesty policy, the team also learned that political issues on the campus have interfered with the faculty's interest in providing support for student learning. Thus far, the faculty has not participated in the college's early alert system for identifying students having academic difficulty, and the Student Services faculty decided not to participate in or give input to the college's 2006 self-study.

Yet another major policy affecting students, which does not appear in either the catalog or schedule of classes, is the grievance or complaint process. Often students go to the Student Government Office only to be told that they have to go to the Dean of Student Services to pick up a copy of the written policy. This policy should be printed in all college publications and placed on the college's website (Standard IIB.2c).

Finally, the team noted that access to student support services at the Hanford Center seems limited. The College needs to strengthen the student services presence at this satellite campus. At Hanford, counseling, financial aid, student health, library and bookstore services are provided, but at least one support service does not adhere to its posted hours. While it appears that the college is slowly coming

out of its budgetary malaise, it was not apparent to the team that there are plans to enhance student support services at its satellite location. (Standard IIB.3a)

Conclusions

Although the Student Services division has a number of best practices such as Financial Aid materials printed in Spanish, an Open House that provides outreach to the community and an Associated Student Body leadership forum for ASB presidents from the local high schools, the College should make greater effort to eliminate the roadblocks that students encounter at COS. These barriers include access issues for students with disabilities and for students seeking counseling and inconsistent services at the Hanford Center.

Additionally, the College needs to make progress on student learning outcomes, evaluating student support services to assure that student learning is occurring. The evaluation of student support services should contribute to the development of student learning outcomes, using their assessment as the basis for improvement.

C. Library

General Comments

Student learning at COS is supported through the new Library/Learning Resource Center. The Library/Learning Resource Center houses a tutorial center, writing center, Math lab, open student computer lab, group study rooms, library orientation classroom, and distance education classroom. Instructional programs are supported by the library's book collection, periodicals, videos, and electronic databases (Standard IIC.1). The library offers three one-unit CSU transferable courses covering the components of information competency (Standard IIC.1b). In addition, the Library is working with the English Department to infuse one-unit of information competency into the English composition curriculum.

The library's databases are currently funded with the California Community College's Telecommunications Technology Infrastructure Program (TTIP) funds. These databases can be accessed from on and off campus. Access to the library's catalog and electronic databases is provided through the library's website. The library's website also provides research guides and other information to assist students. Currently, access to the electronic databases from off campus requires that a librarian manually verify a student's enrollment status and give that student login and password information for each database.

Findings and Evidence

The Visalia campus has reduced the number of qualified professional librarian hours at the reference desk. As a result of this, no hours of scheduled reference service are in place at the Hanford center except by telephone or appointment (Standard IIC.1a, IIC.1c). The reduction of adjunct librarian hours has also resulted in the inability of full-time librarians to participate in professional development opportunities (Standard IIIA.5a).

In addition, the library's book budget has been substantially cut, resulting in an outdated book collection (Standard IIC.1). Approximately half of the library's book collection is older than 1979, and what few books are provided at the Hanford center are books previously discarded by the library at the Visalia campus (IIC.1). Subscription costs for some of the library databases are paid for from the library's operating book budget. Although newly acquired library videos are captioned, older library videos are not captioned, creating access issues for students with disabilities.

The self-study states that Instructional Media Services, which provides audiovisual services and equipment, resides in a separate facility. The IMS staff is highly complimented and appreciated by many individuals at COS. Instructional Media Services are limited at the Hanford Center. (Standard IIC.1)

The library has currently not developed student learning outcomes other than in the information competency courses and is not using student learning outcomes data for the evaluation of services, resources, and program improvement.

Tutorial services are provided in the Learning Resource Center. However, there are no night or Saturday tutorial hours available even though these could be high demand times for students (Standard IIC.1). The location of the writing center in Learning Resources has impacted the use of the new Learning Resources Facilities for library services.

Conclusions

While the Visalia campus has a new Library/Learning Resource Center, the book collection is outdated and inadequate. Library services at the Hanford Center and for distance education students are limited. Library resources should reflect sufficient quantity, currency, depth, and variety to facilitate educational offerings, regardless of location or means of delivery (Standard IIC.1).

The library has not developed comprehensive program level student learning outcomes. Through the development of student learning outcomes and the assessment of these outcomes, the library will be able to evaluate library resources and services to assure their adequacy in meeting student learning needs in all learning environments (Standard IIC.2).

See Recommendation 2, Standard I

See Recommendation 3, Standard I

Recommendation 4: Student Support Services

The team recommends that the College provide the full range of support and instructional services to all students and staff in all of its learning environments. The College must devote appropriate staff, facilities, and budget resources to support instruction, learning, and staff development. It must provide training for staff in diversity awareness, technology applications, and distance education. Additionally, the institution must improve the quantity, currency, depth, and variety of its library resources. (Standard IIA.2e, IIA.2f, IIA.4, IIB.1, IIB.3a, IIC.1a, IIC.1c, IIC2; Standard IIIA.5a, IIIA.5b, IIIB.2, IIIC.1, IIIC.1b, IIIC.1c)

STANDARD III
Resources

A. Human Resources

General Comments

The Human Resources department of the college operates under the direction of the Dean of Human Resources/Legal Affairs. This office is responsible for the hiring and evaluation of all staff, faculty and administration. This office develops Human Resources policies for the campus and ensures that all policies are implemented and adhered to. The college has various committees responsible for staff development.

Findings and Evidence

The district has policies for the hiring of faculty but does not have policies for the hiring of administrative or classified personnel. The faculty hiring procedures highlight the process for faculty input on job description, interview questions, and final candidate selection. (Standard IIIA.1a) The district has policies and a clear process for evaluation of faculty and classified employees; however, the tenure review process has not been reviewed and revised as recommended in the previous accreditation visit. There is a process but no policy to govern the evaluation of management employees. (Standard IIIA.1b) While there has been some discussion about the inclusion of student learning outcomes as a component of evaluation, many courses do not have student learning outcomes; further, the College lacks assessment criteria to determine how successful individual instructors are in producing those learning outcomes. (Standard IIIA.1c)

Both the faculty and administration have written codes of ethics; however, no such policy exists for classified staff. This is a planning agenda item in the self study. (Standard IIIA.1d)

The college has seen recent reductions in staff and faculty due largely to budget issues and plans to hire additional full-time faculty. Classified staffing appears to be problematic in some areas. Staff in some functional areas reported that they do not feel there is an effective process to assess and meet their staffing needs. The program review process is intended to address this need, but evidence that this process will correct staffing deficiencies is lacking. (Standard IIIB.2, IIIB.6)

The accreditation survey shows that staff and faculty feel that the College has an understanding of and appreciation for diversity, which is promoted through programs, practices, and services. This is supported by the college's staff diversity committee's charge and their meeting minutes. However, the demographics of the college show a wide disparity between the ethnicities of students and those of faculty and administrators. While improvement has occurred in the diversity of faculty, progress has been slow. An overall plan to effect meaningful change in this regard does not appear to be in place. (Standard IIIB.4)

The campus has reduced its staff development efforts in recent years largely due to budget constraints. Flex days are now two days per year rather than five. In addition, the College has reduced the number of workshops and campus-wide meetings. The Academic Senate has recently passed a resolution to increase the number of flex days to six per year. Faculty receive funding on a first come first served basis to attend conferences, and classified staff have training opportunities through PACE. The accreditation survey showed that many employees of the district are dissatisfied with the staff development opportunities provided by the College. The team found that the college's staff development and training efforts are inadequate. (Standard IIIB.5, IIIB.5a, IIIB.5b)

Conclusions

The institution needs to review the tenure review process and implement change. This was a recommendation from the previous accreditation visit that has still not been addressed. The college needs to further develop student learning outcomes and incorporate them into the evaluation process for faculty. The level of staff resources in each functional area should be reviewed to determine that they are appropriate and that departments' needs are identified and met. The campus efforts to ensure diversity in hiring should be reviewed to see if these processes could be improved. The campus should engage in a dialogue regarding staff development efforts and how they can be improved.

B. Physical Resources

General Comments

The district maintains three facility locations, the main campus in Visalia and centers in Hanford and Tulare. In addition the district offers classes in several other off-site locations. In general, the physical resources of the campus are sufficient to meet the instructional needs of the district. The campus is well maintained, and processes are in place to make sure a safe, clean environment is provided.

Findings and Evidence

The district ensures that its facilities are well maintained and safe for its students. The campus Safety Officer serves as the main contact for safety related issues. All campus constituencies can submit facilities maintenance issues to the facilities committee, which reviews them and determines if any action is needed. There is a fund set aside annually to address any issues that might be safety related. (Standard IIIB.1, IIIB.1c)

The district has attempted to integrate facilities planning into the institutional planning process through program review. The College Council receives recommendations from the program review process to identify new facility needs and maintenance issues. In addition, the program review process is the basis for the Educational Master Plan and the Facilities Master Plan. While this process is clearly in place, evidence to support that the program review process has actually been used for this purpose is minimal. (Standard IIIB.1a, IIIB.1c, IIIB.2b)

The accreditation survey revealed a potential disconnect in the belief that facilities are maintained and operated effectively in support of programs and services. The board and administration had a very

favorable view, while faculty and staff perceived that facilities were not well maintained and operated. During the site visit, the team found that facilities were generally clean and in good working order. The team identified some accessibility issues in sidewalks and doors. The team found the facilities/safety committee to be a bright spot in the college planning and governance processes. There was broad based active membership on the committee. They provided evidence that the college maintenance staff responds quickly to all reported issues. Maintenance has implemented software and a new web page for the automated submission of all work orders. In addition it provides automated responses to the submitter when work is in progress and again when it is complete. (Standard IIIB.1, IIIB.1a)

Over the past several years the college has purchased property immediately adjacent to the Visalia campus. This process shows foresight as the new parcels have allowed for the movement of parking lots to the outer sections of campus and internal sections to be dedicated to instructional and support facilities. The college has also acquired land in Hanford and Tulare for the eventual development of educational centers. The college is commended for its efforts to secure funding through the state's capital outlay process without the usually required funding match. This is crucial for the college to meet future facilities needs since it three consecutive elections have failed to approve a general obligation bond. (Standard IIIB.1a, IIIB.2a)

Conclusions

It is suggested that the district engage in a dialogue with its constituency groups regarding the effective use of facilities to address the perception of staff and faculty that they are not maintained appropriately.

The district should be commended for the proactive, responsive facilities/safety committee and its long-range facilities development and funding efforts.

C. Technology

General Comments

College of the Sequoias has provided technology resources to students in the new open computer lab in the Learning Resources Center and in various other computer labs on campus. Technology support is also available to students by request from personnel at the help desk and from Student Services in open computer labs across campus. However, this same infrastructure of access and support is not available to faculty and staff at COS. (Standard IIIC.1).

Currently, the Dean of Technology has responsibility for overseeing academic and non-academic computing and the maintenance of computers on campus and at off site facilities. The College plans to establish a coordinator of distance education and academic computing, but this position is still in the planning stages (Standard IIIC.1).

The technology committee has developed an outdated computer and technology replacement plan, which inventoried the campus computers from less than two years old to over three years old, and a

recommended budget and cycle for replacement of outdated computers and equipment on campus. This plan has been forwarded to the College Council for consideration (Standard IIIC.1c, IIIC.2).

Findings and Evidence

At the time of the accreditation visit, College of the Sequoias had 1298 computers on campus and approximately 56 servers. All full-time faculty have computers in their offices, and many part time faculty have computer access through their divisions. However, COS does not provide a faculty computer center or lab where faculty can access computers, printers, or peripherals (i.e. flat bed scanners, slide scanners, video digitizing equipment, etc.) for developing instructional technology materials. (Standard IIIC.1). Furthermore, the campus has limited smart classrooms with instructional technology equipment that instructors can use to enhance student learning (Standard IIIC.1).

Computer and technology support is provided by computer technicians on an as needed basis and a help desk is available that employees can call to receive basic computer assistance. Other then these resources, there is no institutional systemic training or support for technology at COS. This includes distance education training and support (Standard IIIC.1b).

College of the Sequoias used to have a dedicated trainer for Banner. This position was eliminated due to budget reductions and has not been replaced. Currently it is up to divisions to train their faculty and staff on the Banner system. Technology training opportunities for college faculty and staff are limited to non-existent, and what there is, occurs through informal mentoring and support between faculty and staff. (Standard IIIA.5, IIIA.5a, IIIA.5b, IIIB.2, IIIC.1, IIIC.1b, IIIC.1c).

Although the college's Technology Plan 2.0 outlines systematic replacement of all technology resources according to a specified timeline, the college does not systematically acquire, upgrade, and/or replace technology resources (Standard IIIC.1c). This is confirmed by the survey results in the self-study (Standard IIC.1a).

Conclusions

College of the Sequoias has adequate technology resources and access for students in the Learning Resources Center and in various other computer labs on campus. However, similar resources are not available for college employees, and technology training and support for all college employees and students is inadequate.

The lack of a process and plan for the coordinated review, acquisition, maintenance, upgrade, and replacement of technology limits the college's ability to address institutional technology needs and, therefore, support the mission of the college.

In conclusion, the college does not meet this standard in the areas of IIIC.1, IIIC.1b, IIIC.1c, and IIIC.2

D. Financial Resources

General Comments

College of the Sequoias is in general compliance with the standards related to Financial Resources. Currently the college is in a strong financial position and appears to have control of its financial resources. Despite declining enrollments, the college has maintained its financial strength through its enrollment management efforts.

Findings and Evidence

Financial planning occurs at all levels throughout the college. At the department level, the program review process, which is based upon the goals and mission of the college addresses planning. (Standard IIID.1, IIID.1a) Financial requests identified in program review are submitted to the College Council, which makes funding recommendations to the Superintendent/President. In addition, the Vice President, Administrative Services conducts budget reviews with the Institutional Budget Committee. (Standard IIID.4) The Superintendent/President makes final budget recommendations to the Board of Trustees. The self study identifies one weakness in this process, which is that campus-wide initiatives that do not fit within one department may not emerge in program review and, therefore, may not have budgetary consideration. (Standard IIID.1a) The team members found that while the institutional budget process is well defined, they had a general sense that more dialogue is needed with regard to institutional goals and their implementation through the allocation of resources. (Standard IIID.1, IIID.1a, IIID.1d)

The financial planning of the college reflects realistic expectations of funding levels and takes into account both short-term and long-term financial obligations. The Vice President of Administrative Services develops these calculations and presents them to the College Council. (Standard IIID.1b IIID.1c)

Appropriate financial controls are in place to protect the financial integrity of the district. Budget managers are able to receive real time reports via the districts administrative software. (Standard IIID.2, Standard IIID.2b)

All financial documents reflect appropriate allocation and use of financial resources to support the needs of the district. The district hired the services of a consultant to review their process and implement findings. The district hires an external auditor to perform an annual audit and deal with any findings appropriately. (Standard IIID.2a)

It appears that appropriate financial data is available throughout the institution; however, some staff and faculty perceive that this is not the case. The district has developed two planning agendas to address this issue. (Standard IIID.2b)

The college has sufficient cash flow to meet its obligations. Board policy recommends that the district maintain a six percent general fund reserve. A review of the CCFS-311 data on the California Community College Chancellor's Office web page shows the college has met this standard each of the last four years. (Standard IIIB.2c)

External audits reflect that the district practices effective oversight of finances, including financial aid and grants. Feedback on the Accreditation survey indicates that faculty does not feel this is the case. This perception could be due to issues in the past that have already been addressed or it could be reflective of a larger problem that could lead to future issues. (Standard IIIB.2d)

Through its system of governance, the college regularly evaluates its financial management processes. In addition, external audits and discussions with the Board provide additional feedback. (Standard IIIB.2g)

The program review process and the review and recommendation process of College Council allows for input into the college budget process. However, the team could find no evidence that there is a method by which the institution systematically assesses the effective use of its financial resources and uses the results of that evaluation as the basis for improvement. (Standard IIID.3)

Conclusions

The team found that leadership has protected the financial integrity of the district and has used the district's resources in a responsible way. However, the perception among some staff and faculty is that this is not the case. This disconnect is reflected in the Accreditation survey. The campus should engage in a dialogue to determine why these beliefs exist and how they can be changed.

The college should develop a process by which the effective use of the financial resources is evaluated and the results are used as a basis for improvement.

See Recommendation 5, Standard I.

See Recommendation 6, Standard I.

STANDARD IV
Leadership and Governance

A. Decision-Making Roles and Processes

General Comments

College of the Sequoias has many of the structures in place to become a collegial and collaborative institution. The elements are in place to provide all members of the college community with the opportunity to be engaged in decision-making and college governance. The formal organizational structure is a traditional pyramid format with the Board of Trustees at the top and a Superintendent/President reporting directly to them. Individuals reporting to the Superintendent/President include the Vice Presidents for Academic Services, Student Services, and Administrative Services. Also reporting to the Superintendent/President are the Public Information Officer, Executive Director of the Foundation, and Dean of Human Resources and Legal Services.

The new CEO's strength in planning, research, and institutional effectiveness is already improving the organizational climate and the sense of engagement on campus. In the new president's brief time at College of the Sequoias, faculty and staff have commented on a new spirit of openness and transparent decision making processes.

Findings and Evidence

The primary shared governance body on campus is the College Council. The Superintendent/President chairs the Council, and it is listed in the organizational chart as a recommending body to the CEO. The Academic Senate is also listed on the chart with the same reporting relationship to the Superintendent/President.

The College Council meets monthly and, based upon the October 2006 agenda, receives reports on issues of importance to the college and from its standing committees; reviews information items; discusses issues of importance; and takes action on issues as requested. The College Council serves as a recommending body to the CEO.

Faculty and staff comment on the substantial improvement in the climate of openness on campus since the self study was written. The self study states that the faculty had become disengaged from the collegial governance process during the 2004-2005 academic year. (Self Study, pg. 179) That fact helps to explain that on the accreditation survey item relating to whether the administration, faculty and classified staff work collaboratively on behalf of institutional improvements, only 52% of faculty, 61.6% of administration and 58.5% of classified staff agreed that this was happening. (Self Study, pg. 182) While comments from faculty, staff, and trustees indicate that faculty participation is improving, the Accreditation Standards clearly state that all constituents will work together to achieve the mission of the college. (Standard IVA.2, IVA.2a, IVA.2b, IVA.3) The faculty role is particularly important with regard to curriculum development and development and assessment of student learning outcomes.

The institution, however, has been very open and honest regarding the above issue. It is not always easy to be so open when discussing difficult issues such as these. The college's spirit of openness and the progress being made on this issue are encouraging. (Standard IVA.4)

B. Board and Administration Organization

Based upon interview results, the Board of Trustees seems to have a clear idea of their role in facilitating the forward progress of the institution. However, some staff members feel that the Board sometimes becomes too involved in the day-to-day operations of the campus. Accreditation survey results indicate that only 30.4% of faculty, 76.9% of administration, and 40.4% of classified staff agree or strongly agree that the Board is effective in remaining focused at the policy level.

Campus community members also express a significant level of concern regarding the degree to which the Board represents the best interests of the public. In their survey responses, 57.7% of faculty, 7.7% of administration, and 37.8% of classified staff disagree that the Board represents the best interests of the public. Further, 15.4% of faculty and 30.2% of classified staff indicate that they do not know if the Board represents the public's best interests. (Self Study, pg. 187) These results may be partially explained by a staff member's comments that certain members of the Board may have exercised undue influence on the college's decisions regarding satellite campuses.

The Board expressed satisfaction with its involvement in the accreditation process. The Board appointed one of its members as a liaison for accreditation and has received reports both from the liaison and from various accreditation committees. (Standard IVB.li)

The Board has recently hired a new Superintendent/President. Comments from the Board, faculty, and staff indicate a high level of satisfaction with the process and outcome of the CEO search. (Standard IVB1, IBV.1j)

In his first four months in the position, the new Superintendent/President has demonstrated the ability to inspire and lead the institution. He expresses satisfaction with the structures that are in place for planning, governance, and budgeting. He does not believe that these structures have been effectively used in the past but does feel that the structures are in place to effectively encourage involvement of campus constituents in the decision making process.

Interim appointments currently fill two vice president positions. In addition, there are interim appointments in two academic dean positions. The new CEO is going to have the opportunity to select some of the key leadership on campus. The decisions as to who will fill these positions will have an immense impact on the culture of the institution for years to come. While the Board interviews finalists for vice president vacancies at College of the Sequoias, it is hoped that it will continue to defer to the CEO's insights on these decisions.

The new CEO has addressed administrative capacity in the academic areas since arriving on campus. Some staff members feel the same type of analysis should be conducted on administrative capacity in other areas of the college.

The team found instances where the college's policies were either out-of-date or not entirely adequate. For example, the Board of Trustees has a policy defining its code of ethics, but the policy does not include a specific process for dealing with violations of the code. (Standard IVB.1h) The college has recently instituted a process by which college policies will be reviewed and updated.

Conclusions

College of the Sequoias partially meets Standard IV. It is clear to the visiting team that progress has been made on this standard in the last two years, but the standard has not been completely met by the college. All constituencies within the college must continue to work together to achieve its mission. Infighting and competition between various groups, regardless of justification, cannot be allowed to interfere with professional responsibility. Each constituent group has to be involved with the governance and progress of the college. To behave otherwise harms the college, the constituent groups, and most importantly, the students of the district.

Virtually all constituent groups and the Board of Trustees express optimism that the college has begun to create a climate of openness and collegiality on campus. The individuals and groups that make up the campus community at College of the Sequoias must not allow this climate to revert to one of disenfranchisement and distrust.

See Recommendation 6, Standard I

Summary

The visiting team was impressed with the dramatic change in climate on campus and the willingness of all constituencies to work together in the best interest of the students. With a positive campus environment and the dedication and commitment of all the constituencies, all of the major recommendations we have delineated can be accomplished. The visiting team would like to commend College of the Sequoias for the following strength:

The college has shown great foresight in acquiring property immediately adjacent to the Visalia campus and land in Hanford and Tulare for educational centers.

The Student Development Director was particular impressive, inspiring students to learn and use their leadership skills.

The state of the art Student Health Center is a model for other community colleges throughout the state.

The college has recently embraced a collaborative approach to bond drives with other community colleges in the area, rather than competing for scarce dollars.

The faculty, staff, administrators and Board of Trustees of the college are in the process of redefining their roles and embracing more positive interactions.

The visiting team was particularly impressed by the knowledge and vision of the Agricultural Division Chair at the Farm.

The administrator in charge of Facilities and his Safety Committee are proactive and very responsive to issues as they are identified on campus.

The Child Care Center is an impressive facility both in physical layout and in the programs provided for children.

The team recommendations are:

1) The team strongly recommends that the college establish a positive campus climate through an inclusive dialogue that embodies a culture of respect, civility, and trust to improve institutional decision-making, planning, and effectiveness. (Standard IB.1; Standard IIIA.1d, IIIA.4c; and Standard IVA.2, IVA.2a, IVA.2b, IVA.3, and IVA.5)

2) The team recommends that the college engage all campus constituent groups in an institutional decision-making and planning process, which is linked and central to the college mission. The process should be an ongoing, effective, and systematic cycle of evaluation, integrated planning, resource allocation, research, and re-evaluation. This cycle should include such processes as curricular development, program review, and assessment and allocation of

technological, physical, financial, and human resources.(Standard IA.4, IB.3, IB.4, IB.6, IB.7: Standard IIA.1, IIA.2, IIB3, IIB4, IIC2; Standard IIIA6, IIIB2, IIIC2, IIID1, IIID.2g, IIID3)

3) The team recommends that the college develop, review, and measure student learning outcomes in all of its courses, programs, degrees/certificates, the general education pattern, and institution-wide practices. (Standard IB.1, Standard IIA.1c, IIA.2a, IIA.2b, IIA.2e, IIA.2f, IIA.2g, IIA.2h, IIA.2i, IIA.3, IIA.6a, IIB.1, IIB.4, IIC.1a, IIC.2; Standard IIIA.1b, IIIA.1c; and Standard IVA.1, IVA.2b, IVB.1b)

4) The team recommends that the College provide the full range of support and instructional services to all students and staff in all of its learning environments. The College must devote appropriate staff, facilities, and budget resources to support instruction, learning, and staff development. It must provide training for staff in diversity awareness, technology applications, and distance education. Additionally, the institution must improve the quantity, currency, depth, and variety of its library resources. (Standard IIA.2e, IIA.2f, IIA.4, IIB.1, IIB.3a, IIC.1a, IIC.1c, IIC2, Standard IIIA.5a, IIIA.5b, IIIA.5, IIIB.2, IIIC.1, IIIC.1b, IIIC.1c)

5) The team recommends that the College focus on the needs of its diverse populations both on campus and in the community, including new students, non-traditional populations, and persons of limited English ability. The College must pay particular attention in all of its learning environments to the needs of persons with disabilities, including access to facilities, services, instructional materials, and print and electronic media. The College should ensure that its public representations are universally accessible. (Standard IA.1, Standard A.1a, IIA.1b, IIA.2d, IIA.6c,IIB.3a, IIB.3b, Standard IIIA.4a, IIIA.4b)

6) The team recommends that the College develop a process by which all policies are regularly reviewed and updated to meet Accreditation Standards, including, but not limited to:
   - Tenure Review
   - Hiring & Evaluation processes (management, classified, and faculty)
   - Employee Professional Ethics
   - Board policy concerning Ethics Policy violation
   - Boardmanship Training & Development
   - Accommodations for students and staff
   - Academic Honesty Policy

   (Standard IB.1, II.B.1, II.B.2c, Standard IIIA.1d, IIIA.4, IIIA.4c, and Standard IVA2, IVA2a, IVA2b, IVA.3, IVA.5. IVB.1f)