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EVALUATION REPORT

College of the Sequoias
Visalia, California

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

This report represents the findings of the evaluation team
that visited College of the Sequoias
from October 8-11, 2012

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SUMMARY OF EVALUATION REPORT

INSTITUTION: College of the Sequoias

DATES OF VISIT: October 8-11, 2012

TEAM CHAIR: William H. Duncan, IV, Superintendent/President Sierra College

An eleven-member accreditation team visited College of the Sequoias from October 8-11, 2012, to assess how well the college is meeting the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) standards, provide recommendations to assure quality and encourage institutional improvement, and submit recommendations to the ACCJC regarding the status of the college.

The team chair and assistant conducted a pre-visit to College of the Sequoias on September 10, 2012, to meet with the college president and accreditation liaison officer to discuss logistics for the upcoming site visit. They toured the campus during that visit.

In preparation for the visit, team members attended an ACCJC all-day training session on September 14, 2012, and studied Commission training materials prepared for visiting teams. The team chair also attended an all-day training session for team chairs held August 30, 2012.

Prior to the visit team members carefully read the 2012 Institutional Self Evaluation Report, the focused midterm report from 2009, the accreditation follow up reports from 2008 and 2007, and the previous accreditation Institutional Self Evaluation Report from 2006, and assessed the various forms of evidence provided by the college. The team members completed written evaluations of the Institutional Self Evaluation Report and began identifying areas for further investigation. On the day before the formal beginning of the visit, the team met to review and discuss the written materials and evidence provided by the college, as well as other materials submitted to the ACCJC since its last comprehensive visit in 2006.

During the visit the team met with faculty, staff, administrators, Board of Trustees members, students, and community members. The team also examined documents provided in the team room and on the college web page and observed campus facilities. The team visited about a dozen courses, both face-to-face and online courses. Additionally team members visited the Hanford and Tulare Centers and the farm in Visalia. The team also conducted two open forums which provided an opportunity for students, community members and other campus staff to meet with members of the team.

The team found the College to be welcoming and engaged in the accreditation process. Overall the team appreciated the work that the college did to prepare its self evaluation. However, the team found that the report lacked sufficient references to evidence in many key

areas. The team was able to find much of the evidence on site but it would have provided for a much more effective self evaluation if it were referenced in the report.

Commendations and Recommendations of the 2012 Visiting Team

Commendations

1. Special Programs

The College is to be commended for demonstrating a strong commitment to improving opportunities for underserved communities, and participating in programs to serve new students and non-traditional populations, such as MESA, PASEO, TRIO, First Year Experience, and the bus pass program. (Standards I.A.1, II.A.2.d, II.A.6.c, II.B.3.a, II.B.3.b, III.A.4.a, III.A.4.b)

2. Student Communication

The team commends the college for the creation of the President's Monthly Open Forum. The forum keeps students informed about issues affecting the college and helps the college have a more active and engaged student body. (Standard I.B.1)

3. Facilities

The team commends the college for its outstanding efforts in acquiring funds for the construction of facilities to meet the current and future needs of the communities served by the College of the Sequoias District. (Standard III.B.1.a, III.B.1.b)

Recommendations

1. Planning

In order to meet the standards, the team recommends that the college integrate, strengthen, and formalize its planning processes, systematically reviewing and revising them to ensure informed decisions for continuous improvement. (Standards I.A.3, I.A.4, I.B, I.B.2, I.B.3, I.B.6, III.D.1.a, III.D.2.d, III.D.3, IV.A.2.a, IV.A.2.b, IV.A.3, IV.B.2)

2. Campus Dialogue

In order to be more effective, the team recommends that the college improve the campus climate by encouraging all constituents to participate in an inclusive dialogue that embodies a culture of respect, civility, and trust. (Standards I.B.1, I.B.4, I.B.5, IV.A.2, IV.A.2.a, IV.A.3)

3. Research Capacity

In order to fully comply with the standards, the team recommends the college increase the research capacity of the institution in order to compile and provide data to guide institutional planning and resource allocation, program review and assessment, and decision-making for institutional effectiveness. (Standards I.B.2, I.B.3, I.B.6, II.A.1.a, II.A.1.c, II.A.2.e, II.A.2.f, II.B.4, III.A, IV.B.2.b)

4. Student Learning Outcomes

To meet the standard, the team recommends that the college advance its progress on student learning outcomes by regularly assessing those outcomes and using the results to improve student learning and strengthen institutional effectiveness. The college needs to include effectiveness in producing student learning outcomes as a component of the evaluation of faculty and staff who are responsible for assessing student learning. The college also needs to demonstrate how it is using these data for improvement. (Standards I.B.3, II.A.1.c, II.A.2.a, II.A.2.b, II.A.2.e, II.A.2.f, II.A.2.h, II.A.2.i, II.A.5, II.A.6, II.B.3.a, II.B.4, III.A.1.c, IV.B.2, USDE Regulation 602.17(f))

5. Student Support Services

In order to meet the standards, the team recommends that the college improve counseling services for evening students, online students, and students that attend the Hanford Center, and library services for evening students and students that attend the Hanford Center in order to ensure the equitability of those services. (Standards II.B.3.a, II.C.1, II.C.1.c)

6. Human Resource Processes

In order to increase effectiveness, the team recommends that the college improve human resource processes to include hiring procedures for all employees and establish a clear connection between employee evaluation and improvement. (Standards III.A.1, III.A.1.a, III.A.1.b, III.A.1.c)

7. Evaluation of Processes

In order to meet the standards, the team recommends that the college develop and implement a systematic evaluation of its decision-making and budget development processes and use the results of those evaluations as a basis for improvement. (Standards III.D.1.a, III.D.1.d, III.D.2.d, III.D.3, IV.A.2, IV.A.5, IV.B.1.g, IV.B.2)

ACCREDITATION EVALUATION REPORT FOR COLLEGE OF THE SEQUOIAS

Introduction

College of the Sequoias is a public, comprehensive community college located in the San Joaquin Valley in Central California. The college serves a diverse population of students living in Kings and Tulare Counties. It is part of the California Community College System and has an enrollment of approximately 9,000 full-time equivalent students. The college was founded in 1926 and the main campus in Visalia was built in 1939.

College of the Sequoias offers associates degrees, certificates, transfer preparation, career and technical education and training, basic skills education, English as a Second Language, and other development and training opportunities. In recent years COS has significantly expanded its distance education offerings in order to further extend educational opportunities to the students in its service area.

The communities served by the College of the Sequoias showed support for the college in the form of passage of three School Facilities Improvement District (SFID) bonds since 2006; the proceeds of which have been used to expand existing facilities and build new facilities in response to population growth and community needs. New facilities include a new science center, a new allied health building, and a new gymnasium at the Visalia campus. A Hanford Educational Center was completed and occupied in 2010, and a new Tulare College Center will soon open.

The college has also successfully secured grant funding for several programs that serve the unique needs and interests of its students. Notable grant funded programs include nursing and allied health, First-Year Experience and Second-Year Experience, and the Mathematics Engineering and Science Achievement (MESA) program designed to assist underrepresented and low income students in the completion of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics degrees.

The college is proud of its efforts to offer high-quality instructional programs in order to address the educational needs of its community.

Evaluation of Institutional Responses to Previous Recommendations

Recommendation 1 (2006)

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 I.B.1; Standard III.A.1.d, III.A.4.c; and Standard IV.A.2, IV.A.2.a, IV.A.2.b, IV.A.3, and IV.A.5)

Since 2009, when the Commission reaffirmed the College's full accreditation following their mid-term report, College of the Sequoias has tried to maintain a positive campus climate. Each month, the Superintendent/President emails a report to the campus community with information and updates on issues of importance that affect the College. Two excellent examples of handling difficult decisions were given as evidence regarding the distance that the college has come since this 2006 recommendation. To resolve issues of disagreement when there is no consensus on a particular issue, divergent positions are now considered and discussed, data is collected and analyzed, and groups seek compromise on the outcome after reviewing the data.

Unfortunately, tensions have once again negatively affected the campus climate. Due to statewide budget cuts over the last three year, the College has also had to deal with the fallout from them especially as they relate to contract negotiations and the possibility of a health benefits cap being imposed on all COS employees. As such, when the 2012 team arrived to conduct the visit, they were greeted with the news that the faculty union had called for a work slow-down and filed a grievance regarding being asked to assess their student learning outcomes.

The team recognizes that the College had taken positive steps to resolve this recommendation. However, given the fact that the 2012 team did not find a positive campus climate that embodied a culture of respect and trust, the changes made to meet this recommendation have been unsustainable. The team has repeated the intent of this recommendation in 2012 Recommendation 2.

Recommendation 2 (2006)

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 I.A.4, I.B.3, I.B.4, I.B.6, I.B.7; Standard II.A.1, II.A.2, II.B.3, II.B.4, II.C.2; Standard III.A.6, III.B.2, III.C.2, III.D.1, III.D.2.g, III.D.3)

While the Institutional Self Evaluation Report states that the District exceeds the standards on planning, budgeting and decision making, it is apparent that the college is still struggling with certain elements of decision making and planning. An example identified confusion regarding the process for the ranking of new faculty positions. There is a committee

responsible for the ranking process but some at the college expressed that at one point those recommendations were not followed and decisions were made elsewhere. This suggests that the College needed to refine its institutional decision-making process. In terms of planning, the team found that the integrated planning model is not fully understood. The college has not fully addressed this recommendation. The team has repeated the intent of this recommendation in 2012 Recommendation 1.

Recommendation 3 (2006)

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 I.B.1; Standard II.A.1.c, II.A.2.a, II.A.2.b, II.A.2.e, II.A.2.f, II.A.2.g, II.A.2.h, II.A.2.i, II.A.3, II.A.6.a, II.B.1, II.B.4, II.C.1.a, III.C.2; Standard III.A.1.b, III.A.1.c; and Standard IV.A.1, IV.A.2.b, IV.B.1.b)

The College has not met the Commission's 2012 deadline for being at the proficiency level. The College needs to complete the process of identification and assessment to guide improvement of student learning. Student learning outcomes must be assessed and evidence of improvement must occur as a result of that evaluation. Additionally, these student outcomes should be placed on the course outline of record.

The 2012 team notes that significant progress has been made in meeting the standards for Student Learning Outcomes. However, because the college has not met this recommendation from the 2006 Evaluation Team Report, that recommendation is repeated again with an even greater sense of urgency relevant to the importance of missing the Commission's deadline for achieving proficiency by 2012.

The college has not fully addressed this recommendation. Therefore, the team has repeated the intent of this recommendation in 2012 Recommendation 4.

Recommendation 4 (2006)

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 II.A.2.e, I.A.2.f, I.A.4, II.B.1, II.B.3.a, II.C.1.a, II.C.1.c, II.C.2, Standard III.A.5.a, III.A.5.b, III.A.5, III.B.2, III.C.1, III.C.1.b, III.C.1.c)

Shortly after receiving this recommendation in 2006, the District provided significant supplemental funding to ensure that this recommendation was resolved. The college invested in a new library technology system and made significant improvements in the scope and accessibility of its library electronic databases. Additionally, a number of initiatives were implemented to address this recommendation including the creation of a First Year Experience program, the opening of the Writing Center, dedicated tutoring space for the

Math, Engineering, and Science Association program, Distance Education training for the faculty, and the development of a Teaching and Learning Center.

Although significant progress has been made since 2006 in its library's quality and services, the 2012 team recommends that in order to improve, the college develop an adequate, equitable, and sustainable library allocation for library resources, particularly for evening students and students at the Hanford Center. The college has not fully addressed this recommendation. The team has repeated this recommendation in 2012 Recommendation 5.

Recommendation 5 (2006)

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 I.A.1, Standard I.A.1.a, II.A.1.b, II.A.2.d, II.A.6.c, II.B.3.a, II.B.3.b, Standard III.A.4.a, III.A.4.b)

The campus now has a number of programs and services to address the needs of new students, non-traditional populations and persons of limited English ability. The College joined Achieving the Dream, a national initiative aimed at helping low-income students and students of color succeed. It also joined California Tomorrow to examine policies and procedures that could inhibit student progress. COS redesigned its Student Equity Plan, added a new registration and testing program for local high school students, and expanded the number of community based ESL non-credit courses.

To address the needs of the disabled student population, the college has moved the Disabled Students Programs and Services Office into a beautiful new building, fixed broken and cracked sidewalks making it easier for students in wheel chairs to navigate the campus, and upgraded the computers in the High Tech Center. The staff that the team interviewed loves the new facilities, being at the front of the school in the administration building, and report that accessibility is no longer a problem.

Finally, a task force was developed and recommended a set of procedures and resources for faculty to facilitate compliance for electronic instructional media. The team found that the College substantially addressed this recommendation.

Recommendation 6 (2006)

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 I.B.1, II.B.1, II.B.2.c, Standard III.A.1.d, III.A.4, III.A.4.c, and Standard IV.A.2, IV.A.2.a, IV.A.2.b, IV.A.3, IV.A.5, IV.B.1.f)

The team confirmed that the college has established a process for the review, development, and updating of all board policies and administrative procedures. All board policies and administrative procedures are reviewed at least every five years (see Board Policy 2410 and Administrative Procedure 2410). The last comprehensive review and revision of all board policies and administrative procedures was completed in 2007 and 2008. In addition, the district is a member of the Community College League of California (CCLC) and receives the Policy and Procedure Service. This service provides board policy samples for consideration and adoption in the development and maintenance of policies and procedures as legally required. While much work has been done to ensure that policies and procedures are reviewed and updated regularly the team found that processes for the hiring of classified employees and interim administrators were not well established. Additionally, there were no processes for the evaluation of management and classified employees. The college has partially addressed this recommendation.

Eligibility Requirements

1. **Authority:** The evaluation team confirmed that College of the Sequoias (COS) is part of the California Community College system and is authorized to offer educational programs by the California Education Code. The college is accredited by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC).
2. **Mission:** The evaluation team confirmed that the college's current mission statement was adopted by the Board of Trustees on May 14, 2007, and reaffirmed on Nov 14, 2011. It defines the college's educational purposes and is published in Board Policy 1200, in the COS general catalog and on the college's website.
3. **Governing Board:** The evaluation team confirmed that Sequoias Community College District is governed by a five-member Board of Trustees with members from the five geographical areas that comprise the District. The Board of Trustees is the policy making body of the District, responsible for establishing the policies that ensure the quality and effectiveness of programs and services and for maintaining the financial stability of the District. No member of the Board of Trustees is employed by the District.
4. **Chief Executive Officer:** The evaluation team confirmed that COS has a district superintendent/president who was appointed by the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees delegates to the superintendent/president the executive responsibility for administering the policies adopted by the Board and executing decisions of the Board.
5. **Administrative Capacity:** The evaluation team confirmed that the COS has sufficient administrative staff, with appropriate preparation and experience to support its mission and purpose.
6. **Operational Status:** The evaluation team confirmed that students at COS are actively pursuing degrees and certificates in the college's educational programs.
7. **Degrees:** The evaluation team confirmed that the majority of COS course offerings are in programs that lead to degrees and a majority of the students are enrolled in those programs.
8. **Educational Programs:** The evaluation team confirmed that COS degree programs are congruent with its mission, are based on recognized patterns of study, and are conducted at levels of quality and vigor appropriate to the degrees offered.
9. **Academic Credit:** The evaluation team confirmed that COS awards academic credit for all course work based on the Carnegie unit, which is the generally accepted practice in degree-granting institutions of higher education.
10. **Student Learning and Achievement:** The evaluation team confirmed that COS is in the process of developing and assessing student learning outcomes for its courses and programs as part of the Program Review process. Required analysis of student learning as

part of the Program Review process is designed to lead to continuous quality improvement. In 2010-11, the District created and staffed a full-time faculty coordinator position to lead curriculum and student outcomes efforts across the entire college. The college has not, however, fully defined and published student learning outcomes for all programs. Additionally, the college has not assessed all of the learning outcomes that have been published and is therefore not using that data to determine if those outcomes are being achieved.

- 11. General Education:** Through an analysis of the college's catalog, degree programs and course descriptions, the evaluation team confirmed that COS general education requirements include completion of courses in written and oral communication, analytical thinking, natural sciences, humanities, and social and behavioral science. Additional general education requirements may be fulfilled in a variety of areas of study. All COS degree programs include a significant number and variety of required general education courses.
- 12. Academic Freedom:** The evaluation team confirmed that the COS supports an atmosphere of academic freedom as outlined in Board Policy 4030 and Administrative Procedure 4030.
- 13. Faculty:** The evaluation team confirmed that as of spring 2011, COS employed 158 full-time and 264 part-time faculty members, who each meet the Minimum Qualifications for Faculty and Administrators in California Community Colleges handbook. Full-time faculty duties and responsibilities are described in the faculty collective bargaining unit agreement, which is distributed to each faculty member and available online. While it was clear that faculty responsibilities include the development and review of curriculum, the team could not verify that they include the required assessment of learning. Additionally, while it was found that some assessment was being done by faculty, the poor working relationship between faculty and administrators has caused a work slowdown so that progress is no longer being made.
- 14. Student Services:** The evaluation team confirmed that COS provides a comprehensive set of student services to all students including online students. The team recommends, however, that the college ensure the equitability of counseling services for evening students.
- 15. Admissions:** The evaluation team confirmed that COS admissions policies and procedures are consistent with its mission and with California regulations governing public community colleges.
- 16. Information and Learning Resources:** The evaluation team confirmed that COS provides access to information and learning resources and services in a variety of formats. The team recommends, however, that the college ensure the equitability of library services regardless of the location of their delivery.

- 17. Financial Resources:** The evaluation team confirmed that COS is a publicly funded institution with documented funding base, financial resources, and plans for financial development to support its programs and services, improve institutional effectiveness, and assure financial stability.
- 18. Financial Accountability:** The evaluation team confirmed that COS undergoes and makes available an annual external audit.
- 19. Institutional Planning and Evaluation:** The evaluation team confirmed that COS has established processes for institutional planning and evaluation. The team recommends, however, that the college continue to improve those processes. See Recommendation 1, 4, and 7.
- 20. Integrity in Communication with the Public:** The evaluation team confirmed that COS provides an electronic catalog for its constituencies that includes current and accurate general information, requirements, and major policies affecting students.
- 21. Relations with the Accrediting Commission:** The evaluation team confirmed that COS has stated its commitment to adhering to all ACCJC accreditation eligibility requirements and standards and to accurately portraying itself to the Commission.

STANDARD I – Institutional Mission and Effectiveness

Standard IA – Mission

General Observations

A review of the College Catalog and planning documents shows College of the Sequoias (COS) has a clear statement of mission that defines the institution's broad educational purposes, its intended student population, and its commitment to achieving student learning. A review of the board meeting minutes, interviews with staff, and review of planning documents shows the college has reviewed the mission and obtained board approval.

Findings and Evidence

The team finds that COS' student learning programs and services are aligned with its stated purposes. The academic and support programs offered at COS are geared towards meeting the needs of the students' academic and career goals. The team found evidence that the college offers a variety of academic and career technical education programs and numerous student support services focused on upholding a culture of student success. (I.A.1)

The COS mission statement is approved by the Board of Trustees and is published on the college's website and in the College Catalog. The college's current mission statement was revised in 2006, approved by the board on May 14, 2007, and reaffirmed on Nov 14, 2011. (I.A.2)

There is evidence that the mission is routinely reviewed as part of the various committees and departmental review processes. The review process states that the college will review its mission and strategic plan annually. The College Council reviews the mission at the beginning of each fall semester. Any proposed modifications and changes are reviewed and adopted by the Board. Furthermore, the Institutional Planning Council (now the Institutional Planning and Effectiveness Committee-IPEC) is charged with the review of the college's strategic plan. In 2010, based on interviews with staff, the college solicited input from the community for the college's 2010-2015 Strategic Plan. Businesses and community partners are involved in various career technical education and student support services programs. Several businesses provide students with internship and work experience in several career technical education and disabled student programs. Aside from internships, input gathered from the community for the 2010-2015 strategic plan, and advisory committee participation, involvement from the community in regular college mission statement review, decision-making and planning process is limited. The team found evidence that the college partners with the community in programmatic and student support activities to enhance student success. However, business and industry partners shared with the team that course offerings in several areas and support for career technical education programs often suffer in cost cutting measures at the college, therefore, not meeting some of the needs in the community. (I.A.3)

The college mission statement states that the college is focused on "student learning that leads to productive work, lifelong learning, and community involvement" and is committed to "fostering student success." The college in its efforts to continuously improve the quality

of its instructional programs and services has revised its program review format. The revised program review for instructional programs was completing its second cycle at the time of the report. Determining how each program is achieving its mission is discussed in the program review format including how it addresses the college mission. However, linkage between the program review and the entire college planning process could be strengthened. Furthermore, the COS Institutional Self Evaluation Report states "many of the District's committees that participate in planning and decision-making lack a clear committee mission statement to connect the work to the institutional mission." While community input in the review of the college mission could be strengthened, administratively, mechanisms are in place to review the mission of the college. (I.A.4)

Program review documents contain the college mission statement and programs have developed their own mission statements. The college has a strategic plan and resource allocation process tied to program review. There is not clear evidence that the institution's mission is central to institutional planning and the development of new programs and services. In a staff survey, just over ten percent of the respondents strongly agree that the mission guides development of new programs. The college has formed several committees to inform and to gather input into its operations and processes. While the committees are in place, the linkage between the work conducted by committees and the college planning process could be strengthened. (I.A.4)

Conclusion

The college mostly meets this standard. There was evidence to support the institution's desire to make the mission central to decision-making. However, the dialogue and planning process needs to be strengthened. Therefore, COS is encouraged to continue to improve its decision-making and institutional effectiveness processes to strengthen the linkage between the college's mission, program review, and student learning at all levels of the institution. Additionally, COS is further encouraged to involve and inform community and business partners in its decision-making processes.

Recommendations

1. Planning (This recommendation repeats the meaning of Recommendation 2 from 2006.)

In order to meet the standards, the team recommends that the college integrate, strengthen, and formalize its planning processes, systematically reviewing and revising them to ensure informed decisions for continuous improvement. (Standards I.A.3, I.A.4, I.B, I.B.2, I.B.3, I.B.6, III.D.1.a, III.D.2.d, III.D.3, IV.A.2.a, IV.A.2.b, IV.A.3, IV.B.2)

Commendations

1. Special Programs

The College is to be commended for demonstrating a strong commitment to improving opportunities for underserved communities, and participating in programs to serve new students and non-traditional populations, such as MESA, PASEO, TRIO, First Year Experience, and the bus pass program. (Standards I.A.1, II.A.2.d, II.A.6.c, II.B.3.a, II.B.3.b, III.A.4.a, III.A.4.b)

Standard IB – Institutional Effectiveness

General Observations

The College of the Sequoias framework for developing and monitoring its planning processes consists of four components. The college has a mission statement, strategic plan, program review process, and resource allocation process tied to program review. The linkages between these components of their planning process should be strengthened. In addition, the evaluation process for some of these components is in place but their impact on continuous quality improvement should be strengthened.

- The mission statement is reviewed annually and reaffirmed.
- The current strategic plan was developed in 2010 and covers a five-year period. The strategic plan document serves as the college's foundation for the way in which it establishes and monitors its goals.
- The institution has placed a great deal of emphasis on the program review process for planning and this process has been reviewed and modified since the last accreditation site visit.
- The college has a process for allocating resources through program review. Programs that have completed their program reviews adequately are eligible for above-base resource allocations.

While the college has various components of a planning and institutional effectiveness process, the overall processes do not appear to be adequately linked in order to clearly define how the institution uses ongoing and systematic evaluation and planning to refine its key processes and improve student learning.

Findings and Evidence

An important aspect of the college culture is the awareness of and the commitment to open dialogue for all aspects of college communication. Since the 2006 accreditation report and its recommendation to establish a positive and collegial climate of dialogue, the college has made progress in collegial communication as reflected in the ongoing conversations regarding the strategic plan, student learning outcomes, and the formation/structuring of various committees to attend to college business. For these endeavors, communications appear to be open and welcoming to all relevant constituents. However, in the past year, dialogue between the college and the College of the Sequoias Teachers Association (COSTA) regarding faculty negotiations has been less effective. Negotiations have reached impasse and communication between these two entities has ceased. This lack of communication has spilled over into other college functions resulting in a slowdown or work stoppage of many important college planning functions. The accreditation team suggests that in order to promote a more open dialogue, all constituents should attend and participate in the scheduled committee meetings and forums so that all voices can be represented. (I.B.1)

The Strategic Plan 2010-2015 is a mechanism used by the college to produce and support student learning and student success. It is the foundation for establishing goals (Tactical Plans). Objectives and measurable goals are developed for six focus areas (Student Access, Student Success in Completing Educational Goals, Student Mastery of Basic Skills, Effective and Efficient College Practices, Students as Citizens of a Global Community, and Economic Growth for Tulare and Kings Counties). (USDE 602.16(a)(1)(i), I.B.2)

Program review is the mechanism established for the cycle of evaluation-planning-resource allocation-implementation-re-evaluation. Although program review documents were not readily available to the accreditation team prior to the visit, the college does have a detailed process for program review which is administered and evaluated by the Institutional Program Review Committee (IPRC). Over the six-year period of this review, the IPRC has developed, implemented, and revised the program review process. The process was first developed in 2008-09 but has since been modified. The currently revised template, first used in 2010 for program review for academic services has completed one cycle and is in progress for the second review cycle. Comprehensive program reviews were due every five years and updates were due annually. Based on feedback received by the IPRC that the annual update process was just as time consuming as the comprehensive process, the College changed its program review process to now require a comprehensive program review every six years, with updates due every two years.

At the start of the cycle, the IPRC committee members provide email reminders, feedback, and exemplars of program review to promote a comprehensive and timely submission of program review documents. Once program reviews are submitted, all members of the IPRC evaluate all of the comprehensive program review submissions and a subset of the IPRC committee evaluates the updates. The IPRC evaluates each program review based on an established rubric to rank each program review as excellent, satisfactory, or unsatisfactory. Once the IPRC is done evaluating the program review documents, feedback is provided to each preparer and the division dean. A summary of all program reviews are made available to the President and President's Cabinet and the various college committees (Budget, Facilities, Technology, Instructional, and Student Services). Those committees then evaluate, rank, and make funding allocation recommendations to College Council for advisement. Prior to these committees reviewing and ranking budget requests, the committees are informed of the amount of funds available for their requests. Each of these committees then has its own criteria for ranking the program review resource allocation requests. The ranked recommendations are then forwarded to College Council which makes recommendations to the President for final approval. (I.B.2, I.B.3)

Templates for the program review documents for student services have been completed and will be implemented in 2013. Program review templates for administration/interdisciplinary programs are under development and scheduled to be implemented in 2014. (I.B.3)

While the College appears to have numerous, detailed planning processes in place, the linkages among the various components is not apparent. The processes related to the Mission Statement and the Strategic Plan (2010-2015) appear to be aligned, reviewed, assessed, and subsequently revised or reaffirmed. In addition, the processes related to Program Review

and resource allocation appear to be aligned as above-base resource allocations are specifically tied to Program Review. However, the link between the Mission Statement/Strategic Plan and the Program Review/Resource Allocation components are not clearly defined. (I.B.3, I.B.4, I.B.6, I.B.7)

The college is in the early stages of establishing a campus-wide culture of assessment. Currently, it is not apparent that research and the use of data are directly linked to planning activities on campus and there does not appear to be a formal process to use data to make informed decisions. Data is required for the program review documents, but it is unclear how the data reported in the program review documents guide the decision-making and institutional planning processes. The Research Advisory Committee (comprised of the vice president of academic services, faculty, counselors, and deans), co-chaired by the vice president and a faculty member, is charged with establishing and formalizing viable procedures to effectively and efficiently utilize data. One of the tasks completed by this committee will be the formal establishment of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to be implemented in 2013. The research analyst, the sole individual responsible for data acquisition for the college, has made an effort to serve on pertinent college committees and inform faculty and staff about data in an attempt to raise the visibility of how data can be used to make informed decisions about programs, courses, and services. He has a good working relationship with committee members and helps to promote a collaborative working environment as personnel are investigating how data can best be used to make informed decisions. The college's fact book, consisting of relevant data about the college, will be reviewed and revised annually and will be made public at a later time. If the use of data was to become an integral part of planning and decision-making processes, the research office does not appear to have adequate capacity to respond to the volume of data requests that would be generated. As the college works to establish a culture of assessment, a comprehensive action plan describing how data is used to make informed decisions and how these decisions are reflected in budget allocations should be established. (I.B.1, I.B.3, I.B.5, USDE 602.16(a)(1)(i))

Program Review documents are posted via SharePoint and available to campus constituents. The program review template and schedule for document submission is reviewed and revised regularly during IPRC meetings. The review, reflection, and discussions of the program review process appear to take place informally within the IPRC. In 2011, an open-ended survey report (n=17) provided evidence of an evaluation mechanism for the program review process. Responses about scheduled timeline, program review training, SharePoint training, communication/helpfulness of the IPRC, second level review team, template instructions/prompts, and evaluation criteria/rubrics were used to make revisions to the program review protocol and processes. (I.B.5, I.B.6, I.B.7)

Conclusion

While the college places a great deal of emphasis on the program review process as being central to its overall planning process, some individuals interviewed expressed concern that the program review process does not inform the planning and budgeting process. Based on the team's evaluation of the evidence provided and the interviews conducted, the team concludes that while the college has various components of a planning and institutional

effectiveness process, the overall processes do not appear to be adequately linked in order to clearly define how the institution uses ongoing and systematic evaluation and planning to refine its key processes and improve student learning, and how the evaluation process is assessed in order to ensure continuous quality improvement. The college does not meet the Standard.

Recommendations

2. Campus Dialogue (This recommendation repeats the intent of 2006 Recommendation 1.)

In order to be more effective and meet the standards, the team recommends that the college improve the campus climate by encouraging all constituents to participate in an inclusive dialogue that embodies a culture of respect, civility, and trust. (Standards I.B.1, I.B.4, I.B.5, IV.A.2, IV.A.2.a, IV.A.3)

3. Research Capacity

In order to fully comply with the standards, the team recommends the college increase the research capacity of the institution in order to compile and provide data to guide institutional planning and resource allocation, program review and assessment, and decision-making for institutional effectiveness. (Standards I.B.2, I.B.3, I.B.6, II.A.1.a, II.A.1.c, II.A.2.e, II.A.2.f, II.B.4, III.A, III.B, IV.B.2.b)

Commendations

2. Student Communication

The team commends the college for the creation of the President's Monthly Open Forum. The forum keeps students informed about issues affecting the college and helps the college have a more active and engaged student body. (Standard I.B.1)

STANDARD II – Student Learning Programs and Services

Standard IIA – Instructional Programs

General Observations

College of the Sequoias (COS) offers instructional programs that address the educational needs of its communities through the offering of courses and programs that lead to associate degrees, vocational certificates or transfer. Currently, COS offers 163 degree and certificate programs. Academic programs and services are provided on the main campus in Visalia and at the Hanford Center. A second off-campus center in Tulare is expected to open in January 2013.

COS emphasizes the quality, currency, and relevance of its educational offerings through program reviews, a currency policy adopted by the Academic Senate, flex day workshops, and the curriculum process. The team found that the college's program review process attempts to enhance instruction, improve the quality and efficiency of programs, and assist in establishing a foundation for annual budget requests and allocations. However, the team found it was not apparent that research and the use of data were adequately used during program review to inform decision making.

The Institutional Program Review-Committee (IPRC) evaluates all comprehensive program reviews and biennial updates and then rates them excellent, satisfactory, or unsatisfactory. An unsatisfactory rating means that the program is not eligible for above base funding for personnel, equipment, facilities or technology until such time as the review receives a satisfactory rating. A new program review process was approved in December 2008 and the new format (annual updates every other year and comprehensive program reviews every six years) was first implemented in spring 2009.

Interviews with faculty members and administrators outlined the curriculum process. Curriculum development and revision are the primary responsibility of the faculty-led Curriculum Committee. In 2010, a new full-time faculty position (a curriculum/outcomes coordinator) was created in recognition of the amount of work required to facilitate assessments at the course, program, and institutional levels. This full-time Curriculum Chair also chairs the Outcomes and Assessment Committee (formerly called the Student Learning Outcomes Committee).

For the past six years, various college constituencies have worked hard to design and implement a process for the development and assessment of student learning outcomes. However, evidence of improvements made as a result of these assessments is not well documented.

Findings and Evidence

COS offers a variety of instructional programs in at least one area of inquiry/major or in an established interdisciplinary core. It offers traditional academic and career technical education programs that culminate in associate degrees, certificates, and transfer to higher

education institutions. It offers a full range of courses, including basic skills, contract education, not-for-credit, and fee-based community service classes. (II.A.4)

To provide easier access for students to attend classes, the college offers regular courses at ten off-campus locations within the District including the Hanford Center. The college's career technical education programs address the needs of the community, business, and industry through workforce development, thus supporting employment and career readiness within the region.

The team verified that the instructional programs address and meet the mission of the institution. It also verified that the college identifies and meets the educational needs of its students through programs consistent with their educational preparation and the demographics of the community. For example, a series of workshops was developed by the Curriculum Committee to assist faculty in the pairing of appropriate course delivery methods given the college's student demographics, with course objectives and content. Furthermore, the Distance Education Committee created a training program on pedagogical methods for teaching online to effectively achieve course objectives. (II.A.1, II.A.1.a)

Team review of the catalog verified that the college required all academic and vocational programs to be based on a carefully considered philosophy regarding general education. Furthermore, the college relies on the expertise of its faculty to make determination of general education curriculum in each course. (II.A.3, II.A.3.a, II.A.3.b, II.A.3.c)

The team reviewed course and programmatic data, including completion data. Data pertaining to pass rates on licensure examinations were provided to the team during the visit for nursing, aeronautics and aviation technology, physical therapy, truck driving, cosmetology, automotive, computer technology, and welding. These data support the conclusion that students completing vocational certificates and degrees demonstrate technical and professional competencies that meet employment and other applicable state or national standards. (II.A.5, USDE Regulation 602.16 (a)(1)(i))

The team found that the college uses several methods to ensure that its courses meet the needs of its communities (e.g. enrollment information, discussions during the curriculum process and college committees, program reviews, advisory committees, and student surveys). Through career and technical education advisory committees, business and employer partners provide another layer of review to these programs once or twice year. While program and course learning outcome and assessments have gained some traction at the college, progress has been slow given the impasse between the administration and the (COSTA) on faculty workload. The Institutional Self Evaluation Report stated that over 44 percent of the full-time faculty either did not know or disagreed that there was a process to determine student achievement in certificates and majors. (II.A.1.c)

COS reviews its program review process annually to determine changes and/or improvements. The new program review process includes a comprehensive review every six years with program update reports completed every two years, replacing an earlier five-year cycle of program review. The revised process began in 2010. The new Instructional Program

Review template instructs each program to assess its mission, report on data, and discuss learning outcomes and assessment, identify programmatic obstacles, identify needed resources including staffing, and determine plans for improvement. A web page on the college's intranet site offers resources and the documents needed. (II.A.1.c)

The IPRC reviews each program review. The IPRC rates each Program Review using stated criteria, and the ratings may be excellent, satisfactory or unsatisfactory. An unsatisfactory rating means that the program is not eligible for above base funding for personnel, equipment, facilities or technology until such time as the review receives a satisfactory rating. Funding requests for staffing and equipment needs are tied to program reviews and are submitted to the different committees on campus for criteria ranking before being forwarded to the College Council and the President for action.

Program review results and documents are available to all interested parties and the President may share such information with the Board. Program review is intended to inform the decision-making process. While the program review process is in place, it appears that the process is cumbersome and is not meeting its intended purpose according to some of the participants who write division program reviews.

In terms of delivery systems, the team found that the institution utilizes delivery systems and modes of instruction compatible with the objectives of the curriculum and appropriate to the current and future needs of its students. The primary delivery system for online and hybrid courses is Blackboard 9. Blackboard is also used to enhance traditional courses. However, Blackboard is not a required platform and some faculty members use Etudes and textbook publisher websites for their online courses. The Blackboard student accounts – usernames and passwords – are managed and controlled by the district Computer Services staff. The Blackboard system provides an encrypted and secure log in.

This system of district-provided student accounts in an encrypted environment clearly meets the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) regulations to verify the identity of students in distance education classes and is a sustainable model. The district must have processes in place to ensure that *all* delivery systems used for distance education meet the USDE regulations for verifying student identity and ensuring that the student who completes the course or program receives the academic credit. (II.A.1.b, USDE Regulations 602.16(a)(1)(viii), 602.17 (g), 602.24(e), 602.24(f))

Several years ago the college hired a full-time Distance Education (DE) Coordinator to ensure that online courses meet their quality standards and that students and faculty receive support for learning and instruction. The college requires that all faculty members complete an in-house online teacher certification program before teaching online – or demonstrate equivalent knowledge. Since the DE Coordinator has been hired, the college has seen a strong and steady increase in the number of online courses that are offered and furthermore, the retention and success rates of students in online courses have significantly increased. Every division is required to compare student outcomes in distance education courses with the same courses that are offered on campus. For the institution to ensure the quality of all distance education courses, an institution-wide study is required. This study should include

student and faculty survey data and compare student outcomes in distance education courses with similar courses taught on campus. (II.A.1.b)

While the college has assessed student learning outcomes, much work remains on assessing program and institutional learning outcomes, then using the results to make improvements. (II.A.2.a)

Course-level student learning outcomes assessment has taken place but assessment of all program and institutional learning outcomes has not taken place and is therefore not ongoing, systematic or integrated into planning. (II.A.2.f)

By using department exams that have been created and validated by state agencies, the college ensures that it is using nonbiased valid measures in assessing student learning. (II.A.2.g)

Because the college has not clearly identified or assessed student learning outcomes for all programs, it cannot be determined whether credits are being awarded and degrees and certificates conferred based on actual student learning. However, the team visited and reviewed the course outlines and syllabi for 15 face to face lecture classes, 5 face to face lab classes and 7 distance education classes. In all of those visits the team found the course consistent with the instructor syllabi and the assigned work and time allotted to be consistent with the Carnegie Unit. (II.A.2.h, II.A.2.i, USDE Regulations 602.16(a)(1)(viii), 602.24(e), 602.24(f))

Since the 2006 Accreditation Report, the college has made progress in establishing student learning outcomes for its courses. One assessment and associated dialogue cycle for one student learning outcome from every department/division is documented on the CurricUNet site. Faculty has embraced course designing, assessing, and reflecting upon student learning outcomes in varying degrees across campus. Some faculty have expressed a desire not to make the assessment data for course student learning outcomes public, so the data is only viewable to the department, division chair, and the SLO coordinator. Faculty are not willing to report the implications and next steps resulting from the assessments for course student learning outcomes in program review documents. (II.A.2.f)

Program learning outcomes have been established for programs on campus. Some of the programs have completed assessment cycles and reported their findings in CurricUNet. Institutional outcomes have been established and are currently under review to determine if they will be changed to general education outcomes. There appear to be inconsistent findings regarding the number of courses which have student learning outcomes and the percentage that are regularly assessed; the number of programs which have learning outcomes and the percentage that are regularly assessed; and the degree to which institutional learning outcomes are regularly assessed. The discrepancies are evidenced in the data found in CurricUNet and data reported annually to the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC). (II.A.1.c, II.A.2.a, II.A.2.b, II.A.2.e, II.A.2.f, USDE Regulations 602.17(f))

The Outcomes and Assessment Committee (OAC), created in 2011, is represented by seven members with campus representation and serves in an advisory capacity to support the work on learning outcomes and improve the campus culture regarding student learning outcomes. Typically, one student learning outcome for every course is assessed each year. During the reflection and dialogue processes by the OAC, it was thought that the results from this type of assessment mechanism offered a shallow interpretation of the quality of student learning and a new approach was needed. To this end, the OAC has decided to implement a new model where the student learning outcomes for one course will be assessed per year. (II.A.2.f)

As a result of the grievance actions of COSTA, the campus has halted most work on learning outcomes. There is however, some progress on student learning outcomes taking place for personnel choosing to continue in this work. The college is not in compliance with ACCJC accreditation standards and has not reached proficiency. The faculty are aware of the impact of not reaching proficiency based on the ACCJC rubric regarding student learning outcomes, as well as the impact of not doing so on the college's request for reaffirmation of accreditation. (II.A.1.c, II.A.2.a, II.A.2.b, II.A.2.e, II.A.2.f)

Course Outlines of Record (COR) are reviewed every five years for currency. If the COR are out of compliance, faculty have one year to review and revise the COR for currency. If a COR is not revised during the year timeline, the course is removed from the college catalog. Student learning outcomes were originally required to be part of the COR but it was found that once a student learning outcome needed to be revised, the COR had to be approved by the College Curriculum Committee. To address this issue, student learning outcomes can be reported on the Course Outcomes Modules so that they can easily be revised if it is deemed necessary.

The college does not describe its expected student learning outcomes in the catalog, these outcomes cannot be found on the institution's officially approved course outline of record, and the transfer of credit policies cannot be found in the 2011-2013 catalog. (II.A.6, II.A.6.a, USDE Regulations 602.16(a)(1)(viii), 602.24(e), 602.24(f))

The team's review of the board policy on program discontinuance (Board Policy 4020—Program Curriculum and Course Development, Modification, or Discontinuance) found that the college has a clearly delineated procedure. However no program has actually been discontinued. The college meets the standard because a process, should it occur in the future, is in place. (II.A.6.b)

A review of the 2011-2013 college catalog, statements, and publications, including those presented in electronic form, indicates that the college appears to be representing itself clearly, accurately, and consistently. (II.A.6.c)

The team verified that academic integrity of the teaching-learning process is published in the 2011-2013 college catalog, addressed in Board Policy (BP) 5500, and the fall schedule of classes. The faculty academic freedom statement can be found in BP 4030 but cannot be

found in the catalog of classes. The catalog of classes needs to be updated to reflect the board policy. (II.A.7, II.A.7.a, II.A.7.b)

COS does not present students with specific world views nor does it offer curricula in foreign locations. (II.A.7, II.A.8)

Conclusion

While the team acknowledges that the college has met most of the II.A. Standards, there are several areas of concern. First, in its Institutional Self Evaluation Report COS presents a frank account of the difficulties that it has run into trying to meet the deadline for being at the proficiency level for student learning outcomes. Under Standard II.A.1.c, the institution must show that it “identifies student learning outcomes for courses, programs, certificates and degrees; assesses student achievement of those outcomes; and uses assessment results to make improvements” by the fall 2012 deadline. Second, it is obvious that the college will not meet the Commission’s deadline for proficiency. Third, evidence of this struggle can be seen in the responses to the Accreditation survey. Over 25% of faculty either disagree or strongly disagree on the survey that course assessments are being used to improve courses. (II.A.1.c)

Also, the team could not find consistent evidence to support the progress and assessment of course, program, and institutional learning outcomes. Specifically, there is discrepancy between the percentages of course and program learning outcomes developed, the percentage of courses and programs with ongoing assessment cycles, the percentage of institutional outcomes with ongoing assessment cycles evidenced in CurricUNet and data reported to ACCJC in the annual reports for 2010-2011 and 2011-2012.

Significant progress has been made in meeting the standards for Student Learning Outcomes since the last team visit. However, because the college has not fully met Recommendation 3 from the 2006 Evaluation Team Report, that recommendation is repeated during this 2012 visit but this time with an even greater urgency due to missing the Commission’s deadline for achieving proficiency by 2012. (II.A.1.c, II.A.2.a, II.A.2.b, II.A.2.e, II.A.2.f)

Recommendations

See Recommendation 1, Planning (2012)

See Recommendation 3, Research Capacity (2012)

4. Student Learning Outcomes (This recommendation repeats the intent of 2006 Recommendation 3.)

To meet the standard, the team recommends that the college advance its progress on student learning outcomes by regularly assessing those outcomes and using the results to improve student learning and strengthen institutional effectiveness. The college needs to include effectiveness in producing student learning outcomes as a component of the evaluation of faculty and staff who are responsible for assessing student learning. The college also needs to demonstrate how it is using these data for improvement. (Standards I.B.3, II.A.1.c, II.A.2.a,

II.A.2.b, II.A.2.e, II.A.2.f, II.A.2.h, II.A.2.i, II.A.5, II.A.6, II.B.3.a, II.B.4, III.A.1.c, IV.B.2, USDE Regulation 602.17(f))

Commendations

See Commendation 1, Special Programs (2012)

Standard IIB – Student Support Services

General Observations

College of the Sequoias offers a range of student support services that have been designed to support student learning. Consistent with its mission statement, the college recruits and admits diverse students who are able to benefit from its programs. Student services staff meet with students in person at the main campus or the Hanford center or by email or telephone.

Student Services include admissions and records, financial aid, counseling/advising, placement assessment, orientation, career and transfer services, transfer center, veterans' services, and Disabled Student Programs & Services (DSPS). Categorically funded support services include EOPS/CARE, CalWORKs, DSPS, First Year Experience, PASEO (Promoting Achievement and Scholarship through Enrichment Opportunities) and MESA (Math Engineering Science Achievement). The college identifies the learning support needs of its students and provides services and programs to address those needs.

Findings and Evidence

The college provides quality support services to support student learning. The college uses data to evaluate the student support needs of students at the Visalia campus. Distance Education/Correspondence Education support services evaluation takes place through the use of a survey, however the survey does not necessarily include Distance Education (DE) as a "location," so it does not specifically include DE-only locations. Success rates by location and modality are used in the Program Review process. The college meets this standard. (II.B.1)

The 2011-13 catalog is current, easy to use, and well structured. However, it is incomplete in two key areas: There is no explicit academic freedom statement in the catalog and there is no clear policy on acceptance of transfer credits. Page 16 of the catalog states "Any student transferring from another college shall be subject immediately to these same scholastic regulations. Transfer students must supply official transcripts from all other colleges attended." This statement does not communicate a clear policy on the acceptance of units transferred to COS from another institution. (II.B.2, USDE Regulations 602.16(a)(1)(viii), 602.24(e), 602.24(f))

COS publishes a catalog available through the college website. The catalog provides information that meets accreditation standards II.B.2.a, II.B.2.b, II.B.2.c, and II.B.2.d with two exceptions: The catalog does not have the academic freedom statement outlined in BP 4030 and Administrative Procedure (AP) 4030, or a policy on acceptance of transfer credits. (II.B.2.c, USDE Regulations 668.43)

The college's Catalog Committee reviews the catalog for accuracy, currency, and completeness. It is available in printed form in very limited quantities that are distributed to local high schools, counselors, members of the curriculum committee, and the articulation coordinator. Because any printed catalogs are generated from the electronic Portable Document Format (pdf), the printed and electronic catalogs are identical. Board policies are relatively easy to find on the COS website. Other policies, such as those found in the faculty resource guide are not so easy to find.

There are policies about student complaint or grievance processes in the catalog and in the board policies. There is a process for student grievances and these grievances are stored securely in a locked file cabinet. (USDE Regulations 602.16(a)(1)(ix), 668.43)

COS has a comprehensive online orientation that contains much of the important information that a student, whether new or continuing, needs to know about the college. It also contains a section called "Knowledge Gap Assessment" that would be ideal for the pre-test in a student services SLO assessment. (II.B.3)

The college offers most services equitably to students regardless of the service location or delivery method. Much of the admissions and records process is available only on-line. Comprehensive student support services are located on the Visalia campus. Placement assessment, counseling, financial aid, and DSPS appointments are available daily at Visalia, but not at Hanford. The Hanford campus provides computerized admissions and registration and placement testing services. Counseling services are not available to evening students unless those students are available during the day. There is limited counseling and tutoring support for on-line students. (II.B.3.a)

There is a student equity plan. Although it is dated 2012, it is evident from the document that it was not carefully reviewed and edited, because several places in it still have dates from the last time the plan was revised. There is minimal data analysis in the plan.

Services at different locations and in different modalities are evaluated to see how well such services are meeting the needs of students. Such evidence includes assessment placement results, student SES data, disabled student data, and success rates by varying student characteristics, locations, and modalities.

The college creates an environment that encourages personal and civic responsibility, as well as intellectual, aesthetic, and personal development for all of its students. There are a number of ways that students can engage in development opportunities at the school. Evidence on the COS website supports this claim. There is a leadership development class for student government members, and there are a number of student clubs at the college. Dialogue has taken place around what makes a good learning environment in student government meetings. The college has administered surveys to help evaluate the effectiveness of these activities. (II.B.3.b)

The college provides counseling and academic advising in a variety of departments and formats, including limited online and advising via e-mail. The college evaluates its counseling and advising programs to support student development. Among its evaluation activities the college's program review process includes the evaluation of measurable outcomes such as number of student contacts made and the number of transfer guarantee agreements submitted.

Counseling faculty participate in staff development activities to stay current with academic advising matters as the budget allows. They attend professional development conferences and training sessions. Because counseling for online and evening students is very limited, the college does not fully meet this standard. (II.B.3.c)

The college fosters student diversity through its board policies, Student Equity Plan, student clubs, and materials on its website. The college has grants to support diversity activities as well. A range of materials related to diversity is available online in over 200 search results on the COS website. However, it is unclear what the college does to evaluate the effectiveness of such initiatives. The college meets this standard but should strengthen evaluation activities. (II.B.3.d)

The college evaluates its admissions and placement instruments to validate their effectiveness while minimizing bias. CCCApply, developed by the California Community College Chancellor's Office (CCCCO), is used for admissions. Placement processes are evaluated as required by the CCCCCO to ensure their consistency and effectiveness. The college uses the ACCUPLACER test for English and reading, and the CELSA for ESL placement. Math placements are made using MDTP for higher level mathematics. The assessment coordinator validates cut-scores and reports that English meets the standard for consequential validity. The college has also developed and manages a local mathematics placement test, which received full approval on its last submission and is being submitted for renewal in November 2012. Disproportionate impact studies are also conducted to minimize bias. (II.B.3.e)

Board policies 7020, 5040, and 5045 relate to different aspects of student records and release. Although there are security policies in place, the college has had some damage to stored student records. There are plans to convert micro-fiche records to a more-permanent form of electronic storage. The college meets this standard but should strengthen records security measures. (II.B.3.f)

The college evaluates student support services to ensure they meet student needs. All programs undergo a comprehensive program review every six years with biannual updates. Program reviews are conducted regularly by most student services units, however, reports from the Institutional Program Review Committee (IPRC) show that several student service areas received less-than-satisfactory scores for their program reviews. The college participated in the 2009 and the 2011 Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) that contains a number of items related to students' use of and satisfaction with student services. However, the college is not reviewing and using the data from the CCSSE to assess and respond to student needs, nor is it systematically using other data to evaluate

student support needs. The college meets this standard but should improve data-driven decision-making. (II.B.4)

Conclusion

The college does not completely meet this standard. The visiting team confirmed that COS Student Services enhanced student learning by creating and maintaining a supportive learning environment. Students acknowledged repeatedly that the services they received were useful and the faculty and staff within Student Services were friendly and helpful. COS has a well-established and proficient program review process for student services. However, the college should strengthen its student services by further evaluating the effectiveness of its programs for all students at all locations, as per the college's mission statement. The college should also ensure that distance and evening student have adequate access to counseling and library services, and issue that is a carryover from 2006.

Recommendations

See Recommendation 3, Research Capacity (2012)

See Recommendation 4, Student Learning Outcomes (2012)

5. Student Support Services

In order to meet the standards, the team recommends that the college improve counseling services for evening students, online students, and students that attend the Hanford Center, and library services for evening students and students that attend the Hanford Center in order to ensure the equitability of those services. (Standards II.B.3.a, II.C.1, II.C.1.c) (This repeats a 2006 Recommendation 4.)

Commendations

See Commendation 1, Special Programs (2012)

Standard IIC – Library and Learning Support Services

General Observations

The services provided by the college library support student learning, as agreed to by most of the respondents to an accreditation survey. The college has libraries at both the Visalia and Hanford campus, although services at Hanford are lacking in quantity in comparison to those at the Visalia campus. The learning support services at the college include a tutorial center, a computer lab, a writing center, a learning skills lab, a math lab, a language center, and facilities for students in the MESA Program and the First-Year Experience Program.

The library has course level SLOs for its courses, as well as program level SLOs. The library and learning support services areas use surveys to indicate satisfaction; and there is an understanding of the need to develop a budget for library and learning support services at the Hanford campus.

Findings and Evidence

COS supports its instructional programs by providing library and other learning support services through its Learning Resource Center to students at both the Visalia and the Hanford campus and to off-campus and online students. The services provided to the students include a library, a tutorial center, a computer lab, classrooms for computer-aided instruction and for distance education, a writing center, and a learning skills lab. Although funding has impacted the library's ability to be open more than 54 hours per week, the library is still able to open Monday through Friday for student access. The tutorial center, as well, is open Monday through Friday to serve students on a drop-in basis. Other facilities that support students are the Math Lab, the Writing Center, the MESA Program, the First-Year Experience Lab, and the Language Center.

One weakness in the library and learning support services is the lack of availability of services equal to those at the Visalia campus for the students at the Hanford campus. The Hanford campus does not have an ongoing budget for library materials, and several people completing a survey regarding library and learning support services commented on the lack of services available at Hanford, although which campus constituencies completed the survey is not made clear in the Institutional Self Evaluation Report. There is a core collection of books at Hanford, but this collection is locked; students would need to know how to access the books in this collection, and few do. The library does have a working action plan for achieving equivalency of services for the Hanford students, including the areas of collection development, reference, instruction, and outreach. One librarian and one classified staff person from the Visalia campus library will begin working part of their hours in Hanford in spring 2013. (IIC.1, IIC.1.c)

The Learning Resource Center at College of the Sequoias has a collection of print books, e-books, print periodicals, videos, and database subscriptions for its students' use. The Hanford campus students have access to e-books and database subscriptions as well as a small print book collection, but there is no ongoing budget for library materials at Hanford. The librarians are the ones who select titles for acquisition after considering curricular needs and

requests from students. Librarians also work with faculty to build discipline specific collections that meet student needs. (II.C.1.a, II.C.1.c)

Computers for student use are available in the Learning Resource Center. Available on those computers are access to the internet, the Microsoft Office Suite, Blackboard, and the library databases. Computers are ADA compliant. The classrooms in the Learning Resource Center can be booked by the faculty for their classes and serve as the place for offering one-unit library courses. The Technology Committee oversees all new equipment requests. (II.C.1.a, II.C.1.c)

The COS librarians offer formal and informal instruction of information competency skills, skills that are requirements for graduation based on the COS general education pattern effective 2013. Librarians who are available for one-on-one instruction staff the reference desk at the Visalia campus, but there is no staffed reference desk at the Hanford campus. Students at the Hanford campus can get their questions answered by using the Ask a Librarian e-mail service accessed through the Hanford campus library webpage. Formal instruction of information competency skills occurs in the form of individual class instruction sessions and one-unit CSU transferable courses that cover information competency. The librarians have also developed a website that conveys important information for students who are doing research. (II.C.1.b)

The libraries at both the Visalia campus and the Hanford campus have a reserve book program through which faculty can place books to be held for student use. The Learning Resource Center at the Visalia campus has a budget to purchase major textbooks that can then be placed on reserve for student use. Students can also use microfilm readers, view DVDs and videocassettes, and print documents in the library. (II.C.1.c)

The number of library resources available has decreased since the last accreditation visit due to state budget cuts. Because of rising costs and a lessening budget, the college has had to cancel subscriptions to print magazines and journals. While there has been an increase in the number of article databases to which the library subscribes, the decrease in the print collection impacts students. This same shift has occurred with books, as the number of print books has declined while the number of e-books has increased. These shifts have led to few resources being available for many of the vocational areas. The library is currently assessing its collection so that it can reallocate funds where needed. In addition, a liaison has been appointed to work to match resources with programs. (II.C.1.c)

Security for the library and other learning support services at COS is maintained, and security issues are addressed in meetings as needed. Confidentiality of staff and student information is always maintained, and the college purges computer files periodically in an effort to maintain confidentiality. Alarms are installed to ensure that no items, including computers, are taken from the Learning Resource Center. (II.C.1.d)

COS allows California State University, Fresno to house an off-campus program at the college. All of the CSUF students attending the program at College of the Sequoias are allowed to use the same library and learning resources as the students at COS. Although in a

reciprocal effort CSUF allowed the COS librarians to have access to its databases, that agreement is no longer in effect. College of the Sequoias desires again to have the database access agreement with CSUF, and the college states that it will work to have CSUF reconsider it. The college evaluates the performance of these services on a regular basis, and it acknowledges that without the agreement for librarians to have access to the CSUF databases, the CSUF students who take classes at College of the Sequoias are negatively impacted. (II.C.1.e)

The COS program review process, which occurs every six years, is used to evaluate the programs and services of its library and learning support services. The library courses have course level SLOs attached to them. (II.C.2)

Conclusion

A review of library and learning support services shows that the college has many programs that serve to support its students in their education. This review, though, also shows that while there is a sufficient level of support for the students at the Visalia campus there are not equitable services for students at the Hanford campus. Limited funding has caused a reduction in library and learning support services, which has resulted in this discrepancy. The college recognizes this weakness that impacts its meeting of the standards, and it plans to use its working action plan to resolve the inequities. The college should also ensure that student have adequate access library services at all campus sites. This issue is a carryover from 2006 Recommendation 4.

Recommendations

See Recommendation 5, Student Support Services (2012)

Standard III – Resources

Standard IIIA – Human Resources

General Observations

College of the Sequoias has a qualified staff that is supportive of student learning. Its faculty and management hiring processes are clear and followed. However, the hiring processes for classified personnel and interim administrators are not clearly delineated. The evaluation procedures for constituent groups are contained in the collective bargaining agreements for each group and, for management, in the Personnel Policies for Management Council. BP 3050 is the College's written code of ethics to which all employees must adhere.

Those serving on hiring committees are committed to applying the hiring procedures equitably and are trained by members of the Equal Employment Opportunity Advisory Committee. Fairness in hiring procedures is emphasized in BP 3420. All faculty hired meet the minimum qualifications to teach in their respective disciplines.

The College has identified a need to work to improve the ratio of the diversity of COS personnel to that of the surrounding community.

Findings and Evidence

At the time of the publication of the Institutional Self Evaluation Report, COS was in the process of ratifying its Faculty Hiring Procedures after the Academic Senate revised them in December 2011. Both area faculty and Human Resources work to develop faculty job descriptions, and those serving on faculty hiring committees are experts in their fields. For classified positions, representatives from the California School Employees Association (CSEA) work with Human Resources to develop classified job descriptions. For management positions, both Human Resources and the responsible supervisor work on developing the job description. It is clear that classified and management/confidential employee job descriptions must be approved by the Board of Trustees, but that same statement is not made about faculty job descriptions. The College indicates that the process for hiring classified employees and the process for hiring interim administrators is not well established and should be clarified. Recently, procedures for hiring administrators were written and are in the process of being approved by the campus constituencies. These policies do not specifically address the hiring of interim administrators. (III.A.1, III.A.1.a)

Regular and consistent evaluations are conducted for the following groups: the superintendent/president, full-time faculty, part-time faculty, classified personnel, and management employees. The faculty evaluation procedures were developed jointly by the Academic Senate, the Faculty Union, and Administration; and they are published in the faculty agreement. The classified personnel evaluation procedures are published in the classified master agreement and the process for evaluating management personnel was established by the Personnel Policies for Management Council. While there are administrative procedures and board policies regarding the evaluation of full-time faculty, administrative procedures and board policies regarding the evaluation of other constituency groups do not exist. The College has stated that it intends to develop these policies and

procedures. COS had employees take a survey regarding their feelings about evaluation, and only 52% of the respondents felt that a connection between evaluations and improvement exists. (III.A.1.b)

While the evaluation of faculty does include an evaluation of teaching methods, teaching materials, and effectiveness in the classroom, comments to the survey about evaluation included those that relayed concern that little is done to terminate a weak faculty member or even to assist a weak faculty member in improving his/her teaching. Also, while faculty are required to develop goals and objectives for meeting the course outline of record, there is no evidence that a component of their evaluation includes effectiveness in producing stated learning outcomes. (III.A.1.c)

COS' BP 3050 is its written code of ethics to which all employees must adhere. Also, there is a published statement of ethics within the Personnel Policies for Management Council, and there is a published statement of professional ethics in the College Catalog. (III.A.1.d)

Although budget cuts have resulted in declining numbers of faculty, classified personnel, and administrators at COS, the number remaining are sufficient for the college to support its mission. All personnel hired must meet their position's minimum qualifications. (III.A.2)

Board policies and administrative procedures that are related to Human Resources are developed and updated periodically, some of which must be reviewed and approved by affected constituency groups and then by the Board of Trustees. If any constituency group believes that a board policy or an administrative procedure has not been applied equitably, it can protest by following the approved process. (III.A.3)

COS has BP 3420, an Equal Employment Opportunity Plan, and the Equal Employment Opportunity Advisory Committee that ensure fairness in employment procedures. All job announcements, the Human Resources mission statement, and the faculty hiring procedures refer to compliance with equal opportunity. Job announcements are placed in a manner that ensures they reach a diverse population, and applicants are asked to complete an exit survey to give feedback on the equality of their experience. A survey illustrates that 70% of respondents believe that the policies at College of the Sequoias promote diversity. An Equal Employment Opportunity Representative sits as a member on all hiring committees, from the creation of the job flyer to the first interviews. These representatives, as well as all managers at the College, are trained by a visiting attorney from the College's legal firm. (III.A.3.a)

Personnel records at COS are kept confidential and secure, with employees having access to some of their personnel records through the use of Banner software. Any employee can review his/her personnel records in the Office of Human Resources upon request. (III.A.3.b)

BP 3420 and BP 7120 illustrate that COS both understands and has a concern for issues of equity and diversity. Job announcements also illustrate this understanding and concern. Each member of a hiring committee is trained on Equal Employment Opportunity laws prior to serving. (III.A.4, II.A.4.a)

COS encourages diversity among the membership of hiring committees, and it has committed to supporting diverse personnel who are hired. Events such as Cinco de Mayo celebrations and other Student Equity Committee sponsored events are held on campus. The responses to survey questions about diversity show that the campus community as well understands the importance of these programs and services. The examples relayed in the Institutional Self Evaluation Report, however, are limited to diversity of culture and sexual orientation. (III.A.4.a)

COS tracks the diversity of its personnel and compares it to the demographics of the surrounding community. A commitment to improving the ratio of the diversity of College personnel to that of the surrounding community has been identified. However, there is no action plan for making this happen. (III.A.4.b)

Documents exist at the college that ensure that the following constituencies are treated fairly and with integrity: faculty, administrators, classified personnel, and students. Management employees are required to complete sexual harassment training every two years. (III.A.4.c) COS faculty members are required to attend eight hours of FLEX activities on campus on designated days and twelve hours of FLEX activities on their own time and of their own choice. The faculty agreement ensures that funding exists for faculty to attend professional conferences, and the Faculty Enrichment Committee meets monthly to ensure that opportunities for professional development on campus are available. Opportunities for faculty include workshops for using iClickers, for pedagogy, and for teaching online. While sabbatical leaves had been a part of the opportunities for faculty, those leaves have recently been suspended due to the current fiscal crisis. Managers and confidential employees receive professional development at the Management Council meetings that they attend as part of their assigned duties. Senior management receives professional development weekly, and the Deans receive professional development biweekly. Classified personnel may avail themselves of professional development workshops that are offered through the Professional Association of Classified Employees. These workshops are scheduled for most academic months, but at times they are cancelled after having been scheduled. Most of these workshops/events appear to be professional development related, such as the Benefits Fair and the PERS workshop. Others, such as the Craft Fair, are viewed as a vehicle to bring people together, build a sense of fellowship among employees, and strengthen dialogue campus-wide. (III.A.5, III.A.5.a)

Professional development workshops held at COS are evaluated by their attendees. Groups responsible for professional development on campus, including the Faculty Enrichment Committee, the Professional Association of Classified Employees, and members of the Executive Council review the results and make changes if they are required. While the activities offered to faculty were once evaluated by the attendees immediately following the activity, now the questions regarding the evaluation of activities are rolled into the Faculty Enrichment Committee's annual survey. The activities offered to classified personnel are evaluated immediately following the activity. (III.A.5.b)

Program Review at College of the Sequoias includes the planning for human resources. The Instructional Council and the College Council review requests for faculty positions; the

College Council and the President's Cabinet review requests for most classified and administrative positions. All requests for human resources are introduced through Program Review. (III.A.6)

Conclusions

A review of human resources shows that the college has policies and procedures that ensure equitable hiring for most groups. This review, however, also shows that the college does not have clearly established hiring procedures for classified personnel and interim managers. While evaluation procedures for each constituency group exist and are applied, there is not a clear connection between evaluation and improvement.

The college partially meets standard III.A.

Recommendations

See Recommendation 3, Research Capacity (2012)

See Recommendation 4, Student Learning Outcomes (2012)

6. Human Resource Processes

In order to increase effectiveness, the team recommends that the college expand human resource processes to include hiring procedures for all employees and establish a clear connection between employee evaluation and improvement. (Standards III.A.1, III.A.1.a, III.A.1.b, III.A.1.c)

Commendations

See Commendation 1, Special Programs (2012)

Standard IIIB – Physical Resources

General Observations

College of the Sequoias is located in the San Joaquin Valley. It is comprised of the main campus at Visalia, an outreach location in Hanford, and a new Center in Tulare that is currently under development. Together the three locations total 631,534 sq. ft. of building space.

Considerable building expansion and renovation of existing facilities has taken place since the last visit in 2006. COS has added 121,264 sq. ft. of building space in response to population growth, community needs, and capacity/load ratios that indicated a need for additional square footage.

In Visalia, new facilities include a new Science Center, a new Allied Health Building, and a new Gymnasium. In 2010, the new Hanford Educational Center began offering courses from five permanent buildings totaling 55,881 sq. ft. Plans for the future are that the Hanford Educational Center will eventually become a Center. In spring 2013, the first 90 classes will be offered at the new Tulare Center.

COS has received approximately \$103.8 million in state capital outlay funding in the past eight years. Almost all of this funding was given without the requirement of any local contributions. The facilities planning process has identified a need for additional laboratory space and a Final Project Proposal (FPP) to create a Basic Skills Center has been approved by the State Chancellor's Office and is awaiting funding.

Campus constituency groups feel strongly that support for programs and services is important, and they generally agree that the college's facilities are sufficient for supporting their existing programs and services.

The Facilities and Safety Committee oversees the safety budget and reviews and responds to all safety complaints.

Findings and Evidence

The institution provides safe and sufficient physical resources to support the quality of its programs and services at the Visalia, Hanford, and the Tulare locations. Access, safety, security, and healthful environment needs are identified through the Program Review process. Program Review needs are evaluated and become the basis for the district's strategic plan. Specifically, program reviews provide the basis for the strategic plan which drives the facilities five-year construction plan. The planning process includes input from the campus constituencies and the surrounding communities. (III.B.1.b, III.B.2)

The California Community College capital outlay system guidelines validate the need for more facilities based on their formulas. Formulas for modernizing facilities take into account the age of the buildings and changes in programs and instructional methods. The passage of Measure I provided several million dollars to spend on facility upgrades and scheduled

maintenance projects. Inspections at all of the major facilities verify that maintenance is kept at a high level. (III.B.1, III.B.1.a)

A number of bonds in 2006 and 2008 were passed to support the districts master planning. State funds were also used to supplement the bond funds. All major construction and renovation projects were submitted to the Division of State Architects (DSA) to ensure compliance. (III.B.2)

With so many new facilities acquired via external funding sources, Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) becomes a concern, especially given the State's fiscal crisis and the unprecedented funding reductions experienced by all California Community Colleges. This TCO concept was discussed extensively with the Dean of Facilities and Facilities Planning. Evidence makes it clear that this issue is well known and plans are in place to address the concern of ongoing maintenance costs of the new facilities that have come online in recent years. COS has begun to put measures in place to deal with these issues, such as all maintenance and repairs that are made are being made with conservation and sustainability in mind. A good example of this is that within the last three years, an energy management system (EMS) has been installed in every building throughout the district. This allows the college to conserve energy and energy costs; and the related savings are reflected in the college's ongoing budget as an offset to rising maintenance costs. In addition, the Facilities and Safety Committee has done an outstanding job of creatively using available resources to meet the current and future needs of the communities served by the Sequoias Community College District. (III.B.2.a)

Physical resource planning and institutional planning are integrated and driven by the program review process. Assessments are made and the results of the assessments drive changes that lead to further improvements. Instructional support spaces are effectively utilized as evidenced by the institution's capacity/load ratios. (III.B.2.b)

Conclusions

The team found sufficient evidence that COS plans for and maintains its physical resources in a manner that ensures effective utilization and continuing quality to support its programs and services offered both on-campus and off-campus.

The College meets Standard III.B.

Recommendations

None.

Commendations

3. Facilities

The team commends the college for its outstanding efforts in acquiring funds for the construction of facilities to meet the current and future needs of the communities served by the College of the Sequoias District. (Standard III.B.1.a, III.B.1.b)

Standard III C – Technology Resources

General Observations

College of the Sequoias uses technology throughout the college to support student learning, instruction, operations, communications and research. The Technology Services department supports the needs of Academic, Administrative, Student and Interdisciplinary Services throughout the district.

The Visalia campus has a large open computer lab in the library and many computer labs throughout the campus that are used for various classes and open labs when available. This is in addition to computer labs dedicated to tutoring and library support and student services. Most of the classrooms (and meeting rooms) are equipped with a computer, projector, screen, video player and a control system. Media Services recently moved under Information Technology and is responsible for supporting media technologies. COS uses Blackboard 9 for online/hybrid and traditional classes as requested.

The Visalia campus, as well as other COS locations, have a robust network throughout all buildings, classrooms, offices, and labs. This network system includes a burgeoning wireless network that is expanding incrementally as funds become available. COS is transitioning to a new Voice-over-IP phone system that functions over the computer data network. The Hanford and Tulare campuses are networked and connected to information resources at the Visalia campus through recently installed fiber circuits for high bandwidth access. These locally hosted resources include Banner (ERP system), email, SharePoint, Web sites, infrastructure services, storage, research (College Extended Information System), etc. COS' Centers access the internet through the Visalia campus connection to CENIC, which is how all sites reach externally hosted resources for learning and instruction such as Blackboard, CurricUNet and the library system.

The Technology Committee reports to the College Council and is responsible for developing and maintaining the technology plan, prioritizing program review technology requests and developing action plans for the college's strategic plan, among other things. They rely on departments to assess their technology needs for their own programs or services. Additionally, the committee establishes hardware standards for computers and develops annual recommendations for replacing older computers in labs/offices, smart classrooms and network servers. The committee also works on board policies and has recently devoted significant time and effort towards developing a district-wide governance plan for the use of SharePoint.

Findings and Evidence

The Technology Services department provides information technology services and support throughout the district. The department has developed a mission statement, which is aligned with the college mission, to support all students and staff. Technology Services works with the Technology Committee, which is chaired by the Dean of Information Technology and includes three professional staff members from Technology Services, to help ensure that the district is acquiring and using technology to support its mission and operations. (III.C.1, III.C.1.a)

The Technology Committee reports to the College Council and has many responsibilities: (a) developing tactical plans from the College Strategic Plan, (b) developing and maintaining the Technology Plan, (c) prioritizing technology requests that are approved in Program Review, (d) recommending replacement computers, and technological equipment, on an annual basis, (e) developing technology policies, and, (f) discussing technology issues/options/needs. However, the committee's approved "Functional Statement" from the College Council only addresses item (f). The committee chair provides a brief Technology Committee update at each meeting of the College Council. Additionally, the Strategic Plan calls for an annual report to the College Council. (III.C.1, III.C.1.a)

When the Technology Committee reviews technology requests from the program review process, they discuss each request and consider its relevance to the Technology Plan. Through dialog and consensus, they develop a prioritized ranking of the requests. The finalized list is submitted to the College Council for review and potential funding. However, it was noted that the committee does not have clearly defined (written) criteria to help them rate the requests in order to ensure that requests are appropriately aligned with the Strategic Plan and Technology Plan for maintaining, upgrading and replacing equipment. (III.C.1.c)

As new technologies or operational processes are introduced, it is important to provide quality training for students and faculty/staff. Student training and support is provided through the Learning Resources Center (LRC) and through computer classes that are offered. The LRC provides Help Desk support for students in person or by phone for Banner, email and Blackboard. District-wide faculty and staff training is organized through the Faculty Enrichment Committee (FEC) and the Professional Association of Classified Employees (PACE). The technology related PACE classes have been sparse over the past several years. In addition, the College does not appear to be assessing training needs and ensuring that all faculty, staff, and managers are receiving updated training. However, some departments such as Technology Services have organized training opportunities in Banner and SharePoint. (III.C.1.b)

COS has been able to expand its technology infrastructure and equipment over the past five years largely through capital outlay and bond funded projects. The Technology Committee has discussed the need for an institutional plan in order to address the ongoing concern that bond funding will decrease over the years, requiring a shift to general funding, in order to provide for replacing computers every four years and other equipment on a regular basis. However, given the economic downturn over the past five years, the College has not been able to make technology funding a priority and thus the Technology Committee has since increased the replacement cycle of computers to six years. (III.C.1.c)

Program review is the primary vehicle for communicating technology needs and to request funding for those needs. For any technology resources that come out of program review, the requests are divided between "instructional" and "non-instructional" and are prioritized for funding accordingly. There were some noted gaps in the program review process such as not every department is completing its program review in a satisfactory manner, and, there has been very limited funding for those requests which are truly priorities. Nonetheless, the

employee survey indicates that faculty and staff agree that technology resources are sufficient for supporting programs and services. (III.C.1.d)

The Technology Committee is involved with strategic planning and technology planning. The committee distributes the workload of developing tactical plans for technology-related goals in the strategic plan. Furthermore, the Committee ensures that the Technology Plan informs revisions to the strategic plan. As the Technology Committee is preparing to update its Technology Plan, it will survey students, staff, and faculty to better assess technological needs. The updated Technology Plan is slated to be done by July 2013. (III.C.2)

Over the past year, the Technology Committee has been working on developing a plan for rolling out SharePoint throughout the district for ensuring that all committees and workgroups have a centralized, trusted, web platform for collaboration and committee documents. This is a good example of the function of the Technology Committee and the stated mission of Technology Services to “set the standard for innovative use of technology and provide direction for future technology use.” Overall, the Committee and the Department are working to ensure that COS has the technology resources needed to fulfill its mission.

Conclusions

The College meets this standard. However, the “Functional Statement” of the Technology Committee does not fully describe its responsibilities related to integrated planning and program review prioritizations of technology resources. Given that the Technology Committee reports to the College Council, the Technology Committee should work with the College Council to redefine the function of the committee to match its intended purpose. Furthermore, the Technology Committee would benefit from setting annual goals and conducting an annual self-evaluation for continuous improvement.

Recommendations

None.

Standard III.D – Financial Resources

General Observations

Despite the state budget reductions that have impacted all California Community Colleges, it appears that COS is well run from a financial perspective and is fiscally stable. The state's cash deferrals have negatively impacted COS, similar to many other community colleges. This has added borrowing costs as COS has had to enter into a Municipal Lease and a Tax Revenue Anticipation Note (TRAN).

COS appears to have a significant amount of long term debt in terms of lease revenue bonds, general obligation bonds, and certificates of participation; however, the short term obligations related to the debt service payments of these debt instruments are included within COS' annual budgeting process. The college has made significant capital improvements via its bond issuances but once these bond funds are no longer available, the college will need a plan to fund the ongoing maintenance associated with these new facilities and will need to ensure that adequate financial resources are available from a total cost of ownership perspective of the new facilities that have come online in recent years.

The college places a great deal of emphasis on Program Review, but it is difficult to tell if the budget allocation process is integrated with the program review process and how the link is actually made. There is also concern that the college is not assessing the effectiveness of its processes to provide for a direct link between evaluation, assessment, and resource allocation.

Findings and Evidence

While the college appears to have planning processes in place, the links between the various components are not apparent. Above-base budget allocations are established with Program Review as the starting point, but the links between the college's Mission Statement/Strategic Plan components to the Program Review/Resource Allocation components are not clearly identified. The college's *Budget Planning and Development Activities* document is a calendar of budget development processes but does not make any reference to linking to institutional plans, goals, objectives, priorities, etc. Via numerous interviews with staff responsible for fiscal resources, as well as those responsible for program review and institutional effectiveness, it remained difficult to see how the various components of the college's planning processes are linked. Therefore, the college does not appear to have integrated planning processes with clear links indicating that financial resource planning is integrated with institutional planning. (III.D.1, III.D.1.a, III.D.4)

The college's budget assumptions and budget reports, including the *Budget Accountability Reports* and similar information contained in the annual budget book, appear complete, detailed, and based on appropriate and accurate information. Due to the State budget situation, financial resources have been limited, but the college has been able to secure additional grant resources to sustain student learning as best as possible with limited resources. (III.D.1.b, USDE Regulations 602.19(a-e))

COS is fiscally stable with adequate reserves and has accrued liabilities for its outstanding obligations. The college's long-term debt instruments include Bonds, Certificates of Participation (COPs), and Other Post-Employment Benefit (OPEB) obligations. Short-term debt instruments include a TRAN and a Municipal Lease for cash flow purposes. Any applicable debt payments for the Bonds, COPs, TRAN, and Municipal Lease are included in the college's budget projections. In order to comply with Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) statement 45 regarding accounting for OPEB obligations, the college has been completing actuarial studies and has established an irrevocable trust through the Community College League of California (CCLC). The college has made significant efforts in addressing its long-term liability by funding its OPEB Annual Required Contribution (ARC) at a level which exceeds the actuarially determined ARC. As of June 30, 2011, the College had a net prepaid OPEB asset balance of \$4.4 million. The team recognizes the college for its commitment in complying with GASB statement 45 at a level above and beyond the required minimum level. (III.D.1.c, III.D.3.c, III.D.3.d, III.D.3.e, USDE Regulations 602.19(a-e))

The college's primary participatory governance committee related to finance and budget is the Standing Budget Committee. It is a sub-committee of College Council. However, based on evidence gathered from interviews and from reviewing agendas and minutes, the Standing Budget Committee typically only meets a few times per year, and the focus of the meetings is primarily for fiscal staff to provide information about how the budget was developed; typically from an after-the-fact perspective. Therefore, it does not appear that the College is allowing for broad participation in the budget development process. (III.D.1.d)

COS utilizes the Banner finance system. Financial transactions are processed through Banner, and approvals are built into the system electronically. Spending requires approval by at least one supervisor. All Budget Managers have access to view and print budget status reports at any time. Budget reports are presented to the Board regularly. (III.D.2.c)

The college has established BP 6300 and AP 6300 to ensure sound financial practices and financial stability. This is also evidenced through the satisfactory results of the external audits and through a review of the level of reserves maintained by the College. (III.D.3)

The college has engaged the services of independent auditors to perform the required annual audits. For each of the last six years, the college has received an unqualified opinion, the highest opinion available, with no material weakness findings reported. In 2007, the college received one federal finding related to multi-funded positions requiring time logs. This finding was subsequently "implemented" as indicated in the Status of Prior Year Findings section of the 2008 audit report. The college also received one state compliance finding in 2011 related to To-Be-Arranged (TBA) hours. The independent auditor's follow up status of this finding has not yet been released. (III.D.2, III.D.2.a, III.D.2.b, III.D.2.d, III.D.2.e, III.D.3.h)

As previously mentioned, in response to the State's cash deferrals imposed on Community Colleges, COS has employed the use of TRANs and Municipal Leases as short-term cash flow financing instruments in order to ensure adequate cash flows. In addition, the college

has identified cash available to borrow from other funds should the need arise. The college has maintained reserves in excess of the 5%, recommended by the State Chancellor's Office as the "prudent" reserve level, over the last six years. (III.D.3.a)

While COS has had financially sound budgets and financial statements, it does not currently have a well-defined mechanism in place to systematically assess the effective use of its financial resources, and consequently, cannot use the results of those evaluations as a basis for improvement. (IIID.3.b, III.D.4)

COS appears to monitor and manage its student loan default rates, as the rates over the last three fiscal years have been 9.7%, 13.8%, and 6.9%, respectively. These rates are within the federal guidelines. (III.D.3.f)

The college has established board policies and administrative procedures related to delegating authority for the approval of contracts and informal bids, within limits. Based on satisfactory results of the college's independent audits, it appears that the institution has appropriate controls in place to manage contractual agreements with external entities. (III.D.3.g)

Conclusions

The college has sufficient financial resources to support student learning programs and services and to improve institutional effectiveness. The college is well managed from a financial perspective, maintaining reserves that exceed the prudent level of 5% of unrestricted expenditures. The college has taken appropriate and fiscally prudent measures to ensure adequate cash flows, despite the deferrals from the State. However, in order to fully meet this Standard, the college will need to integrate and strengthen the links of its planning processes, including a process for evaluating its financial management processes and systematically assessing the effective use of financial resources; and will need to allow for broad participation in the budget development process.

Recommendations

See Recommendation 1, Planning (2012)

7. Evaluation of Processes

In order to meet the standards, the team recommends that the college develop and implement a systematic evaluation of its decision-making and budget development processes and use the results of those evaluations as a basis for improvement. (III.D.1.a, III.D.1.d, III.D.2.d, III.D.3, IV.A.2, IV.A.5, IV.B.1.g, IV.B.2)

STANDARD IV – Leadership and Governance

Standard IVA – Decision-Making Roles and Processes

General Observations

College of the Sequoias has a governance structure that provides an opportunity for all stakeholders (students, classified staff, faculty and administrators) to participate in decision-making. The college decision-making structure has one major shared governance committee (College Council) and six standing committees (Budget, Institutional Effectiveness and Planning, Student Equity, Technology, Facilities/Safety and Essential Learning).

Governance at COS is a participatory process that involves all constituent groups on campus, including faculty, classified staff, management, and students. Standing committees are organized with shared representation from campus constituencies, and the goal is one of inclusion so that participation leads to ownership, and each group then becomes a stakeholder. Various forums and avenues are available for the expression and exchange of ideas.

The team was impressed with the large number of Academic Senate committees at COS. Subcommittees of the Academic Senate include CurricUNet Implementation Team, GE Committee, Outcomes and Assessment Committee, Research Advisory Committee, Distance Education, Curriculum and Equivalency. The “Principles of Collegial Governance” first adopted in 1989 is now reflected in a policy titled the “Participatory Governance Model” that outlines the structure of the College Council and the agreed upon rules of how this major shared governance committee will operate. All Board changes receive a first and second reading at College Council before going to the Board. Faculty participation in the governance process at COS is outlined in BP 2510. The official faculty governance group is the Academic Senate, and its participation at every level of interaction is limited to all matters and policies that pertain to academic and professional matters. Similarly, classified staff, students, and management also participate in the governance process to provide appropriate input into the decision-making process. All groups had a role in the development and vetting of the Strategic Plan and other institutional initiatives.

The Academic Senate at the College of Sequoias meets regularly to discuss academic and professional matters. It has direct oversight of the Curriculum Committee and provides input on a wide range of academic issues, including Student Learning Outcomes, articulation, Transfer Model Curricula, Student Success, Student Equity, and Outcomes and Assessment.

While COS has been greatly enhanced by active faculty participation in the governance process, the team noted that a labor dispute over a possible health benefits cap has once again created tensions which are having a negative effect on the campus climate. The team found that a work slow-down initiated by the faculty union has been in effect since last March and that the faculty have filed a grievance regarding the requirement that they develop and assess course outcomes. Additionally, some faculty stopped attending committee meetings for over a year. Regardless of the reasons, consistent nonattendance by any group weakens the governance process and reduces the opportunity for effective communication.

For governance to be truly participatory, effective, and significant, all constituent groups must participate and contribute to the process with consistency and continuity. Lack of faculty involvement was a significant concern for the 2006 team, and this situation underscores the need for leadership by the faculty and administration to come together in order to reach a resolution.

Findings and Evidence

Standard IV.A.1 cites the need for institutional leaders to create an environment for empowerment, innovation, and institutional excellence. Evidence that the college partially meets this standard was validated by the Institutional Planning and Effectiveness Committee (IPEC) meeting minutes and by the large number of innovative grant funded initiatives (e.g. First Year Experience Program, Second Year Experience Program, Promoting Achievement and Scholarship with Enrichment, etc.).

In terms of creating an environment for empowerment, a discussion with faculty leaders clearly indicates that the recent impasse in contract negotiations has had an impact on morale for some faculty. Given the fact that an effective college must depend on its faculty, the college should take a more proactive approach to managing expectations of faculty and staff through additional channels of communication to assist them with a realistic assessment of resource availability.

The college has a written policy that provides for faculty, staff, administrative and student participation in decision-making. First adopted in 1989 by the College Council, the Participatory Governance Model policy was reviewed and last updated in August 2010. (IV.A.2, IV.A.2.a)

In interviews with faculty and academic administrators, the team documented that the college, through its standing committees of the Academic Senate, relies on the faculty and academic administrators for recommendations about student learning programs and services. (IV.A.2.b)

The current labor strife with the faculty does not bode well for continuing the current practice of the Board of Trustees, administrators, faculty, staff, and students working together for the good of the college. The college needs to find a way to regain its ability to discuss ideas and have effective communication among all of its constituencies. (IV.A.3)

COS is in good standing with the Commission and in compliance with all its requirements for public disclosure, reporting requirements, and the submission of its substantive change report for distance education to the Commission. The college has always demonstrated honesty and integrity in its dealings with the Commission. (IV.A.4)

The team did not find any evidence that the college has a process to evaluate its governance and decision-making structure. Furthermore, beyond a handout listing committee members, there is no document that the team found serves to provide an overview of how standing committee members are selected, their term limits, how chair elections are to be conducted,

etc. An interview with the co-chairs revealed that a document exists but the college could not produce it when asked. (IV.A.5)

Conclusions

Evidence establishes that the College partially meets Standard IV.A. Review of documents and interviews with staff, faculty, and administrators reveal that the college does not have in place a system for the regular evaluation of its governance structures.

Recommendations

See Recommendation 1, Planning (2012)

See Recommendation 2, Campus Dialogue (2012)

See Recommendation 7, Evaluation of Processes (2012)

Standard IVB – Board and Administrative Organization

General Observations

The College of the Sequoias (COS) Board of Trustees (the Board) is a publicly elected body that is responsible for establishing and upholding policies to ensure the quality, integrity, and effectiveness of all aspects of the district. The Board of Trustees is comprised of five elected individuals from five areas within the district. The Associated Student Body (ASB) sends a representative to serve as Student Trustee.

Ample evidence was found to establish that the Board recognizes its responsibility for maintaining educational programs that meet and exceed the minimum standards set by law; and to maintain the fiscal and legal integrity of the district. (AP 6100) Finally, the Board is responsible for selecting (BP 2431) and evaluating (BP 2435) the superintendent/president of the district. (IV.B.1, IV.B.2, IV.B.3)

All board policies and administrative procedures are reviewed at least every five years (see BP 2410). The last comprehensive review and revision of all board policies and administrative procedures was completed in 2007 and 2008. In addition, the district is a member of the Community College League of California (CCLC) and receives the Policy and Procedure Service. This service provides board policy samples for consideration and adoption in the development and maintenance of policies and procedures as legally required. (IV.B.4)

The Board of Trustees has a framework, BP 2715 Code of Ethics/Standards of Practice. The Board also operates within the guidelines of BP 2710 Conflict of Interest, and its administrative procedures also have a section on conflict of interest. In addition, Board members are subject to an annual declaration required under Form 700 regarding conflict of interest.

While Standard IV.B.1.j prohibits the Board from micro-managing the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), it also prescribes for the Board to hold the CEO accountable for the successful operation of the institution and district. The district has in place BP 2430 which is in line with the prescription and prohibition outlined in Standard IV.B.1.j.

It should be noted that nearly half of the respondents in the survey indicated that they “don’t know” the Board delegates authority to the superintendent/president without interference, and more than a third also “don’t know” the Board holds him accountable for the operation of the district.

While the college meets Standard IV.B.1.j as per its parameters, the survey results are indicative of underlying conflict and dissension on campus. The survey results suggest that the college may want to work to increase communication with all constituent groups to correct misperceptions, renew collaboration and establish mutual expectations.

Findings and Evidence

Sequoias Community College District is a single college district with a five-member Board of Trustees, elected by voters of the geographic areas they represent. The boundaries of these areas were reviewed summer and fall 2011 and approved October 10, 2011. The geographical representation, composition, and structure of the Board are outlined in board policies BP 2010 and BP 2210. In addition, administrative procedures also guide the Board's functions and actions. The Board arrives at decisions through a process of dialog guided by parliamentary procedures. As evidenced from the minutes of Board meetings, the Board is cohesive, functional, projects and protects the interests of the institution and the students it serves. (IV.B.1.a)

Through a variety of mechanisms including standing reports, Board meetings, and participatory governance practices, the Board establishes policies to ensure quality, integrity, and improvement of student learning programs and services. (IV.B.1.b)

There are clear processes indicating the governing board has ultimate responsibility for educational quality, legal matters, and financial integrity. Educational programs and curriculum are reviewed and approved by the Board of Trustees with input from the departments, divisions, the curriculum committee, and the Academic Senate. Regular reports by these groups keep the board informed on education matters.

The process to insure financial integrity begins with a preliminary budget adopted in May after it has been developed by Administrative Services in consultation with the president's cabinet. After being presented to the Institutional Budget Committee of the College Council, the final budget is adopted by the Board of Trustees in September following passage of the state's final budget. (IV.B.1.c)

The Board acts in a manner consistent with its policies and bylaws which are published on the district webpage. These bylaws and policies inform size, structure, duties, and responsibilities. A comprehensive review of all board policies was made in 2007 and completed by February 2008. This is done in a five-year cycle. (IV.B.1.e)

Trustee term lengths in the District are staggered to provide stability, continuity, and minimize disruption. Qualifications of the Board of Trustees are covered by BP 2010, and through BP 2740, the Board of Trustees has an ongoing development process for Board members, as well as a trustee education program. Internally, the Board conducts study sessions/retreats over two days each year, where planning, goal-setting and self-evaluation are carried out. There is a code of ethics that is clearly stated and published. (IV.B.1.f, IV.B.1.g, IV.B.1.h)

The Board of Trustees is regularly informed about and involved in the accreditation process through monthly updates by the Vice President of Academic Services about the accreditation process during the board and executive reports portion of the board meetings. (IV.B.1.i)

The superintendent/president is evaluated annually by the Board. In June 2011, Dr. Bill Scroggins resigned as superintendent/president, and a consultant was used to guide the

selection of the new superintendent/president. Stan A. Carrizosa was hired and started July 1, 2012. Dr. Scroggins was evaluated in June 2009, but there was no formal evaluation in 2010. It is noted in the Institutional Self Evaluation Report that the Board of Trustees will conduct a formal evaluation of the superintendent/president annually and the process is noted in the minutes. (IV.B.1.j)

The superintendent/president has primary responsibility for the quality of the institution and to provide effective leadership for planning, organizing, budgeting, selecting and developing personnel, and assessing institutional effectiveness. To carry out these responsibilities, the superintendent/president has established four Councils: The Senior Management Council which is made up of the superintendent/president, provosts, dean of Human resources and the vice presidents; the College Council which is the primary venue for shared governance; the Management Council; and, the Deans Council. Through these four Councils, the superintendent/president communicates with the various constituencies represented at COS and delegates authority to administrators and others consistent with their responsibilities, as appropriate. The accreditation survey verifies that "the superintendent/president provides effective leadership." Seventy percent of the respondents strongly agree or agree with this statement. (IV.B.2, IV.B.2.a)

In the first few years since the 2006 accreditation team visit the college was moving in a positive direction by attempting to establish collegial processes, increasing research capacity and developing a culture of evaluation and improvement, developing and assessing student learning outcomes, and improving planning and assessment efforts. However with transitions in leadership, financial impacts on the college, poor labor relations, work slowdowns, and breakdowns in governance processes, all of these efforts have been affected. In the months leading up to the fall 2012 accreditation team visit the Board of Trustees has hired a new President who is in the process of developing plans to improve all of these areas. However, at the time of the visit sufficient progress has not been made to ensure that the college's efforts will be successful. (IV.B.2.b)

The team found evidence that the superintendent/president ensures that institutional practices are consistent with institutional mission and policies. The strategic plan guides discussions and decisions. The strategic plan is linked to tactical plans which are linked to program plans. This process leads to recommendations that are sent to the College Council which uses them to make recommendations to the Senior Management Council for final decisions on resource planning and distribution to achieve student learning outcomes. (IV.B.2.c, IV.B.2.d)

The superintendent/president and his designees represent the district on various local boards and commissions. The superintendent/president speaks to about 15 service clubs throughout the district in addition to numerous business and trade organizations. (IV.B.2.e)

Conclusions

Evidence establishes that the College of the Sequoias partially meets this standard. While the roles and responsibilities of the Board of Trustees and of the Superintendent/President are understood and efforts have been made to establish collegial processes, transitions in leadership, financial impacts on the college, poor labor relations, work slowdowns, and

breakdowns in governance processes have negatively affected the effective operation of the institution.

Recommendations

See Recommendation 1, Planning (2012)

See Recommendation 3, Research Capacity (2012)

See Recommendation 4, Student Learning Outcomes (2012)

See Recommendation 7, Evaluation of Processes (2012)

