

## **Peer Review Team Report**

Sequoias Community College District  
915 South Mooney Boulevard  
Visalia, CA 93277

This report represents the findings of the Peer Review Team that conducted Team ISER Review on March 18, 2025, and a Focused Site Visit to College of the Sequoias, Sequoias Community College District from September 15 – 17, 2025. The Commission acted on the accredited status of the institution during its January 2026 meeting and this team report must be reviewed in conjunction with the Commission's Action letter.

Dr. Jennifer Zellet  
Team Chair

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## Sequoias Community College District

### Peer Review Team Roster

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#### **TEAM MEMBERS**

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Melynie Schiel  
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## **Purpose of Focused Site Visit and Summary Analysis**

INSTITUTION: Sequoias Community College District

DATES OF VISIT: September 15-16, 2025

TEAM CHAIR: Dr. Jennifer Zellet

### **Purpose of the Focused Site Visit**

This Peer Review Team Report is based on the findings of the peer review team which conducted its evaluation and analysis over a two-semester comprehensive peer review process. In March 2025, the team conducted Team ISER Review (formative component) to identify where the Institution meets Standards and to identify Core Inquiries which specify areas of attention for the Focused Site Visit (summative component). The team chair and vice chair held a pre-Focused Site Visit meeting with the institution's CEO on August 18, 2025, to discuss updates since the Team ISER Review and to plan for the Focused Site Visit.

The peer review team conducted a Focused Site Visit to College of the Sequoias on September 15 and 16, 2025 for the purpose of completing its Peer Review Team Report and determining whether the Institution continues to meet Accreditation Standards, Eligibility Requirements, Commission Policies, and U.S. Department of Education regulations. During the Focused Site Visit, team members met with approximately 70 faculty, administrators, classified staff and students in formal meetings, group interviews and individual interviews. The team held an open forum which was well attended and provided the Institution's community and others the opportunity to share their thoughts with members of the peer review team. The team evaluated how well the Institution is achieving its stated purposes, providing recommendations for quality assurance and institutional improvement. The team thanks the Institution's staff for hosting the Focused Site Visit, coordinating meetings, providing additional documentation, and ensuring a smooth and collegial process.

### **Summary Analysis**

As the College of the Sequoias (CoS) approaches its 100th year, our visiting team observed an institution marked by sustained growth, clear strategic vision, and a strong culture of care and collaboration. Founded in 1926 as Visalia Junior College, CoS has evolved into an independent community college district with the Visalia campus serving as its central hub since 1938. The student population is predominantly Hispanic/Latino and White, reflecting the demographic makeup of the surrounding region. Over the past decade, CoS has expanded its enrollment, program offerings, and infrastructure in ways that align well with its mission to provide accessible, affordable education to its regional community.

Enrollment trends are particularly notable, with growth from 11,266 students in 2015–16 to 13,586 in 2023–24. Fully online enrollment has increased by an impressive 375%, reflecting the college’s responsiveness to diverse student needs and changing educational delivery models.

Beyond quantitative growth, the team was impressed by the institution’s evident culture of care and collegiality. During a Zoom College Meet and Greet, faculty, staff, and administrators engaged openly and warmly with the team. This session showcased a campus-wide commitment to student success, with conversations highlighting not only academic programs and services but also a genuine concern for student well-being and development. The team noted the strong sense of mutual respect and collaboration among colleagues, which reinforces a unified institutional purpose.

The college’s integrated planning and budgeting model demonstrates effective coordination and alignment of resources with institutional goals. The college has proactively implemented state reforms such as AB 928 and AB 1111, adopting the Cal-GETC general education pathway and expanding access to Associate Degrees for Transfer (ADTs). These measures are part of a comprehensive strategy to facilitate seamless transfer to four-year colleges and universities and improve student completion outcomes.

Programmatically, the college has prioritized growth in critical workforce areas. The nursing program’s expansion from approximately 40 to 80 students per semester reflects both regional demand and institutional capacity-building, supported by the Board of Registered Nurses and a significant \$5.4 million anonymous donation in 2024. These funds further strengthen allied health, teacher preparation, and technology initiatives.

Facilities enhancements are advancing rapidly and strategically. The team visited and reviewed progress on the new Educational Support Services Building (Visalia) and the Applied Tech & Trades Complex (Tulare), both providing extraordinary instruction and support in state-of-the-art learning environments from industry professionals. Additional projects, including new science labs, performing arts facilities, and athletic upgrades, align with the college’s multi-year Facilities Master Plan.

A key component of CoS’s future growth is the planned University Center, which will offer local access to upper-division and graduate degree programs in partnership with four-year institutions. This initiative directly supports regional educational attainment goals and reflects the college’s forward-looking approach. In addition, the Tulare campus is comprised of approximately 500 acres, most of which is a blank canvas for future growth initiatives. All current building has been conducted with future growth in mind, knowing that what is considered the “main” part of the campus now will be the western side of campus in the future.

Student success metrics show positive trends, with a graduation rate rising to 32% in 2023–24 and retention for full-time students steady at approximately 70%. These improvements underscore the effectiveness of CoS’s comprehensive district-wide approach to student support, academic quality, and institutional planning.

In summary, the College of the Sequoias exhibits a consistent and cohesive commitment to its mission through a culture of collaboration, careful planning, and responsiveness to student and community needs. As it prepares to enter its second century, College of the Sequoias stands as a growing, nurturing, and united institution well-positioned to serve its region's educational and workforce demands.

## Major Findings

### Commendations:

Commendation 1: The team commends the Institution for its unwavering commitment to and execution of continuous improvement to drive equitable student success, characterized by well-defined, documented, integrated, and current planning and governing processes that ensure participation from all constituent groups, promote innovation and creativity, and empower employees to participate in the growth and development of the institution (1.2, 2.2, 3.5, 4.3).

### Recommendations for Compliance:

None.

### Recommendations to Improve Institutional Effectiveness:

Recommendation 1: In order to improve institutional effectiveness, the team recommends the college continues its momentum ensuring Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI) by continuing their comprehensive and collaborative efforts to enact policies and practices that sustain ongoing alignment with federal requirements for distance education, ACCJC's Policy on Distance Education, and on Correspondence Education (2.6).

### Required Documentation:

The Institution submitted the required documentation per the Accreditation Standards.

## Standard 1

### Mission and Institutional Effectiveness

#### General Observations:

The Sequoias Community College District's mission statement demonstrates a well-established commitment to its values, structure, and demographics, and reflects a strong dedication to equity and educational outcomes for all students. Data plays a central role in the college's planning and goal-setting process. Data analysis is conducted regularly through several methods, including the Annual Report on the Master Plan, Institutional Program Reviews, and Institutional Set-Standard analyses. This data helps identify challenges and opportunities for institutional improvement and innovation. The Program Review Dashboard allows for disaggregation of data on success rates, enrollment patterns, and withdrawal rates across different student groups. This granular analysis of data enables the institution to identify disparities and take action to close disproportionate impact gaps. The college's engagement in regular communication is illustrated by the dissemination of evaluative reports, stakeholder feedback, and dialogue events. The college also takes a reflective approach that is focused on learning and development. The regular reporting cycle, through surveys, assessments, and reports, helps track progress and sets the stage for the next cycle of improvement.

#### Findings and Evidence:

At the outset of its mission statement, the Sequoias Community College District underscores a dual commitment to delivering high-quality higher education and promoting equity for a diverse student population. This foundational focus, paired with the belief that all students should reach their full potential, serves as a guiding framework for shared governance, integrated planning, and professional development. Together with its vision and equity statements, the mission sets a clear standard: student success and equitable outcomes are inseparable and equally prioritized. The district demonstrates its dedication to this mission through a systematic, districtwide approach that ensures the inclusion of all stakeholder voices. Ongoing data sharing and analysis inform integrated planning, while regular self-assessment is embedded in program reviews, Dialogue Days, shared governance meetings, and diverse communication strategies that engage both internal and external stakeholders. A recent change to the Program Review process, extending the period from one year to two years, demonstrated the district's commitment to addressing data-substantiated concerns related to resource allocation and the implementation of SLO and PLO driven improvements. A compelling manifestation of the effectiveness of these efforts is the CoS Visalia University Center, which exemplifies the district's responsiveness to student and community need for access to post graduate education (1.1).

The Sequoias Community College District's approach to establishing meaningful and ambitious goals for institutional improvement, innovation, and equitable student outcomes is robust and comprehensive. Through careful data analysis, collaborative planning, and continuous review, the district ensures that its goals are relevant, actionable, and aligned with its mission. The program review process, Student Equity Plan, and Institution-Set Standards further enhance the district's ability to innovate and address disproportionate impact gaps, creating a dynamic and responsive environment focused on improving outcomes for all students. The integrated, evidence-based planning process demonstrates the district's commitment to continuous improvement and its determination to foster a more equitable and successful educational experience. The Integrated planning flowcharts create a clear, interactive and ongoing process for fulfilling the overall goals of the educational master plan and the district. The team commends the institution for its focus and success in creating and sustaining this impactful model of institutional effectiveness (1.2).

The team observes that the institution ensures accountability through systematic and data-driven practices, including program reviews, Institution-Set Standards, outcomes assessments, and surveys, which assess progress, identify strengths and weaknesses, and inform plans for improvement and innovation. These processes ensure that unit-level planning is meaningfully linked to districtwide goals, promoting continuous institutional progress. Clear, measurable performance standards are reviewed annually and adjusted as needed to remain relevant and effective. Disaggregated data from surveys and student learning outcomes assessments highlight disproportionate impact gaps and guide targeted strategies to close them. By incorporating both quantitative and qualitative evidence, the institution consistently aligns its actions with strategic goals, fostering a culture of accountability and informed decision-making across academic, student services, and administrative units. This integrated approach supports ongoing improvement and responsiveness to student needs (1.3).

The institution's mission directly informs resource allocation, innovation, and continuous quality improvement through the structured program review and annual update process which is tied to systematic planning and evaluation. The evaluation and analysis of programs that occur during this process informs the development of best practices. The district's unrestricted general fund is organized into three categories: non-discretionary base (primarily salaries and benefits), discretionary base (flexible operational costs), and above-base funding. While all the categories are mission aligned, the above-base funding is specifically designated by the Board of Trustees to support initiatives aligned with the Master Plan, Strategic Plan, and Program Reviews. This intentional allocation of funds ensures that planning efforts are financially supported and mission-driven, enabling innovation and sustained institutional improvement. Further, the rubric for ranking above-base funding used in the program evaluation process includes criteria that directly support the district's mission by requiring that there be a significant link to district objectives. The district demonstrated its commitment to mission directed resource allocation in the strategic hiring of positions that support instructional design and compliance and its considerable investment in basic needs initiatives across campus (1.4).

The college effectively communicates its progress toward achieving its mission and goals through multiple channels that engage both internal and external stakeholders, including joint Board meetings, community advisory committees, District-wide forums, and regular reports such as the Annual Report on the Master Plan, Student Equity Plan, and program reviews. These reports offer comprehensive updates on institutional performance and actively invite feedback. Dialogue is further encouraged through events like Dialogue Days and Convocation, which foster collaboration on key initiatives. The college's strong community engagement is exemplified by the creation of the CoS Visalia University Center, made possible through a locally supported bond measure. Transparency in resource allocation is maintained through publicly available reports and surveys, while the college's website serves as a central hub for sharing information. This commitment to clear, consistent communication enhances stakeholder understanding of the college's strengths, priorities, and areas for improvement (1.5).

Commendation 1: The team commends the Institution for its unwavering commitment to and execution of continuous improvement to drive equitable student success, characterized by well-defined, documented, integrated, and current planning and governing processes that ensure participation from all constituent groups, promote innovation and creativity, and empower employees to participate in the growth and development of the institution (1.2, 2.2, 3.5, 4.3).

Conclusions:

The Institution meets Standard 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5.

## **Standard 2**

### **Student Success**

### General Observations:

In alignment with its mission, College of the Sequoias (CoS) delivers high-quality academic and learning support programs designed to support diverse student populations across multiple campuses and modalities. Academic and student support services foster equitable student success, degree and certificate completion, transfer preparation, and workforce readiness. The district evaluates student learning and achievement data, disaggregated by student groups, to inform planning, curriculum design, and student services. Faculty play a central role in curriculum oversight, and institutional processes emphasize continuous improvement. Areas of excellence include innovative scheduling strategies, equity-minded curriculum design, and the development of comprehensive student support and engagement opportunities.

### Findings and Evidence:

The district offers 162 academic programs, 76 associate degrees, 45 certificate of achievement programs, 37 skills certificate programs, 3 noncredit certificate of competency programs, and 1 noncredit certificate of completion, that align with its mission to provide “excellent higher education.” Programs are offered at the Visalia Campus, Tulare College Center, Hanford Educational Center, and through Distance Education, Dual Enrollment, and Instructional Service Agreements. Academic rigor is ensured through the Curriculum Committee, which maintains consistency with California Community College standards and institutional goals. Curriculum Committee training (e.g., fall 2023 topics: unit calculations, regulations, policy/procedure updates) supports consistent application of generally accepted higher-education practices and ensures programs at all locations and in all delivery modes reflect appropriate breadth, depth, and expected learning outcomes (2.1).

Faculty lead curriculum development and program review, collaborating closely with industry partners to ensure alignment with disciplinary standards and workforce needs. This partnership is central to the process, as faculty and industry partners co-create a vision for new courses based on marketplace needs. Once a vision is established, faculty initiate the curriculum workflow, which affirms that the necessary resources will be available if the course is approved. With this assurance, faculty and partners draft student learning outcomes (SLOs) and assessments (SLOAs) that align with the specific needs of potential employers, ensuring students are prepared for the workforce.

Disaggregated student success data informs equity-minded revisions. For example, Child Development faculty revised CHLD 039 to integrate culturally relevant content and align with CSU transfer requirements. In 2022, the Curriculum Committee further strengthened this work by introducing an Equity Review rubric and guidelines that require faculty to examine course outlines for equity in areas such as descriptions, prerequisites, assignments, outcomes, and materials. This process has helped faculty develop more culturally relevant curriculum, connect students to resources, and improve success for disproportionately impacted groups. For instance, Political Science faculty used the rubric to identify changes to support Black/African

American males and Hispanic students, and CoS has shared this model with other colleges at the Curriculum Institute as a promising practice.

Career Technical Education (CTE) programs engage industry partners to ensure relevance. Faculty routinely assess outcomes on defined cycles; outcomes are embedded in course outlines of record (CORs), published in the Catalog and on the Outcomes & Assessment site, and managed in Nuventive Improve to support equitable attainment of learning outcomes and achievement of educational goals. The team commends successful practices that utilize continuous quality improvement to perfect offerings for students that lead to successful outcomes (2.2).

All degree programs include a General Education (GE) framework that emphasizes critical thinking, communication, quantitative reasoning, information literacy, civic responsibility, and engagement with diverse perspectives. In Fall 2023, the district revised General Education Learning Outcomes (GELOs) based on assessment results, ensuring alignment with Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs) and the statewide Cal-GETC transfer framework. The Outcome & Assessment Committee is piloting a revised GE/ILO assessment instrument in Fall 2024. The local GE pattern and UC/CSU transfer patterns both encompass these elements, and the district has convened a cross-functional task force to implement Cal-GETC beginning Fall 2025 (2.3).

The district communicates clear, accurate, and accessible program and service information through the Catalog, website, student portals, and course syllabi. Learning outcomes are available through multiple channels, and innovative practices such as the Nursing Division's laminated SLO badges which provide students with clear, accessible information. The Public Information Office coordinates cross-platform communication and evaluates effectiveness via analytics and surveys (2.4).

Course scheduling supports degree and certificate completion through coordinated planning by the Instructional Council and division faculty. The district holds itself accountable for ensuring programs can be completed in the expected time, and the Administration of Justice Division, for example, restructured course rotations to reduce student travel and support on-time completion. Guided Pathways sequencing maps and DegreeWorks planning tools further support timely progress. Enrollment Management practices (including a dean whose role is focused on data-informed scheduling) provide ongoing monitoring and training across divisions (2.5).

The team found that the district provides equitable student learning opportunities across all delivery modes and maintains effective quality assurance processes for distance education. The district offers courses and programs through various delivery modes, including face-to-face, fully online, and hybrid, ensuring equitable learning opportunities for all students. The Canvas Learning Management System is used for all online and hybrid courses, meeting requirements for distance education and authentication. A robust curriculum approval process, which includes a Distance Learning Addendum, ensures that all online and hybrid courses adhere to

best practices for online delivery. Further, online faculty are required to specify how they will provide regular and substantive interaction (RSI) for student engagement in courses. The team confirms that online courses demonstrate RSI.

The district supports instructional effectiveness through a comprehensive system that includes faculty development, program review, evaluations, and student feedback. The District's Master Agreement mandates that all faculty assigned to an online course must successfully complete a rigorous Online Certification in Teaching and Accessibility. This certification is maintained through ongoing training. To support and motivate faculty, the district offers incentives such as release time and stipends for developing or revising distance learning curriculum.

A variety of additional resources are provided to ensure course quality and accessibility. These include a campus-wide Canvas template to support accessible course structures and webinars on best practices. Faculty are encouraged to implement simplified navigation and orientation modules to maintain consistent course layouts. The district also provides training for the CVC-OEI Peer Online Course Review (POCR), allowing faculty to request peer reviews to help them assess and improve their courses.

The team acknowledges that the district's success in RSI is closely tied to the comprehensive and all-hands-on-deck approach to addressing initial inquiries related to online education. The team recommends that the district continues its momentum by working comprehensively and collaboratively together to institutionalize practices to sustain ongoing alignment with federal requirements for distance education (2.6).

The team confirms that the district provides equitable and effective student support services including counseling, mental health resources, disability services, and career preparation that address academic and non-academic needs and maximize potential for student success. The atmosphere and support in the Veteran's center and Welcome center exemplify the district's overall commitment to students across all programs. The Basic Needs Center (Giant Marketplace and Giant Threads) addresses food insecurity and clothing needs. Library Services and Learning Centers (Math Lab, Writing Center, Language Lab) provide academic support both in person and online. Services are accessible across modalities and tailored to diverse student populations (2.7).

Student engagement is fostered through 44 clubs, athletics, identity-based organizations, and career-focused networking events. Programs such as the HBCU Pathways initiative and Entree to Employment expand opportunities for disproportionately impacted students. Student Senate leadership and community performance activities, such as those in the Theatre Department, enhance belonging and civic participation. The team notes the active and engaged student atmosphere. The team observed student spaces and open quads that were bustling with activity. The team appreciates the involvement of student representatives to support the college tour and their participation in on-site interviews. (2.8).

The district uses systematic program review, supported by a comprehensive technology solution, to assess academic programs, student services, and learning support. Faculty and

administrators analyze disaggregated data to identify disproportionate impact gaps. For example, the district established a Dream Center to expand services for undocumented students in response to assessment findings. In the instructional area, review of data led to analysis and reflection of aggregate differences in student course achievement by modality. Such activity was confirmed by the team to validate the institution's honest reflection and commitment to continuous improvement. Program review and ILO/GELO assessment results inform improvements and innovations in support of equitable student achievement (2.9).

Recommendation 1: In order to improve institutional effectiveness, the team recommends the college continues its momentum ensuring Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI) by continuing their comprehensive and collaborative efforts to put policies and practices in place to sustain ongoing alignment with federal requirements for distance education, ACCJC's Policy on Distance Education and on Correspondence Education (2.6).

Commendation 1: The team commends the Institution for its unwavering commitment to and execution of continuous improvement to drive equitable student success, characterized by well-defined, documented, integrated, and current planning and governing processes that ensure participation from all constituent groups, promote innovation and creativity, and empower employees to participate in the growth and development of the institution (1.2, 2.2, 3.5, 4.3).

Conclusions:

The district meets Standards 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, 2.7, 2.8, and 2.9.

## Standard 3

### Infrastructure and Resources

#### General Observations:

Sequoias Community College District has established policies and practices in the administrative areas of infrastructure, human resources, budget and financial management, and facilities management to support its educational services and operational functions. The college employs qualified personnel through structured hiring processes aligned with district goals, emphasizing diversity and equity. With overall effectiveness and student success in mind, professional development is guided by the CoS Professional Learning Plan, with various training opportunities informed by feedback. Employee evaluations occur regularly, ensuring performance aligns with institutional priorities. Fiscal planning integrates budget processes with governance structures, ensuring transparency and stability. Financial controls include audits and participatory governance. The college maintains physical resources, follows a Technology Services Plan, and ensures data security. Risk management strategies cover financial, environmental, and technological emergencies, with efforts to enhance resilience and security across all operational areas.

#### Findings and Evidence:

The district employs qualified faculty, staff, administrators, and other personnel to support educational services and enhance student success. Its hiring processes are guided by comprehensive policies and procedures, such as the Integrated Planning Manual and Board policies, ensuring alignment with district goals. Positions are filled through detailed procedures that involve input from various councils, ensuring positions align with the mission and goals. The district also prioritizes equity and diversity in recruitment, requiring equity narratives in applications and ensuring equal employment opportunity through its EEO Plan. Regular assessments of workforce and applicant pools are conducted to foster a diverse, inclusive environment. The hiring procedures for all employee categories—faculty, staff, and administrators—are publicly available and updated regularly to meet institutional needs, ensuring the employment of qualified individuals who contribute to the institution's mission and student success (3.1).

The institution identifies employees' professional learning needs through methods aligned with its mission and goals, focusing on closing achievement gaps. The CoS Professional Learning Plan guides district-wide development, emphasizing student-centeredness and discipline-specific needs. Professional development opportunities include Convocation Week, New Faculty Orientation, FLEX activities, and workshops for faculty, staff, and administrators. Feedback from the Giant Questionnaire and attendees helps shape future offerings. Managers participate in the Management Institute, and compliance training is available through SafeSchools. The

institution evaluates its professional learning programs using feedback from evaluations and the Annual Report, continuously improving to meet employee needs (3.2).

The institution evaluates all employees at regular intervals, using clear criteria that align with professional responsibilities, Board policies, institutional mission and goals. Such processes foster employee development and success. Employee evaluations assess performance, participation, and identify areas for improvement, with follow-up as needed. Evidence of the various evaluation forms reflects the importance of high-quality performance. The process varies by employee group, with specific guidelines for staff, confidential, faculty, and administrators outlined in collective bargaining agreements and/or personnel policies and employee handbooks. While CoS uses Banner to store full-time and adjunct faculty evaluations, either Human Resources or the appropriate Vice President must track and notify administrators/managers when evaluations are due. The district also uses an automated system, NEOED, for classified staff to track and ensure timely evaluations, achieving a very high level of completion for this employee group, which is an achievement to be recognized. The district aims to broaden NEOED evaluation tracking to full-time and part-time faculty in the coming year. Regular assessments inform professional development, improve job performance, and align with institutional priorities, ensuring ongoing employee growth (3.3).

College of the Sequoias has sufficient resources to support essential programs, operational functions, and educational improvements. Its Institutional Planning Process aligns budget development and resource allocation with District goals, documented in various planning and governance manuals. The budget process prioritizes maintaining a stable base budget while allocating additional funds through governance processes. Fiscal stability is ensured through a healthy fund balance and financial projections, with routine financial reports enhancing transparency. The Program Review Process allows units to request extra resources, assessed the following year for effectiveness. Resource allocation follows clear priorities, with funding requests tied to District goals and evaluated through a structured rubric system (3.4).

The district's fiscal planning is integrated deeply into institutional planning and guided by its mission and goals, which are reviewed every three years. Board policies and administrative procedures ensure financial stability and transparency, with financial information shared broadly. Governance groups, councils, and committees provide opportunities for stakeholder participation in financial planning, budgeting, and prioritization. Stakeholders receive realistic assessments of financial resources, including the annual budget and future fiscal commitments. The budget aligns with institutional plans, program reviews, and the resource allocation process. For example, the team learned of a particular resource allocation request borne out of an EMT emergency response simulation exercise in which the instructor saw a real resource need for the program. The team commends the district for the strong participatory governance structure and processes that foster robust dialogue and feedback throughout budget development, ensuring mission adherence, transparency, and broad stakeholder involvement

across all locations, leading to resource allocations that directly support student achievement(3.5).

The institution maintains effective internal and external controls to ensure accurate and timely financial information for decision-making. It follows board policies and administrative procedures, ensuring proper separation of duties. The district contracts an external audit firm for annual evaluations of financial statements and internal controls, addressing audit findings promptly. For the last several years, CoS has consistently received clean audit reports and uses audit information to improve financial management. Budget and financial information is communicated regularly through governance structures and is publicly available on the district's website for transparency. Continuous process improvements are made based on audit results and participatory governance input (3.6).

The district safeguards its financial solvency with clear policies, procedures, and processes that align with district goals and objectives such as the Resource Allocation process which requires robust minimum reserve levels. The district has Board Policy on Budget Preparation, Budget Management, and Fiscal Management, and it follows robust, regular processes that monitor its institutional budgets and cash flow, ensuring fiscal stability for resource allocation to meet programmatic and operational needs. The team noted that the district uses a multi-year projection that includes the budget year revenues and expenses plus two. The institution also appropriately handles its long-term liabilities and obligations such as paying down debt and Other Post-Employment Benefit (OPEB) obligations, employing health benefit caps, and utilizing other liability alleviation strategies (3.7).

College of the Sequoias demonstrates that it does construct and maintain the physical resources to support educational programs, services, and operational functions that are in alignment with its mission and goals. The district, through its general obligation bond financing from 2006 and 2008, has addressed significant capital improvement and deferred maintenance needs identified in the Educational and Facilities Master Plan, Space Inventory, and other facilities planning documents. The district has specific policies, procedures, and systems in place to ensure facilities at all locations are safely maintained according to district and local safety regulations and standards (3.8).

In accordance with the district's mission and goals, the college has an aligned Technology Services Plan that outlines technology planning and implementation. The Technology Committee, reporting up to the District Governance Senate, is the primary participatory governance body responsible for technology planning and evaluation including infrastructure, services, professional support, hardware and software, planning, plan implementation, annual progress report on the Technology Plan, instructional technology standards, and compliance with policy. CoS has well-defined policies, procedures, and other supporting documents that guide appropriate and safe use of technology that are clearly communicated to students and employees. The Technology Services program review includes an evaluation of technology infrastructure, including network security, to ensure ongoing effectiveness in supporting

educational services and operations. The district also conducts several user satisfaction surveys to identify and address technology service gaps (3.9).

As evidenced in the district's policies and procedures, CoS has appropriate strategies for risk management in the event of financial, environmental, and technological emergencies. The institution consistently meets or exceeds its minimum financial reserves established in the Board Policy and aims by Board Priority to maintain General Fund reserves at or above the average for community colleges statewide. The district participates in three different Joint Powers Authority groups (JPAs) for property and liability, workers compensation, and health insurance benefits and coverage. It also has detailed plans, policies, and procedures for potential environmental emergencies, natural disasters, or hazardous conditions. The district has procedures for the back-up and recovery of sensitive data systems and performs an annual simulation to ensure the recovery of its Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system should it be compromised. The team notes that in the last two (2) years, the district has completed several initiatives to improve technological resilience and hired additional staff to support increased network security (3.10).

Commendation 1: The team commends the Institution for its unwavering commitment to and execution of continuous improvement to drive equitable student success, characterized by well-defined, documented, integrated, and current planning and governing processes that ensure participation from all constituent groups, promote innovation and creativity, and empower employees to participate in the growth and development of the institution (1.2, 2.2, 3.5, 4.3).

Conclusions:

The Institution meet Standards 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7, 3.8, 3.9, and 3.10.

## Standard 4

### Governance and Decision-Making

#### General Observations:

College of the Sequoias is committed to transparency and inclusivity in governance and decision-making. The Board of Trustees, comprised of five locally elected officials (BP 2010), follows relevant Board Policies, abiding by the Code of Ethics (BP 2715), Conflict of Interest (BP 2710), and following Board Duties and Responsibilities (BP 2200). The team finds that the Board appropriately delegates authority to the Superintendent/President and conducts an annual planning retreat and self-evaluation. The quality and detail of the governance documents (e.g. Governance and Decision-Making Manual, Resource Allocation Manual, and Integrated Planning Manual) promote participation, innovation, and continuous improvement in the pursuit of the college mission and student success.

#### Findings and Evidence:

The college demonstrates a methodological approach to governance and upholds principles of academic freedom, academic integrity, and freedom of inquiry. Extensive documentation of practice, e.g. BP/APs, the catalog, Code of Ethics, and Student Standards of Conduct, exemplifies the college's commitment. The team confirms that cyclical review of these documents ensures relevancy and applicability (4.1).

The Governance and Decision-Making Manual defines roles, responsibilities, and authority for participation in governance. This clearly organized document defines each group's responsibilities and participation. No matter the constituency, (Board Members, administrators, faculty, classified professionals, or students) this document describes not only how, but also why and by what authority participation takes place. Three types of groups develop recommendations, and the purpose of the task determines the type of group. The Governance and Decision-Making Manual authorizes Governance Groups, Operational Groups, and Task Forces. In the document, three Governance Groups are named: District Governance Senate, Academic Senate, and Student Senate. Reporting to each Senate are a series of committees tasked with the business of the college comprised of representatives from constituent groups. Each Senate makes recommendations to the Superintendent President who makes recommendations to the Board of Trustees. The team is impressed by the climate of collaboration that was central to most conversations during the site visit. It is clear to the team that the district's well defined and universally accepted planning processes are fundamental to the environment and culture (4.2).

The college website hosts a governance page that provides ready access to the three planning manuals essential to promoting consistent and effective governance: The Governance and Decision-Making Manual, Resource Allocation Manual, and the Integrated Planning Manual. These documents provide the structure and process for collaboration across constituent groups and promote innovation. The 5 agreed upon principles of participatory governance (Mutuality, Collegiality and Collaboration; Transparency; Representative Participation; Mutual Accountability; and Clarity of Roles) promote consistent participation regardless of the function of the group. Administrative Procedure 3255 ensures annual review and open access to any Senate to propose modifications or changes to the document. The Integrated Planning Manual describes how constituent groups contribute to the overall planning of the college. Beginning with the College's Mission, all subsequent steps (e.g. setting of goals, action plans, etc.) are determined. The Governance and Decision-Making Manual, Resource Allocation Manual, and the Integrated Planning Manual are detailed and well-integrated to support decision-making and innovation. Interviews during the site visit demonstrated real-time adherence to and active appreciation for the institution's decision-making processes, crediting these documents with the continued success and growth of the college. In addition, employees remarked on the continued intentionality of the plans stating, "Everyone knows why they are here every day". The team commends the college for the comprehensive, accessible nature of the governance documents, which empower all employees to participate in the daily function and future improvements of the college (4.3).

The governing Board of Trustees takes responsibility for establishing policies that ensure the quality, integrity, and improvement of institutional processes. These policies are reviewed on a six-year cycle, and the board takes guidance from the annual updates from the Community College League of California's Board Policy and Procedure Service, ensuring compliance with legal mandates. Having ultimate responsibility for monitoring institutional performance and educational quality, evidence shows the Board approves curriculum and programs; monitors financial resources through regular updates and annual external audits; and adoption of final budgets (4.4).

Evidence shows that the board selects and evaluates the CEO according to Board Policy and Administrative Procedure. The current CEO, Dr. Brent Calvin, was hired in March of 2018, and has since had annual evaluations. The CoS Management Handbook outlines the base job description for the position, and the contract has a provision for annual evaluation, which includes constituent feedback. The college's Superintendent/President has primary responsibility for the daily operations and quality of the college, as the Board delegates this authority per Board Policy 2430 (4.5).

The governing board functions effectively, acting collectively on official decisions. Board of Trustee meetings ensure transparency to the public, and documents are circulated to Trustees prior to the meeting to support preparation. The Code of Ethics/Standards of Practice policy

states, “When speaking to members of the public, Board members should always clarify whether they are speaking as a member of the Board or as a private citizen.” This statement is designed to ensure that Board decisions are clearly communicated and are discrete from personal belief and opinion. Evidence shows that the Board meets regularly, accomplishes the business of the college, and takes appropriate actions to ensure the functionality and vitality of the college. The board conducts an annual planning retreat where board priorities are discussed and determined, and the board conducts self-evaluations annually (4.6).

Commendation 1: The team commends the Institution for its unwavering commitment to and execution of continuous improvement to drive equitable student success, characterized by well-defined, documented, integrated, and current planning and governing processes that ensure participation from all constituent groups, promote innovation and creativity, and empower employees to participate in the growth and development of the institution (1.2, 2.2, 3.5, 4.3).

Conclusions:

The Institution meet Standards 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6.

## Verification of Required Documentation

The evaluation items detailed in this Checklist are those which fall specifically under federal regulations and related Commission policies, beyond what is articulated in the Accreditation Standards. Some required documentation may have been used in response to ACCJC Standards that address the same or similar subject matter. For each required item listed, the team must verify its review of the required documentation, and indicated its conclusion by choosing one of the options below and note any comment or concerns where needed:

Verified	The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission’s requirements.
Verified, with Recommendations for improvement	The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission’s requirements, but improvement is recommended.
Not met	The team has reviewed the elements of this component and found the institution does not meet the Commission’s requirements.

### Standard 1: Mission and Institutional Effectiveness

Required Item	Conclusions
i. Documentation of institution’s authority to operate as a post-secondary educational institution and award degrees (e.g., degree-granting approval statement, authorization to operate, articles of incorporation) (ER 1)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Verified <input type="checkbox"/> Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement <input type="checkbox"/> Not met <b>Recommendation(s) for improvement:</b>
ii. Procedures/practices for periodic review of mission/mission-related statements, including provisions for revision (if/when revisions are needed) that allow for participation of institutional stakeholders, as appropriate for the character and context of the institution	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Verified <input type="checkbox"/> Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement <input type="checkbox"/> Not met <b>Recommendation(s) for improvement:</b>
iii. Documentation of the governing board’s approval of the institutional mission (ER 6)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Verified <input type="checkbox"/> Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement <input type="checkbox"/> Not met <b>Recommendation(s) for improvement:</b>
iv. Procedures/practices for setting institutional goals, including provisions for the inclusion of input from relevant institutional stakeholders, as appropriate for the character and context of the institution	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Verified <input type="checkbox"/> Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement <input type="checkbox"/> Not met <b>Recommendation(s) for improvement:</b>

<p>v. Documentation that the institution has established standards and goals for student achievement (i.e., institution-set standards), including but not limited to standards and goals for course success, degree and certificate attainment, transfer, job placement rates, and licensure examination pass rates, at the institutional and program levels (ER 2, ER 11)</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Verified  <input type="checkbox"/> Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement  <input type="checkbox"/> Not met  <b>Recommendation(s) for improvement:</b></p>
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## Standard 2: Student Success

Required Item	Conclusions
<p>i. Documentation that the institution's practices for awarding credit reflect generally accepted norms in higher education, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commonly accepted minimum program lengths for certificates, associate degrees, and baccalaureate degrees</li> <li>• Written policies for determining credit hours that are consistently applied to all courses, programs, and modalities</li> <li>• Adherence to the Department of Education's standards for clock-to-credit hour conversions, if applicable (ER 10)</li> </ul> <p>(See Commission <a href="#">Policy on Credit Hour, Clock Hour, and Academic Year</a>)</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Verified  <input type="checkbox"/> Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement  <input type="checkbox"/> Not met  <b>Recommendation(s) for improvement:</b></p>
<p>ii. Documentation that the institution's transfer of credit policies include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any established criteria the institution uses regarding the transfer of credit earned at another institution</li> <li>• Any types of institutions or sources from which the institution will not accept credits</li> <li>• A list of institutions with which the institution has established an articulation agreement</li> <li>• Written criteria used to evaluate and award credit for prior learning experience including, but not limited to, service in the armed forces, paid or unpaid employment, or other demonstrated competency or learning</li> </ul> <p>See <a href="#">Policy on Transfer of Credit</a></p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Verified  <input type="checkbox"/> Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement  <input type="checkbox"/> Not met  <b>Recommendation(s) for improvement:</b></p>
<p>iii. Documentation of the institution's advertising and recruitment policies, demonstrating alignment with the <a href="#">Policy on Institutional Advertising and Student Recruitment</a> (ER 16)</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Verified  <input type="checkbox"/> Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement  <input type="checkbox"/> Not met  <b>Recommendation(s) for improvement:</b></p>

Required Item	Conclusions
iv. Documentation of clear policies and procedures for handling student complaints, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence that these policies/procedures are accessible to students in the catalog and online;</li> <li>• Evidence that that institution provides contact information for filing complaints with associations, agencies and governmental bodies that accredit, approve, or license the institution and any of its programs</li> </ul>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Verified <input type="checkbox"/> Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement <input type="checkbox"/> Not met <b>Recommendation(s) for improvement:</b>
v. Verification that the institution maintains files of formal student complaints received throughout the current accreditation cycle (i.e., since the last site visit), demonstrating: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accurate and consistent implementation of complaint policies and procedures</li> <li>• No issues indicative of noncompliance with Standards</li> </ul>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Verified <input type="checkbox"/> Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement <input type="checkbox"/> Not met <b>Recommendation(s) for improvement:</b>
vi. Verification that student records are stored permanently, securely, and confidentially, with provision for secure backup	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Verified <input type="checkbox"/> Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement <input type="checkbox"/> Not met <b>Recommendation(s) for improvement:</b>
vii. Documentation of the institution’s policies and/or practices for the release of student records	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Verified <input type="checkbox"/> Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement <input type="checkbox"/> Not met <b>Recommendation(s) for improvement:</b>
viii. Documentation that the institution’s policies and procedures for program discontinuance provide enrolled students with opportunities for timely completion in the event of program elimination	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Verified <input type="checkbox"/> Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement <input type="checkbox"/> Not met <b>Recommendation(s) for improvement:</b>
ix. Official college catalog contains required elements (ER 20)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Verified <input type="checkbox"/> Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement <input type="checkbox"/> Not met <b>Recommendation(s) for improvement:</b>

<b>FOR TITLE IV PARTICIPANTS:</b>	
<p>x. Documentation of institution's implementation of the required components of the Title IV Program, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Findings from any audits and program/other review activities by the U.S. Department of Education (ED)</li> <li>• Evidence of timely corrective action taken in response to any Title IV audits or program reviews</li> </ul> <p>See <a href="#">Policy on Institutional Compliance with Title IV</a></p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Verified  <input type="checkbox"/> Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement  <input type="checkbox"/> Not met  <b>Recommendation(s) for improvement:</b></p>
<b>FOR INSTITUTIONS WITH DISTANCE EDUCATION AND/OR CORRESPONDENCE EDUCATION:</b>	
<p>xi. Documentation of institution's:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Procedures for verifying that the student who registers in a course offered via distance education or correspondence education is the same person who participates in the course and receives academic credit</li> <li>• Policies and/or procedures for notifying students of any charges associated with verification of student identity (if applicable)</li> <li>• Policies regarding protection of student privacy</li> </ul> <p>See <a href="#">Policy on Distance Education and on Correspondence Education</a></p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Verified  <input type="checkbox"/> Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement  <input type="checkbox"/> Not met  <b>Recommendation(s) for improvement:</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable</p>
<b>REQUIRED ONLY IF APPLICABLE</b>	
<p>xii. Documentation demonstrating how the institution distinguishes its pre-collegiate curriculum from its college-level curriculum</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Verified  <input type="checkbox"/> Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement  <input type="checkbox"/> Not met  <b>Recommendation(s) for improvement:</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable</p>
<p>xiii. Documentation of policies and/or procedures for awarding credit for prior learning and/or competency-based credit</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Verified  <input type="checkbox"/> Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement  <input type="checkbox"/> Not met  <b>Recommendation(s) for improvement:</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable</p>
<p>xiv. Documentation of agreements with other external parties regarding the provision of student and/or learning support services</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Verified  <input type="checkbox"/> Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement  <input type="checkbox"/> Not met  <b>Recommendation(s) for improvement:</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable</p>

xv. Policies and/or other documentation related to institutional expectations of conformity with any specific worldviews or beliefs	<input type="checkbox"/> Verified <input type="checkbox"/> Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement <input type="checkbox"/> Not met <b>Recommendation(s) for improvement:</b>  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable
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### Standard 3: Infrastructure and Resources

Required Item	Conclusions
i. Written policies and procedures for human resources, including hiring procedures	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Verified <input type="checkbox"/> Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement <input type="checkbox"/> Not met <b>Recommendation(s) for improvement:</b>
ii. Employee handbooks or similar documents that communicate expectations to employees	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Verified <input type="checkbox"/> Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement <input type="checkbox"/> Not met <b>Recommendation(s) for improvement:</b>
iii. Annual financial audit reports - 3 prior years (include auxiliary organizations, if applicable) (ER 5)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Verified <input type="checkbox"/> Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement <input type="checkbox"/> Not met <b>Recommendation(s) for improvement:</b>
iv. Practices for resource allocation and budget development (including budget allocation model for multi-college districts/systems)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Verified <input type="checkbox"/> Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement <input type="checkbox"/> Not met <b>Recommendation(s) for improvement:</b>
v. Policies guiding fiscal management (e.g., related to reserves, budget development)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Verified <input type="checkbox"/> Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement <input type="checkbox"/> Not met <b>Recommendation(s) for improvement:</b>
vi. Policies, procedures or agreements (e.g., AUAs) related to appropriate use of technology systems	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Verified <input type="checkbox"/> Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement <input type="checkbox"/> Not met <b>Recommendation(s) for improvement:</b>
<b>FOR TITLE IV PARTICIPANTS:</b>	

<p>vii. Documentation that the institution's student loan default rates are within the acceptable range defined by ED, or – if rates fall outside the acceptable range - documentation of corrective efforts underway to address the issue</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Verified  <input type="checkbox"/> Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement  <input type="checkbox"/> Not met  <b>Recommendation(s) for improvement:</b>   <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable</p>
<b>REQUIRED ONLY IF APPLICABLE</b>	
<p>viii. Documentation of any agreements that fall under ACCJC's policy on contractual relationships with non-accredited organizations</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Verified  <input type="checkbox"/> Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement  <input type="checkbox"/> Not met  <b>Recommendation(s) for improvement:</b>   <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable</p>
<p>ix. Written code of professional ethics for all personnel including consequences for violations</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Verified  <input type="checkbox"/> Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement  <input type="checkbox"/> Not met  <b>Recommendation(s) for improvement:</b>   <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable</p>

#### Standard 4: Governance and Decision-Making

Required Item	Documentation
<p>i. Governing board policies/procedures for selecting and regularly evaluating its chief executive officer</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Verified  <input type="checkbox"/> Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement  <input type="checkbox"/> Not met  <b>Recommendation(s) for improvement:</b></p>
<p>ii. Documentation or certification that the institution's CEO does not serve as the chair of the governing board (ER 4)</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Verified  <input type="checkbox"/> Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement  <input type="checkbox"/> Not met  <b>Recommendation(s) for improvement:</b></p>
<p>iii. Governing board policies/procedures/bylaws related to Board Ethics</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Verified  <input type="checkbox"/> Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement  <input type="checkbox"/> Not met  <b>Recommendation(s) for improvement:</b></p>

Required Item	Documentation
iv. Governing board policies/procedures/bylaws related to conflict of interest	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Verified <input type="checkbox"/> Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement <input type="checkbox"/> Not met <b>Recommendation(s) for improvement:</b>

### Other Federal Regulations and Related Commission Policies

Required Item	Conclusions
i. Documentation of the institution’s appropriate and timely effort to solicit third party comment in advance of the Focused Site Visit and – if applicable - cooperate with the review team in any necessary follow-up  See <a href="#">Policy on Rights, Responsibilities, and Good Practice in Relations with Member Institutions</a> , Section D	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Verified <input type="checkbox"/> Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement <input type="checkbox"/> Not met <b>Recommendation(s) for improvement:</b>
ii. Documentation that the institution provides accurate information for the public concerning its accredited status with ACCJC on its institutional website, no more than one page (one click) away from the home page  See <a href="#">Policy on Representation of Accredited Status</a>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Verified <input type="checkbox"/> Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement <input type="checkbox"/> Not met <b>Recommendation(s) for improvement:</b>