

COS MASTER PLAN - CHAPTER 1 – DRAFT 2

Historical Context

In 1926, Visalia Junior College was established, originally as a department in a city high school. Initially, its mission was to provide inexpensive, lower-division postsecondary education to local high school graduates who intended to transfer to a four-year institution. As student interest in higher education increased over the next decade, Visalia Junior College grew. In 1938, a permanent Visalia campus was built. As the college grew, it formally became the Sequoias Community College District (SCCD), and specifically College of the Sequoias (COS)--serving portions of Tulare County, Kings County, and Fresno County.

In the late 1990s, the Board of Trustees became aware that COS programs and services could no longer be accommodated primarily on the Visalia campus. To keep pace with its growing communities, expand student access across the District, and contribute to the economic development of both Tulare and Kings Counties, the Board was intentional in building additional sites to serve all residents of the District.

Geographical Context

The Sequoias Community College District located in Visalia, Hanford, and Tulare, California, occupies the unceded ancestral lands of many tribal families of the great Yokuts peoples, the Wukchumni, Tulumni, Tachi, who are the original caretakers that used only what is needed from the land and are still amongst us today. Considering the SCCD continues to benefit from the systemic oppression that occurred historically in this local region, this section begins by intentionally seeking to recognize the continual existence of Native American peoples of this geographic region to shift away from the historical amnesia of omitting their integral ties and contributions to these lands where the SCCD is now located.

College of the Sequoias lies in the heart of the San Joaquin Valley, which is comprised of eight counties, including all of Kings County, most of Fresno, Kern, Merced, and Stanislaus counties, and portions of Madera, San Luis Obispo, Tulare counties. With a population exceeding 3 million residents, the San Joaquin Valley is globally recognized as one of the most productive agricultural regions in the world. (https://web.archive.org/web/20141022150246/http://valleycan.org/fact_sheets_info/sjv_fact_sheet.php.html)

The San Joaquin Valley plays a significant role in growing many of California's 200 commercially produced crops, making agriculture a leading economic engine of the region. This robust agricultural activity serves as a cornerstone of the region's economy, contributing 14% of GDP, 17% of employment, and 19% of revenues in the San Joaquin Valley as a whole. (*Escriva-Bou, Hanak, Cole, Medellin-Azuara, The Future of Agriculture in the San Joaquin Valley*)

Nestled in the heart of the San Joaquin Valley, College of the Sequoias serves as a center for higher education and career-technical education, catering to the educational needs of local residents. Encompassing 2,893 square miles, the District's geographic borders include sections of Tulare, Kings, and Fresno Counties. While the following specifically discusses the geographic borders of the District, COS also extends its service to a diverse range of students from surrounding areas and across the State.

Tulare County, comprising about 80% of the district's boundaries, is a moderate-sized rural county spanning 4,839 square miles. Nearly half of the county is made up of public land, such as the Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Park and the Sequoia National Forest. The incorporated communities in Tulare County within the College of the Sequoias boundaries include, but are not limited to: Exeter, Farmersville, Lindsay, Goshen, Orosi, Three Rivers, Tulare, Visalia, and Woodlake. Visalia, the county seat, is the largest of these with 142,978 residents in 2023.

<https://www.census.gov/>

Kings County, which includes about 19% of the district's boundaries, is a small rural county of 1,392 square miles, primarily dedicated to agricultural land. The incorporated cities in Kings County within the COS boundaries are Corcoran and Hanford which also serves as the county seat and is the largest city in the County with 58,496 residents in 2020. <https://www.census.gov/>

Fresno County, which comprises about 1% of the District's boundaries, encompasses both rural and urban areas. With 1,015,190 people, Fresno County is the 10th most populated county in California. Fresno county is notably recognized for its expansive agricultural land, foothills and vibrant cities. Fresno County's geographical diversity plays a pivotal role in its importance as a significant contributor to the state's agricultural and economic sectors. <https://www.census.gov/>

Higher Education in the Region

Sequoias Community College District (SCCD) is part of the California Community College system, the largest system of higher education in the United States, with 116 colleges organized into 73 districts. Today, COS offers various associate degrees, dual enrollment courses, career technical education (CTE) programs, and contract education classes. Specifically, COS offers 33 different Associate Degrees for Transfer and over 40 local associate degrees. In addition, 44 certificates of achievement and 41 skills certificates are available to students.

The three community college districts which border the COS District are Kern Community College District, West Hills Community College District, and State Center Community College District. For comparison, in the 2022-23 academic year, College of the Sequoias served 17,365 students. West Hills Community College District and Kern Community College District served 8,992 and 51,809, respectively, and the largest of the three neighboring districts, State Center Community College District served 56,873 students. (*The 2022-23 Annual Student Count Report, datamart.cccco.edu*)

CSU Bakersfield is about 78 miles from Visalia and UC Merced, about 100 miles from Visalia. The closest public 4-year university is Fresno State which is approximately 50 miles from Visalia. The University, however, also operates a satellite campus which offers four Bachelor degree programs on the COS Visalia Campus.

To provide more opportunities in higher education, in Fall 2022, residents of the COS School Facility Improvement District #2 (Visalia, Cutler-Orosi, Farmersville, Exeter, and Woodlake Unified School Districts) passed Measure C, a \$95 million bond which will fund a University Center on the Visalia campus. This will allow the district to establish partnerships with four-year universities and provide students with more bachelor's and master's Degree programs.

COS operates three primary campuses that provide a diverse range of comprehensive offerings, both on-campus and online, and that fulfill transfer requirements and/or lead to associate degrees

and certificates in a variety of majors. Each primary physical campus is anchored with specific CTE programs which serve as anchor programs for the campus. In addition, all three campuses offer a full complement of student support services, including but not limited to library resources, matriculation, counseling, admissions and records, a bookstore, District police, a career and transfer center, Access and Ability Center, equal opportunity programs and services, food services, job placement, outreach, student financial aid services, health services, Basic Support, mental health services, and educational support services. To learn more about the specific services, please refer to Chapter 4, and for specific Facilities information, please refer to Chapter 5.

COS Visalia Campus

In addition to general education courses, the Visalia campus is home to the following CTE programs: Nursing and Allied Health, Administration of Justice, Human Services, Culinary, Fashion, Business, and Child Development. In addition to these anchor programs, the Visalia campus has specialized facilities and equipment available to accommodate performances for athletics and the Fine Arts Program, which includes theatre and music.

Instructional programs in Visalia are complemented by a full range of student support services, including but not limited to library resources, matriculation, assessment, counseling, admissions and records, a bookstore, District police, a Career and Transfer Center, the Access and Ability Center, Veterans Resource Center, food services, a Welcome Center, student financial aid services, health services, student activities, and tutorial services.

COS Hanford Educational Center

Since the 1980s, a small storefront with a handful of classrooms was operated by COS to serve residents in the Hanford area. In 1992, a permanent facility was leased, setting the groundwork for COS's long-term vision of establishing a permanent campus in Hanford. In 2001 COS entered a unique partnership with the City of Hanford and Hanford Joint Union High School District. The partnership purchased 180 acres through a tenants-in-common agreement. The land was to be used for a new high school, an athletic complex, and a permanent COS Hanford campus.

In Fall 2006, District residents of the School Facilities Improvement District #1 passed a local \$22 million general obligation bond, to build a permanent educational center in Hanford. This bond enabled COS to construct and equip the campus, which includes the Education and Public Safety Buildings. An Economic Development Agency Grant, awarded to the City of Hanford and COS, contributed more than half of the funding for the Vocational Educational Building. The facility opened in Fall 2010, and total instructional and administrative space currently includes over 63,000 square feet.

In May 2015, requirements were completed through the California Community College Chancellor's Office Center Status Process, and the Hanford Educational Center received official Center designation. This designation made the campus eligible for annual Center funding when the Campus reached 1000 FTES.

In addition to its signature CTE programs, the COS Hanford campus also offers a variety of general education courses. The Tulare/Kings Regional Public Safety Training Center offers the Commission on Peace Officer Standard and Training (POST) Basic Police Academy certificate, advanced officer

training for local agencies and fire programs. The Fire Program encompasses courses associated with the firefighter academy, the certificate and Associate of Science Fire Programs, along with advanced firefighter training. Additionally, a paramedic program is underway and is slated to start in Summer 2024. Finally, two other CTE programs housed at the Hanford Campus are the Industrial Maintenance program and the Electrician Training program, working in tandem with the programs offered at the Tulare Campus.

COS Tulare College Center

Much like the Hanford Campus's development, prior to establishing a center in Tulare, COS worked on enhancing student access across the District by offering courses in high schools and community centers in Tulare, which is located eight miles from the Visalia Campus. In 1998, the District purchased the 500-acre site in Tulare to house the Center for Agriculture Science and Technology and provide general education courses in a closer proximity to the residents of southern Tulare County.

The Tulare College Center opened in January 2013. Currently, the facility includes over 90,000 square feet of classrooms; laboratory space with a 12,000 square foot welding and construction shop; and extensive equine, livestock, farm, and horticulture facilities. These laboratories provide students with unique opportunities for hands-on experience related to their chosen agricultural program. In Spring 2023, COS Tulare hosted a groundbreaking for the new Applied Technology and Skill Trades programs. The 36,000 square foot complex will include three new buildings that adjoin the current Welding Technology building. It also will include a two-acre outdoor education area for teaching projects, student events and industry partner activities for all COS CTE programs, and it is slated to open in Fall 2024.

Today, the Tulare College Center offers general education courses as well as several signature CTE programs related to agriculture, architecture, welding, industrial maintenance, and electrician training.

Offsite Locations

Beyond the three primary campuses, COS extends its reach by offering classes at various offsite locations, primarily for its Dual Enrollment and English as a Second Language Programs. Generally, high schools and other community centers are chosen to provide higher education opportunities to residents living in less-heavily populated areas of the district, such as Lindsay, Farmersville, Oroshi, Exeter, Corcoran, and Woodlake.

Students attending these off-site locations are supported through student support services located at each of the three campuses, depending on the proximity of the off-campus site.

Other Contextual Background

Population Growth

The California Department of Finance projects that the population of both Tulare and Kings County, which comprise 99% of the District's service area, will grow over the next decade. Tulare County,

with 477,054 residents in 2021, is projected to reach 489,854 residents by 2035. Kings County, with 153,443 residents in 2021, is projected to reach 174,393 residents by 2035. (<https://www.city-data.com>)

The Economy

As of August 2023, California's unemployment rate stood at 4.6%. California's unemployment rate is only slightly higher than the national unemployment rate of 3.8%, the unemployment rate of Kings and Tulare counties remains much higher at 7.7% and 9.8% respectively. (Bureau of Labor Statistics)

In early 2023, 31.1% of residents living in California were poor or nearly poor. This is up from 28.7% in fall 2021. Without safety net programs such as CalFresh, the Federal Earned Income Tax Credit, the Federal Child Tax Credit, federal housing subsidies and Supplemental Security Income, an additional 8.4% of Californians would have been classified as living in poverty. Although safety net programs reduce poverty in most inland areas, if removed, poverty would be 14.4% higher in the Central Valley and Sierra regions. ([Public Policy Institute of California](https://www.pplic.org/publication/poverty-in-california/) <https://www.pplic.org/publication/poverty-in-california/>)

California Community College System

As part of the California Community College System, College of the Sequoias must follow statewide mandates and programs. As such, faculty, staff, and administrators have worked diligently to tie the local plans to state requirements.

Vision For Success

The Vision of California Community Colleges (CCCs) is to make "sure students from all communities, eliminating achievement gaps once and for all." In 2017, the California Community Colleges Board of Governors adopted the Vision for Success, and set forth the following goals:

- **GOAL 1:** Completion Systemwide, increase by at least 20% the number of CCC students annually who acquire associate degrees, credentials, certificates, or specific job skill sets that prepare them for in-demand jobs by 2021-22.
- **GOAL 2:** Transfer Systemwide, increase by 35% the number of CCC students transferring annually to a UC or CSU by 2021-22.
- **GOAL 3:** Unit Accumulation Systemwide, decrease the number of units accumulated by CCC students earning associate degrees, from an average of approximately 87 total units to an average of 79 total units by 2021-22.
- **GOAL 4:** Workforce Systemwide, increase the percent of exiting CTE students who report being employed in their field of study, from the most recent statewide average of 69% to 76% by 2021-22.
- **GOAL 5:** Equity Systemwide, reduce equity gaps across all the above measures through faster improvements among traditionally underrepresented student groups, with the goal of cutting achievement gaps by 40 percent by 2021-22 and fully closing those achievement gaps for good by 2026-27.

At the time Vision for Success goals were set up, no one imagined the major disruptions and setbacks that students and colleges would face with the pandemic, with greatest impact to

communities of color and low-income populations. In addition, societal damage affected communities from highly visible police killings, social unrest, and deepened social divides.

In July 2021, the Vision for Success was reaffirmed and stressed equity in a time of recovery. The following Commitments were established:

- Focus relentlessly on students' end goals.
- Always design and decide with the student in mind.
- Pair high expectations with high support.
- Take ownership of goals and performance.
- Enable action and thoughtful innovation.
- Lead the work of partnering across systems. (<https://www.cccco.edu/-/media/CCCCO-Website/docs/report/vision-for-success-update-2021-a11y.pdf>)

Student-Centered Funding Formula

One integral aspect of the Vision for Success is the change of funding model to the Student-Centered Funding Formula. This formula is focused on ensuring community colleges are funded - at least in part, by students' success in the classroom. The formula is formed of three areas:

- A base allocation, which largely reflects enrollment. (70%)
- A supplemental allocation based on the numbers of students receiving a College Promise Grant, students receiving a Pell Grant and students covered by AB 540. (20%)
- A student success allocation based on outcomes that includes, but is not limited to, the number of students earning associate degrees and credit certificates, the number of students transferring to four-year colleges and universities, the number of students who complete transfer-level math and English within their first year, and the number of students who complete nine or more career education units (10%)

Guided Pathways

Another integral part of the CCC's Vision for Success was the implementation of Guided Pathways. While it has been changed since its start, The Guided Pathways framework still is the same. It creates a highly structured approach to student success that provides all students with a set of clear course-taking patterns that promotes better enrollment decisions and prepares students for future success in their academics and career in a timely manner.

- Clarify the Path – Create clear curricular pathways to employment and further education.
 - Enter the path – Help students choose and enter their pathway.
 - Stay on the Path – Help students stay on their path.
 - Ensure Learning – Ensure that learning is happening with intentional outcomes.
- (<https://www.cccco.edu/College-Professionals/Guided-Pathways>)

The Pandemic: COVID 19

In March 2020, all California Community Colleges moved to online learning in days. In addition, and just as challenging was moving all student support services in the spring, including academic counseling, library services, financial aid, tutoring, and more. This required loaning technology (laptops and hotspots) to students and assisting them with other support activities. In addition, colleges were called upon to administer and coordinate new funding associated with the federal

stimulus packages, many colleges repurposed existing resources to meet the needs of students in acute financial distress during the pandemic.

The effects of COVID-19 on transfer-intending students enrolled in California Community Colleges has been affected during these unprecedented times. Statewide, there was an enrollment decline of 152,332 students (20%) from Fall 2019 to Fall 2021. In addition, for first-time and continuing students, persistence and course completion declined. (Public Policy Institute of California, October 2022)

Multi-Year Roadmap Between the Newsom Administration and the California Community Colleges

Included in the 2022-23 California State Budget, the Governor's Office and the California Community College system mutually agreed to prioritize advancing shared goals over the next five-year term. This is described in the Multiyear Roadmap Between the Newsom Administration and the California Community Colleges. Aligned with the Vision for Success and Guided Pathways, the Roadmap details the role of California Community Colleges in meeting and supporting the Governor's goal of 70% of California working-age adults earning postsecondary degrees or certificates by 2030.

Vision 2030

In 2023, when Dr. Sonja Christian was appointed as the new California Community College Chancellor, Vision 2030 was launched. It is a framework for bold and thoughtful action in policy reform, fiscal sustainability, systems development and for process and practice reform in the field. The framework has been guided by Vision for Success (2017), the governor's "Multi-Year Roadmap" (2022) and current issues and future considerations.

This work is designed to advance student success, access, support and socio-economic mobility with equity, and includes the following areas:

- People — Active partnership with people in the field to guide practice and provide data, technical assistance and needed support.
- Systems — Systems Development to remove barriers at scale. Examples: data systems and common ERP, common course numbering and intersegmental learning management.
- Resources — Lead state, federal and philanthropic development to support fiscal sustainability and maximize local resources.
- Policy — Identify and advance policy reform across state, federal, Title V and local district policies to unlock potential.

AB 705 and AB 1705

In Fall 2018, the California Community College system began implementing AB 705, ensuring that most students started in transfer-level math and English, rather than a developmental education sequence. Locally, these changes in placement procedures needed to be implemented by Fall 2019. Since implementing AB705, statewide far fewer students had to repeat math coursework already completed in high school—moving from 78% to 47%. In addition, over 80% of minoritized students were placed into transfer-level math at their community college.

Research showed that AB 705's implementation across colleges was inconsistent, especially in Math. In Fall 2022, AB 1705 was signed and expanded AB 705 by further requiring community colleges not only to place students directly into transfer-level English and math courses, but also

ensure that students enroll in those courses. In addition, the new law clarifies that a community college can require students to enroll in additional concurrent support if it is determined that the support will increase the student's likelihood of passing transfer-level English or math.

Bachelor's Degrees Awarded by Community Colleges

With the rise of Californian's carrying federal student loan debt, in 2021 California law allows California community colleges to offer some bachelor's degree programs. The hope is to alleviate the student loan debt for future students and make bachelor degrees more available to residents, both in terms of location and cost. The law allows 30 community college bachelor's programs to start each year.

This change is not going unnoticed by many in the California State University system where many are expressing opposition to community colleges offering some of the degree programs. Specifically, there is a concern about community colleges offering programs which duplicate those in the CSU system. The argument is that it is a waste of taxpayer dollars to duplicate programs in other systems and competition (<https://spectrumnews1.com/ca/la-west/la-times-today/2023/10/16/community-colleges-offer-bachelor-s-degrees#>)

Cal-GETC

The California General Education Transfer Curriculum (Cal-GETC) is a singular general education pathway for California Community College students to fulfill lower-division general education requirements necessary for transfer and admission to both the California State University (CSU) and the University of California (UC). Since the development of the 1960 Master Plan for Higher Education, ease of transfer has been the cornerstone of California's three-tiered system of higher education.

Community College students have been able to use the CSU General Education Breadth pattern (CSU GE) to meet lower-division general education requirements if transferring to the CSU. For those transferring to a University of California (UC) campus, the IGETC pattern has been used.

To reduce confusion given the differences in standards lower-division General Education transfer pathways, AB 928 (Berman, 2021) requires the development of a singular lower-division general education pathway that will meet academic for transfer admission to both the CSU and the UC.

As such, the use of the Cal-GETC transfer pathway will begin Fall 2025. Under Cal-GETC, every student will be designated as having achieved, or not having achieved, Cal-GETC certification irrespective of their transfer destination. Transfer students with catalog rights can maintain their use of their grandfathered CSU GE or IGETC pattern as permitted by the transfer institution.

In addition to identifying the needs of our district, in addition to the statewide initiatives creates the context in which the 2025-2035 College of the Sequoias Master Plan.