SHOW CAUSE TEAM 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 show cause
evaluation team that visited College of the Sequoias
November 13-14, 2013

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INTRODUCTION TO SHOW CAUSE TEAM REPORT

INSTITUTION: College of the Sequoias

DATES OF VISIT: November 13-14, 2013

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

An eight-member accreditation team visited College of the Sequoias (COS) from November 13-14, 2013, to assess how well the College has addressed deficiencies in meeting Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) Standards as identified in the October 2012 External Evaluation Team Report.

Prior to the visit team members carefully read the 2013 Show Cause Report and assessed the various forms of evidence provided by the College. The team members completed written evaluations of the Show Cause Report and began identifying areas for further investigation.

During the visit the team met with faculty, staff, administrators, Board of Trustees members, students, and community members, and found all constituency groups to be knowledgeable, enthusiastic, and committed to the success of the College and its students. The team also examined documents provided in the team room and in electronic format and observed campus facilities.

The team found the College to be welcoming and fully engaged in the accreditation process, and the team appreciated the work that the College has done to address deficiencies and prepare its Show Cause Report. The team commends the College for its many accomplishments in responding to the recommendations of the 2012 External Evaluation Team Report, but notes that there are items that require more time to complete. The team has made a 2013 recommendation regarding planning to help guide the College's efforts to continue its progress and fully meet the Standards.

RECOMMENDATION OF THE 2013 VISITING TEAM

2013 Recommendation – Planning

In order to fully meet the Standards, the team recommends that the College follow its new Model for Integrated Planning to demonstrate the integration of institutional planning, resource allocation, implementation and re-evaluation. These processes should include appropriate participation from constituent groups and should be evaluated based upon analyses of both quantitative and qualitative data. (Standards I.B.3, III.D.1.a, III.D.1.d, III.D.4, IV.B.2.b)

SECTION 1 – INSTITUTIONAL PERFORMANCE ON ACCREDITATION STANDARDS AND ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

STANDARD I – Institutional Mission and Effectiveness
Standard I.A – Mission

Standard I.A

The institution has a statement of mission that defines the institution's broad educational purposes, its intended student population, and its commitment to achieving student learning.

General Observations

The mission is scheduled for review in 2014 and every three years thereafter. Economic factors and measures of effectiveness are routinely included in the mission revision process. Visible in all planning documents, the mission is central to the College's planning efforts. In addition, regular review of the mission assures connectedness to the community need.

I.A.3

Using the institution's governance and decision-making processes, the institution reviews its mission statement on a regular basis and revises it as necessary.

Findings and Evidence

The College's mission is reviewed on a regular three-year cycle and revised if necessary, as described in the *2013 Integrated Planning Manual*. Planning documents have been developed and organizational structures are in place for future review of the mission depicting a sustainable practice. The mission was last reaffirmed in 2011.

The process for mission review begins with the District Governance Senate Co-chairs convening a task force who gather data elements and report back on the current status of the mission. This data can include internal measures of effectiveness as well as demographic and economic changes within the community.

The *2013 Integrated Planning Manual* details the timeline for future review of the mission. The next cycle will commence in September 2014.

Conclusion

The institution meets this Standard.

I.A.4

The institution's mission is central to institutional planning and decision making.

Findings and Evidence

College of the Sequoias mission is the foundation for all planning processes as evidenced by the Model for Integrated Planning. Central to the College's integrated planning; the mission

is visible in the Educational Master Plan, the *2013 Integrated Planning Manual*, the Strategic Plan, and the *2013 Governance and Decision-making Manual*.

The "Turning Mission into Action" segment from the Educational Master Plan identifies how the College uses the mission to develop strategic goals and provide a framework for evaluating when a goal has been accomplished. Additional examples of how the mission is fundamental to planning can be viewed in unit level program reviews. Therefore, whether developing long-range strategic goals, allocating funds, or identifying unit level planning objectives, the mission is the starting point.

As mentioned in the mission, the College strives to connect with its surrounding community and realizes their economic impact on the community. This is evidenced in the number of events offered at local high schools and other civic organizations over the last year.

Thoughtful planning is viewed throughout the process leading to what appears to be a sustainable practice.

Conclusion

The institution meets this Standard.

Standard I.B – Institutional Effectiveness

Standard I.B
The institution demonstrates a conscious effort to produce and support student learning, measures that learning, assesses how well learning is occurring, and makes changes to improve student learning. The institution also organizes its key processes and allocates its resources to effectively support student learning. The institution demonstrates its effectiveness by providing: 1) evidence of the achievement of student learning outcomes and 2) evidence of institution and program performance. The institution uses ongoing and systematic evaluation and planning to refine its key processes and improve student learning.

General Observations

COS has established clearly defined processes to meet this Standard. These processes were formalized in the newly created *College of the Sequoias 2013 Integrated Planning Manual*. The manual provides a timeline and identifies groups and/or individual positions responsible for facilitating each major component of the District's planning process. This will ensure that the established processes remain with the institution, rather than being dependent solely on an individual. This should protect the District from falling behind in its processes should additional turnover at the leadership level be experienced; a factor identified by the College as contributing to recurring recommendations from the 2006 to the 2012 comprehensive evaluations.

COS had previously utilized a strategic plan for 2010-2015 which contained 20 goals and 134 objectives. Upon collaborative review of this plan in June 2013, the plan was found to be ineffective because it was deemed unrealistic to achieve 134 objectives, many of which were not measurable, that were determined to be uneven in level and scope as some described large District wide projects while others described normal job duties. Rather than abandon the strategic plan entirely, the decision was made to refocus the 134 objectives by determining the highest priority objectives for 2013-14.

I.B.1
The institution maintains an ongoing, collegial, self-reflective dialogue about the continuous improvement of student learning and institutional processes.

Findings and Evidence

COS has had a great deal of dialogue regarding continuous improvement of student learning and institutional processes. This was evidenced through the implementation task force that was created. The task force members met regularly and ensured that work contained vetting across each of the Standards. Individuals got together to engage in dialogue over what was working well and what was not working in regards to decision-making and planning. Based on numerous discussions with individuals and groups, it was evident that individuals throughout the organization engaged in self-reflective dialogue and focused on following the processes that were documented in the new manuals. In addition, a number of regular, campus wide forums and Academic Senate summits were held with a large number of attendees.

Through the new Model for Integrated Planning, COS has formalized certain processes to foster ongoing, collegial and self-reflective dialogue about student learning and institutional processes. These include:

- Institutional Program Reviews that allow for self-reflective dialogue at the unit level and then feed into broader dialogue as resource requests are reviewed, vetted and prioritized by category, and considered for funding.
- The Annual Report on the Strategic Plan, a process by which progress from the parties responsible for meeting the District Objectives is compiled. The Institutional Planning and Effectiveness Committee is responsible for consolidating this information, analyzing it in terms of its effectiveness, assessing the outcomes for the current year to determine the objectives for the next year, and identifying improvements that resulted from these efforts. This report is then distributed to the broader District community through the District Governance Senate and Academic Senate.
- Dialogue Days, which began in fall 2013 to complete course and program outcomes assessment work through dialogue about the analysis of research findings and developing action plans to improve instructional processes.

Conclusion

The institution meets this Standard.

I.B.2
The institution sets goals to improve its effectiveness consistent with its stated purposes. The institution articulates its goals and states the objectives derived from them in measurable terms so that the degree to which they are achieved can be determined and widely discussed. The institutional members understand these goals and work collaboratively toward their achievement.

Findings and Evidence

COS assessed its previously established goals and objectives from the 2010–2015 Strategic Plan, which contained 20 goals and 134 objectives. Responsible parties submitted progress updates on those objectives to the Institutional Planning and Effectiveness Committee. Upon review however, the District identified the need to reassess the effectiveness of those goals. The Institutional Planning and Effectiveness Committee, the Institutional Program Review Committee, Senior Management Council, and the Executive Board of the Academic Senate met in a retreat to ultimately identify the highest priority objectives and reframe them in a manner that would ensure measurability. This resulted in the creation of eight measurable District Objectives for 2013-14, with processes and timelines established for assessing the objectives and for allocating resources to support the objectives, as outlined in both the *2013 Integrated Planning Manual* and the *2013 Resource Allocation Manual*.

The process described above was followed by COS to bridge the gap between its previously established processes and its newly established processes identified in the *2013 Integrated Planning Manual*, which call for the development of new District Goals beginning in January

2014 followed by the development of a three-year Strategic Plan with corresponding Objectives beginning in January 2015. COS is in the process of planning for a new Educational Master Plan. The Institutional Planning and Effectiveness Committee has been charged with formulating how that Plan will be accomplished.

Conclusion

The institution meets this Standard.

I.B.3
The institution assesses progress toward achieving its stated goals and makes decisions regarding the improvement of institutional effectiveness in an ongoing and systematic cycle of evaluation, integrated planning, resource allocation, implementation, and re-evaluation. Evaluation is based on analyses of both quantitative and qualitative data.

Findings and Evidence

The College's new integrated planning process and Strategic Plan reporting structure provides the mechanisms to allow responsible parties to report their progress toward achieving stated goals and objectives. The Institutional Planning and Effectiveness Committee then evaluate this information to determine institutional effectiveness. COS has implemented a system to compile and track relevant information related to Initiatives through TracDat. In an effort of ongoing and systematic assessment and improvement, the Institutional Planning and Effectiveness Committee will make recommendations toward planning and improvement in the following year based on an assessment of the current year. COS has also enhanced its research model by hiring a Director of Research, Planning and Institutional Effectiveness. This has increased the District's research capacity to play an integral part in the evaluation component of this Standard. Through newly defined methodologies and metrics as a basis for measurement, the institution has now implemented standardized measurements for assessing Action Plans. Much of this process has recently been put into place in the months leading up to the team's visit and as such the college has not yet had the opportunity to fully complete the cycle.

Conclusion

While COS has done a great deal of work through the creation of the *2013 Integrated Planning Manual* and through the creation and implementation of procedures to support its new processes, in order to fully meet the Standard, COS will need to follow its new model to ensure integration, resource allocation, implementation, and re-evaluation, based on an analyses of both quantitative and qualitative data.

I.B.4
The institution provides evidence that the planning process is broad-based, offers opportunities for input by appropriate constituencies, allocates necessary resources, and leads to improvement of institutional effectiveness.

Findings and Evidence

A task force comprised of various constituent groups was developed to evaluate the existing planning processes, modify them to add processes as necessary to ensure an integrated planning model, and to create a graphic depicting how the elements in the model would link to one another. Subsequently, the *2013 Integrated Planning Manual* was created and drafts of the manual were presented at open forums and planning summits, and were distributed to the entire District to gather broad-based feedback. Based on the evidence reviewed and a series of interviews with individuals and groups throughout the visit, it was noted that input by the various constituency groups is taking place. Also, the newly defined timelines and responsibilities for facilitating each major component of the District's new planning process will ensure ongoing broad-based participation by appropriate constituencies in the planning and resource allocation processes, resulting in the overall improvement of institutional effectiveness.

Conclusion

The institution meets this Standard.

I.B.5
The institution uses documented assessment results to communicate matters of quality assurance to appropriate constituencies.

Evidence and Analysis

Assessment results are documented in Institutional Program Reviews, the Annual Report on the Strategic Plan, Essential Learning Initiative reports, surveys, and Dialogue Days. In addition, the president hosts District wide forums to keep constituent groups informed on matters regarding quality assurance and other matters, and articles about the District's effectiveness are submitted for publication in various local newspapers. The District also provides information regarding the outcomes of institutional assessments on the District website (eNews and Community list serve). An analysis of the evidence provided substantiates that the District communicates with both internal and external constituencies through a variety of means such as postings, presentations, town hall meetings, open forums, etc.

Conclusion

The institution meets this Standard.

I.B.6
The institution assures the effectiveness of its ongoing planning and resource allocation processes by systematically reviewing and modifying, as appropriate, all parts of the cycle, including institutional and other research efforts.

Findings and Evidence

After the 2012 External Evaluation Team visit, COS reviewed its existing planning and resource allocation processes and made significant modifications based on self-evaluation,

ACCJC Standards, and the 2012 visiting team's recommendations. The revised planning and resource allocation processes and/or creation of new processes, are clearly defined in the newly created *2013 Integrated Planning Manual*. The manual documents the District's planning cycle in a manner which assures the effectiveness of its ongoing planning and resource allocation processes through systematic review, allowing for modification as necessary, to all parts of the planning cycle. The District's integrated planning model provides a systematic timeline for each component of the planning model and for review of each of those components. While the first formal assessment of the District's newly revised integrated planning model will not take place until Spring 2015, and every three years thereafter, sufficient evidence has been provided indicating that COS meets this Standard based on the systematic review and modification that was done on its former processes.

Conclusion

The institution meets this Standard.

2013 Recommendation – Planning

In order to fully meet the Standards, the team recommends that the College follow its new Model for Integrated Planning to demonstrate the integration of institutional planning, resource allocation, implementation and re-evaluation. These processes should include appropriate participation from constituent groups and should be evaluated based upon analyses of both quantitative and qualitative data. (Standards I.B.3, III.D.1.a, III.D.1.d, III.D.4, IV.B.2.b)

STANDARD II – Student Learning Programs and Services
Standard II.A – Instructional Programs

Standard II.A
The institution offers high-quality instructional programs in recognized and emerging fields of study that culminate in identified student outcomes leading to degrees, certificates, employment, or transfer to other higher education institutions or programs consistent with its mission. Instructional programs are systematically assessed in order to assure currency, improve teaching and learning strategies, and achieve stated student learning outcomes. The provisions of this standard are broadly applicable to all instructional activities offered in the name of the institution.

General Observations

COS meets the educational needs of its students through its programs and services. Student learning outcomes have been identified for courses, programs, certificates, and degrees, and these outcomes have a cycle of assessment. The faculty maintain the primary responsibility for the writing of, the assessment of, and the evaluation of student learning outcomes.

The courses and programs offered at COS are reviewed systematically for relevance, appropriateness, achievement of learning outcomes, currency, and future needs and plans. The cycle for this review is every three years. All departmental, course, and program evaluations used are validated for effectiveness.

Credit in all courses offered at COS is awarded based on a student's achievement of the course's stated learning outcomes.

A review of student learning programs and services shows that COS has developed and assessed student learning outcomes for all of its courses, programs, degrees, and certificates and that it uses the results of the assessments for improvement.

II.A.1.a
The institution identifies and seeks to meet the varied educational needs of its students through programs consistent with their educational preparation and the diversity, demographics, and economy of its communities. The institution relies upon research and analysis to identify student learning needs and to assess progress toward achieving stated learning outcomes.

Findings and Evidence

In response to the 2012 External Evaluation Team Report, COS identifies and seeks to meet the needs of its students with its programs. It has hired a new Director of Research, Planning and Institutional Effectiveness, and it relies on research and analysis to identify student learning needs and to assess progress towards achieving learning outcomes.

Conclusion

The institution meets this Standard.

II.A.1.c
The institution identifies student learning outcomes for courses, programs, certificates, and degrees; assesses student achievement of those outcomes; and uses assessment results to make improvements.

Findings and Evidence

The College has identified student learning outcomes for its courses, programs, certificates, and degrees; and it has aligned course and program outcomes. It assesses these outcomes using a three-year cycle, and it uses the assessments to make improvements. The College uses TracDat to house its student learning outcomes data, and it plans to establish processes to evaluate the effectiveness of this tool. The College links course and program outcomes and concludes that achievement of a course's outcomes functions as achievement of a program's outcomes.

Conclusion

The institution meets this Standard.

II.A.2.a
The institution uses established procedures to design, identify learning outcomes for, approve, administer, deliver, and evaluate courses and programs. The institution recognizes the central role of its faculty for establishing quality and improving instructional courses and programs.

Findings and Evidence

The faculty of COS maintains a central role in the development of learning outcomes and in the use of those outcomes for evaluation. Board Policy 2510 and Administrative Procedure 2510 (Participation in Local Decision-making) were both updated to reflect this faculty role. The College believes that these changes reflect the College's dedication to the student learning outcomes processes are sustainable, as evidenced by the assessment process being a component of Program Review and the commitment of the Academic Senate to ongoing faculty training in this area.

Conclusion

The institution meets this Standard.

II.A.2.b
The institution relies on faculty expertise and the assistance of advisory committees when appropriate to identify competency levels and measurable student learning outcomes for courses, certificates, programs including general and vocational education, and degrees. The institution regularly assesses student progress towards achieving those outcomes.

Findings and Evidence

COS relies on the expertise of its faculty to identify learning outcomes that are measurable. It ensures that student progress is being made toward achieving learning outcomes by

implementing the use of the TracDat system and by developing a three-year assessment cycle.

Conclusion

The institution meets this Standard.

II.A.2.e
The institution evaluates all courses and programs through an on-going systematic review of their relevance, appropriateness, achievement of learning outcomes, currency, and future needs and plans.

Findings and Evidence

The assessment cycle at COS is part of the program review process and the integrated planning model, ensuring regular and systematic assessment of courses and programs. The faculty who had previously halted work on learning outcomes, due to grievance actions of the College of the Sequoias Teachers Association (COSTA), have reengaged in learning outcomes work.

Conclusion

The institution meets this Standard.

II.a.2.f
The institution engages in ongoing, systematic evaluation and integrated planning to assure currency and measure achievement of its stated student learning outcomes for courses, certificates, programs including general and vocational education, and degrees. The institution systematically strives to improve those outcomes and makes the results available to appropriate constituencies.

Findings and Evidence

COS has developed an integrated planning process that ensures the adherence to systematic evaluation of learning outcomes. Course level outcomes are mapped to program level outcomes and institutional level outcomes. The results of outcome assessment are reported in TracDat, and all learning outcomes are available via the College's Outcomes and Assessment website.

Conclusion

The institution meets this Standard.

II.A.2.g
If an institution uses departmental course and/or program examinations, it validates their effectiveness in measuring student learning and minimizes test biases.

Findings and Evidence

COS validates the effectiveness of departmental course and program examinations to assure

their appropriateness and to minimize biases. State agencies validate the departmental examinations used.

Conclusion

The institution meets this Standard.

II.A.2.h
The institution awards credit based on student achievement of the course's stated learning outcomes. Units of credit awarded are consistent with institutional policies that reflect generally accepted norms or equivalencies in higher education.

Findings and Evidence

COS awards credit based on achievement of stated learning outcomes. The active courses and programs at COS have learning outcomes that have been assessed. Results of outcome assessment are used to improve courses and programs.

Conclusion

The institution meets this Standard.

II.A.2.i
The institution awards degrees and certificates based on student achievement of a program's stated learning outcomes.

Findings and Evidence

COS awards credit for degrees and certificates based on achievement of stated learning outcomes. Course outcomes are mapped to program and degree outcomes, and the assessment of the course outcomes for the courses required for a program or a degree functions as program and degree level assessment.

Conclusion

The institution meets this Standard.

Standard II.B – Student Support Services

Standard II.B
The institution recruits and admits diverse students who are able to benefit from its programs, consistent with its mission. Student support services address the identified needs of students and enhance a supportive learning environment. The entire student pathway through the institutional experience is characterized by a concern for student access, progress, learning, and success. The institution systematically assesses student support services using student learning outcomes, faculty and staff input, and other appropriate measures in order to improve the effectiveness of these services.

General Observations

COS assures that students have equitable access for all student services for each service area and location. Last spring 2013 the District opened the new Tulare College Center and implemented the same student support services as provided at the Visalia campus to meet the needs of Tulare students. The Hanford Educational Center provides the same student support services as the Visalia campus and commensurate to the student needs. The COS website has been updated to make it easier for all students to find available student support services through its newly implemented AskCOS system, an intelligent response knowledgebase system.

Standard II.B.3.a
The institution assures equitable access to all of its students by providing appropriate, comprehensive, and reliable services to students regardless of service location or delivery method.

Findings and Evidence

Academic counseling is provided at all three campuses as well as online. Evening counseling hours and online counseling were implemented for students at all locations this year in response to identifying student needs. Counselors enter student educational plans in the Banner system so that students and counselors can track their progress online. AskCOS provides targeted feedback in response to online questions about counseling services.

Additional counseling services are provided at each center for EOPS students and students with disabilities. Counselors assist with assessment and placement testing accommodations for students with disabilities. EOPS counselors proactively work with students to schedule their appointments at each location for the term. EOPS counselors also monitor students using the Early Alert system.

Admissions, Records and Registration information and services are readily available at all locations (in-person) and online. The student portal, BannerWeb, enables students to complete their college application and course registration activities online.

Financial Aid resources are available online and at each campus with staff to provide financial aid services for student drop-in visits and orientations onsite.

A student help desk is staffed at the Visalia Learning Resource Center whereby students can drop-in or call-in to receive live support with Banner, Blackboard and common applications.

COS is making every effort to ensure that its student support services are offered adequately and equitably at all locations and is commensurate with student needs.

Conclusion

The institution meets this Standard.

Standard II.B.4
The institution evaluates student support services to assure their adequacy in meeting identified student needs. Evaluation of these services provides evidence that they contribute to the achievement of student learning outcomes. The institution uses the results of these evaluations as the basis for improvement.

Findings and Evidence

The student services units – Admissions and Records, Counseling, Disability Resource Center, Extended Opportunities Programs and Services, Financial Aid, etc., have developed Service Area Outcomes to enumerate and delineate the services they offer students. Furthermore, through surveys, student feedback and dialogue among student services managers, they evaluate their services to ensure they are meeting needs and aligning with the District strategies.

Through evaluation processes the College has been able to improve its services to students. These improvements have included (a) evening hours for counseling (Academic, DRC and EOPS), (b) a new "Quiet Zone" for students at the Hanford Educational Center, (c) online counseling, (d) implementation of AskCOS, and, (e) use of Early Alert to proactively support students. Early Alert was developed in the Data Warehouse to identify student's difficulties in courses so that they may be assisted for course completion and success.

The student service units are using TracDat to document and track all Service Area Outcomes. They plan to use TracDat on an ongoing basis for the annual cycle of assessment and improvement of student services. TracDat is used by all units, programs and departments for tracking outcomes, assessment and improvement and alignment with the District mission, goals and objectives. TracDat and Early Alert are also used for Research data collection, analysis and reporting.

COS is working diligently and collaboratively among its student service areas to ensure that its student support services are offered adequately and equitably at all locations and is commensurate with student needs. They have implemented many student service improvements based on their goals and evaluations.

Conclusion

The institution meets this Standard.

Standard II.C – Library and Learning Support Services

II.C
Library and other learning support services for students are sufficient to support the institution's instructional programs and intellectual, aesthetic, and cultural activities in whatever format and wherever they are offered. Such services include library services and collections, tutoring, learning centers, computer laboratories, and learning technology development and training. The institution provides access and training to students so that library and other learning support services may be used effectively and efficiently. The institution systematically assesses these services using student learning outcomes, faculty input, and other appropriate measures in order to improve the effectiveness of the services.

General Observations

The Learning Resource Center provides a significant compendium of online and on-campus learning resources for students at all locations and online. These include "Ask a Librarian," online catalog, academic databases, eBooks, books, textbook reservations, subject guides, information competency course information and learning support services. The Tulare College Center and Hanford Educational Center provide similar learning resources as the Visalia campus.

Standard II.C.1
The institution supports the quality of its instructional programs by providing library and other learning support services that are sufficient in quantity, currency, depth, and variety to facilitate educational offerings, regardless of location or means of delivery."

Standard II.C.1.c
The institution provides students and personnel responsible for student learning programs and services adequate access to the library and other learning support services regardless of their location or means of delivery.

Findings and Evidence

COS supports its instructional programs by providing learning resources and support services online and at each campus. These resources and support services include online academic databases, online catalog, eBooks, computer labs, tutorial services, writing center, math labs and collaborative online resources to connect students and faculty between sites.

The integrated library system allows students to use the web to see where materials are held, view available eBooks and request materials to be delivered to any location.

The Centers have expanded their library support hours and librarian service hours in order to provide adequate and equitable service. The library at each Center has a "hotline" whereby students can pick up a phone and be automatically connected to a reference librarian at the main campus to get a quick reply to their reference or research question. This hotline service makes up for the times when a librarian is not available at the Center but is available at the Visalia campus.

All students, including online, can use the "Ask a Librarian" to send an email question to the reference librarian. The response time is typically within four hours but may take up to two days. The library maintains Frequently Asked Questions on their website for students and faculty to access at any time from any place. They have made online database authentication (username and password) easier and self-evident for students thereby improving this service to students and reducing the number of service requests.

Tutorial services are provided at each location. The Centers have increased their math tutoring capacity by very recently installing a computer workstation with video and electronic whiteboard sharing at each Center to connect with a live math tutor at the Visalia campus. This is a new resource that will require staff and student training to be used effectively. As a result of a student tutorial survey, the College provided online math tutoring at the Centers from fall 2011 to spring 2013. However, the student utilization was very low and so it was discontinued. The College is actively considering using a third-party online tutoring service for online students next semester.

Conclusion

The institution meets this Standard.

Standard III – Resources
Standard III.A – Human Resources

Standard III.A
The institution employs qualified personnel to support student learning programs and services wherever offered and by whatever means delivered, and to improve institutional effectiveness. Personnel are treated equitably, are evaluated regularly and systematically, and are provided opportunities for professional development. Consistent with its mission, the institution demonstrates its commitment to the significant educational role played by persons of diverse backgrounds by making positive efforts to encourage such diversity. Human resource planning is integrated with institutional planning.

General Observations

COS has a staff that is qualified and serves in support of student learning. Its faculty and management hiring processes continue to be clear and followed, and it has clarified and follows its hiring processes for classified personnel and interim administrators. The evaluation procedures for the constituent groups are contained in the collective bargaining agreements for each group and, for management, in Board Policy 7150 and Administrative Procedure 7150 (Employee Evaluations). Board Policy 3050 (Institutional Code of Ethics) is the College's written code of ethics to which all employees must adhere.

Members of hiring committees for all constituent groups are committed to applying the hiring procedures equitably and are trained by members of the Equal Employment Opportunity Advisory Committee. Board Policy 3420 (Equal Employment Opportunity) ensures fairness in hiring procedures. All faculty hired meet the minimum qualifications to teach in their respective disciplines.

All personnel employed at COS are evaluated systematically to ensure their effectiveness and to encourage improvement. Faculty and others responsible for student progress towards learning outcomes have as a part of their evaluation effectiveness in producing those outcomes.

A review of human resources shows that COS has policies and procedures that ensure equitable hiring for all of the College's constituent groups. Evaluation procedures for each constituency exist and are applied, and there is a clear connection between evaluation and improvement.

III.A.1
The institution assures the integrity and quality of its programs and services by employing personnel who are qualified by appropriate education, training, and experience to provide and support these programs and services. Criteria, qualifications, and procedures for selection of personnel are clearly and publicly stated. Job descriptions are directly related to institutional mission and goals and accurately reflect position duties, responsibilities, and authority.

Findings and Evidence

In response to the 2012 External Evaluation Team report, COS employed qualified personnel to ensure the quality and integrity of its programs and services.

Conclusion

The institution meets this Standard.

III.A.1.a
Criteria for selection of faculty include knowledge of the subject matter or service to be performed (as determined by individuals with discipline expertise), effective teaching, scholarly activities, and potential to contribute to the mission of the institution. Institutional faculty play a significant role in selection of new faculty. Degrees held by faculty and administrators are from institutions accredited by recognized U.S. accrediting agencies. Degrees from non-U.S. institutions are recognized only if equivalence has been established.

Findings and Evidence

COS updated Board Policy 7120 (Academic Employees) to include the hiring of management and confidential employees, as it previously only addressed the hiring of faculty and classified employees. The College understands that following these written hiring procedures ensures the fair and equitable treatment of applicants for positions in all constituent groups.

Conclusion

The institution meets this Standard.

III.A.1.b
The institution assures the effectiveness of its human resources by evaluating all personnel systematically and at stated intervals. The institution establishes written criteria for evaluating all personnel, including performance of assigned duties and participation in institutional responsibilities and other activities appropriate to their expertise. Evaluation processes seek to assess effectiveness of personnel and encourage improvement. Actions taken following evaluations are formal, timely, and documented.

Findings and Evidence

Board Policy 7150 and Administrative Procedure 7150 (Employee Evaluations) were written to include formal evaluation procedures for all constituent groups. These faculty evaluation procedures as well as the evaluation procedures for the Superintendent/President, classified employees, managers, and confidential employees include the encouragement of improvement. All personnel are evaluated systematically, and the District is up-to-date with the evaluations of all personnel.

Conclusion

The institution meets this Standard.

III.A.1.c

Faculty and others directly responsible for student progress toward achieving stated student learning outcomes have, as a component of their evaluation, effectiveness in producing those learning outcomes.

Findings and Evidence

The faculty evaluation procedures for both full-time and part-time faculty have been modified to include a component focused on the effectiveness of producing student learning outcomes.

Conclusion

The institution meets this Standard.

III.A.1.d

The institution upholds a written code of professional ethics for all of its personnel.

Findings and Evidence

COS Board Policy 3050 (Institutional Code of Ethics) provides a written code of ethics, and all employees must adhere to this code. There is also 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.

Conclusion

The institution meets this Standard.

Standard III.D – Financial Resources

Standard III.D

Financial resources are sufficient to support student learning programs and services and to improve institutional effectiveness. The distribution of resources supports the development, maintenance, and enhancement of programs and services. The institution plans and manages its financial affairs with integrity and in a manner that ensures financial stability. The level of financial resources provides a reasonable expectation of both short-term and long-term financial solvency. Financial resource planning is integrated with institutional planning at both college and district/system levels in multi-college systems.

General Observations

Despite the state budget reductions that have impacted all California Community Colleges over the last several years, COS has remained fiscally stable, with adequate reserves. The District appears to be well run from a financial perspective and has been successful in securing other sources of financial resources in order to ensure fiscal stability. COS appears to have a significant amount of long-term debt obligations, consisting of lease revenue bonds, general obligation bonds, Certificates of Participation, a Bond Anticipation Note, and retiree health benefits. The District has considered these long-term obligations in its financial planning by accruing liabilities for outstanding obligations and accounting for the applicable short-term repayment amounts within its annual budgeting process. The District's current financial plan for the repayment of the Bond Anticipation Note, due in April 2016, is to repay this note from the proceeds of future bond issuances and facility project savings. The District has planned for its retiree health benefit obligation by participating in the Community College League of California (CCLC) irrevocable trust Joint Powers Authority (JPA).

After assessing its planning and resource allocation processes subsequent to the External Evaluation Team visit in 2012, COS created a new model for Integrated Planning to clearly define integrated planning processes and resource allocation processes, which are linked with institutional planning. Through the development of manuals, COS defined its processes for financial planning and budget development. This information is communicated to all constituent groups to ensure broad participation in the development of institutional plans and budgets. The processes are formalized in the *2013 Integrated Planning Manual* and the *2013 Resource Allocation Manual*. COS has also prepared the *2013 Governance and Decision-making Manual* which defines the various governance groups and their respective membership and reporting structure in order to clearly show how broad participation and collaboration will play into the new processes. Accordingly, the District has modified the role and function of the Budget Committee to ensure its effectiveness in this process. The manuals provide timelines and identify groups and/or individuals responsible for facilitating the major components of the District's integrated planning processes in which the institution's mission and goals serve as the foundation for financial planning and resource allocation.

III.D.1

The institution's mission and goals are the foundation for financial planning.

Findings and Evidence

The new COS integrated planning process begins with the development of two key documents, the Master Plan and the Strategic Plan. With the mission as the first step in the integrated planning process, the Master Plan then establishes the long-term District Goals and the Strategic Plan establishes the short-term District Objectives (specific measurable outcomes), developed to address the District Goals.

Conclusion

The institution meets this Standard.

III.D.1.a
Financial planning is integrated with and supports all institutional planning.

Findings and Evidence

The new COS integrated planning process clearly defines how financial planning is integrated with institutional planning. Through the Master Plan and Strategic Plan, measurable outcomes are developed and resources are then allocated to achieve those outcomes. Resources are also allocated through the Institutional Program Review process, following a predetermined rubric.

Based on an analysis of the Integrated Planning graphic and the information contained in the *2013 Resource Allocation Manual*, financial planning is linked to institutional planning through the Strategic Plan as District Objectives are used as the basis for Institutional Program Reviews and subsequently, resource allocations. COS financial planning will stem from the institution's mission and goals as the foundation, at the point of developing the budget assumptions. This will be done through broad input by the Budget Committee. Since the newly revised integrated planning model became effective in fall 2013, the first opportunity to develop budget assumptions under this new model will begin with development of the 2014-15 budget, which will take place during spring 2014. Among the sources of information to be considered in developing the budget assumptions are the District Goals (Master Plan) and District Objectives (Strategic Plan), as well as the priorities identified through the Institutional Program Review process.

Conclusion

While the newly developed Model for Integrated Planning was designed to allow COS to follow this Standard, the District has not yet performed this work. The first cycle of budget assumptions to be developed in accordance with this new model will begin in spring 2014. Therefore, in order to fully meet the Standard, COS will need to ensure that its budgeting process begins with the Mission and Goals as the foundation for financial planning.

III.D.1.b
Institutional planning reflects realistic assessment of financial resource availability, development of financial resources, partnerships, and expenditure requirements.

Findings and Evidence

The *2013 Resource Allocation Manual* clearly defines financial resource availability (revenues) and expenditure requirements. The largest category of revenues is state apportionment and for financial planning purposes, administrative services and academic services work closely together, along with the Enrollment Management Committee, to establish FTES projections to approximate the amount of state apportionment and to monitor enrollment patterns throughout the year. In addition, COS has been successful in obtaining grant funding over the years. As evidenced in the June 30, 2012 audit report, COS had approximately $3 million of expenditures from grants. The District has also developed a number of partnerships with cities, K-12 districts, county offices of education, economic development corporations and Workforce Investment Boards, allowing COS to ensure student success while partnering with other entities to share in the costs.

Conclusion

The institution meets this Standard.

III.D.1.c
When making short-range financial plans, the institution considers its long-range financial priorities to assure financial stability. The institution clearly identifies and plans for payment of liabilities and future obligations.

Findings and Evidence

In order to ensure financial stability, despite a significant amount of long-term debt obligations, COS annually budgets the short-term obligations related to the repayment of long-term debt instruments through its annual budgeting process. These repayment amounts are budgeted from unrestricted general funds. In addition, COS Board Policy 6200 (Budget Preparation) establishes a six percent (6%) unrestricted general fund reserve level. However, as approved by the Board due to the state's fiscal crisis over the last several years, COS was authorized to spend down a portion of its reserves in order to sustain operations. Despite this approval, COS still maintained reserves at a level above the State Chancellor's Office prudent recommended level of five percent (5%) and COS is projecting that reserves will return to six percent (6%) by June 30, 2014.

Conclusion

The institution meets this Standard.

III.D.1.d
The institution clearly defines and follows its guidelines and processes for financial planning and budget development, with all constituencies having appropriate opportunities to participate in the development of institutional plans and budgets.

Findings and Evidence

COS revised its Budget Committee in spring 2013. The revised committee now includes a larger membership ensuring that all Constituent groups are represented and the committee

has more clearly defined its purpose which includes reviewing and revising budget assumptions that guide budget development, overseeing, evaluating, and assessing the budget development process including making recommendations for Above-Base Funds, and developing and maintaining a process to ensure that resource allocations are linked to District planning. In addition to the revised Budget Committee, broad participation in the development of institutional plans and budgets will be facilitated through the Institutional Program Review Process and through Spring Budget forums which are planned to commence in spring 2014.

Conclusion

While COS has reconfigured its Budget Committee and developed Budget Forums in order to ensure broad participation by all constituencies, it has not yet begun a budget cycle following this newly defined model. Therefore, in order to fully meet the Standard, COS will need to ensure that its budgeting process for 2014-15 follow this new model.

III.D.2
To assure the financial integrity of the institution and responsible use of financial resources, the financial management system has appropriate control mechanisms and widely disseminates dependable and timely information for sound financial decision making.

Findings and Evidence

COS utilizes the Banner finance system. Internal control mechanisms are built into the system electronically in the form of approvals and all financial transactions are processed through Banner. As such, all spending requires approval by at least one supervisor. All Budget Managers have access to view and print budget status reports at any time. Also, Budget Reports are received and reviewed by the Budget Committee each month and these reports are also presented to the Board regularly.

Conclusion

The institution meets this Standard.

III.D.2.a
Financial documents, including the budget and independent audit, have a high degree of credibility and accuracy, and reflect appropriate allocation and use of financial resources to support student learning programs and services.

III.D.2.b
Institutional responses to external audit findings are comprehensive, timely, and communicated appropriately.

Findings and Evidence

Board Policy 6300 and Administrative Procedure 6300 (Fiscal Management) establish sound financial practices and financial stability. This is evidenced through the satisfactory results of the external audits and through a review of the level of reserves maintained at above the Chancellor's Office prudent recommended level of five percent (5%).

COS has engaged the services of independent external auditors to perform the required annual audits. The District has received unqualified opinions, the highest level opinion available, with no material weakness findings reported. Any findings that were noted were subsequently "implemented" as indicated in the Status of Prior Year Findings section of the subsequent audit report.

Conclusion

The institution meets this Standard.

III.D.2.c
Appropriate financial information is provided throughout the institution in a timely manner.

Findings and Evidence

COS utilizes the Banner finance system. Accordingly, all financial transactions are processed through Banner and all budget managers have access to view and print budget status reports at any time. Also, budget reports are received and reviewed by the Budget Committee each month and these reports are also presented to the Board regularly. In addition, budget documents are posted on the District website, available to all, and are shared at participatory governance meetings and other group meetings.

Conclusion

The institution meets this Standard.

III.D.2.d
All financial resources, including short and long term debt instruments (such as bonds and Certificates of Participation), auxiliary activities, fund-raising efforts, and grants, are used with integrity in a manner consistent with the intended purpose of the funding source.

Findings and Evidence

Based on the internal controls electronically built into the Banner finance system, and evidenced through the unqualified opinions of the independent external audits, and limited findings which were not recurrent, financial resources appear to be well managed and used in a manner that is consistent with the intended purpose for the funding source.

Conclusion

The institution meets this Standard.

III.D.2.e
The institution's internal control systems are evaluated and assessed for validity and effectiveness and the results of this assessment are used for improvement.

Findings and Evidence

Internal controls mechanisms are electronically built into the Banner finance system. Annual external audits evaluate and assess the validity and effectiveness of internal controls and assessments are used for improvement. This is evidenced through the unqualified audit opinions and through the fact that any recommendations for audit findings noted were implemented in the subsequent year. In addition, fiscal services staff utilize two self-assessment tools for review to ensure sound fiscal practices in accordance with established policies and procedures: the Budget Development Checklist and the quarterly Budget Accountability Report.

Conclusion

The institution meets this Standard.

III.D.3
The institution has policies and procedures to ensure sound financial practices and financial stability.

Findings and Evidence

As previously stated, BP 6300 and AP 6300 ensure sound financial practices and financial stability and this is evidenced through satisfactory results of external audits and through a review of the level of reserves maintained by the District.

Conclusion

The institution meets this Standard.

III.D.3.a
The institution has sufficient cash flow and reserves to maintain stability, strategies for appropriate risk management, and develops contingency plans to meet financial emergencies and unforeseen occurrences.

Findings and Evidence

COS employs the use of Tax Revenue Anticipation Notes (TRANs) to ensure sufficient cash flows. This is a common practice among California Community Colleges, especially due to the state's imposed cash deferrals. TRANs are issued through the CCLC pooled TRAN program and are appropriately repaid in a timely manner. Also, as previously noted, COS has maintained adequate reserves to maintain stability, at a level above the State Chancellor's Office prudent recommended level of five percent (5%) and COS is projecting that reserves will return to six percent (6%, per board policy) by June 30, 2014. Maintaining this reserve level allows COS to respond to financial emergencies and unforeseen conditions. Also, to manage risk, COS participates in two JPAs in order to secure insurance for losses due to destruction of assets or injuries to employees.

Conclusion

The institution meets this Standard.

III.D.3.b
The institution practices effective oversight of finances, including management of financial aid, grants, externally funded programs, contractual relationships, auxiliary organizations or foundations, and institutional investments and assets.

Findings and Evidence

The external audit includes an annual analysis of financial aid, grants and specially funded programs, contractual relationships, auxiliary organizations and foundations, and institutional assets including investments. As noted in the 2012 External Evaluation Team Report, the District has received unqualified opinions, the highest level opinion available, with no material weakness findings reported. Although the District received one federal finding in 2007 related to grants, having to do with multi-funded positions requiring time logs, this finding was subsequently "implemented" as indicated in the Status of Prior Year Findings section of the subsequent report. The District also has established board policies and administrative procedures related to delegating authority for the approval of contractual agreements. All contracts are reviewed by the Vice President of Administrative Services for risk management, legal issues, fiscal issues, human resource issues, tax issues and consistency with the District's mission. The satisfactory results of the external audits, noting no significant pending litigation that may have an adverse effect on the District's financial condition, indicate that this is happening effectively.

Conclusion

The institution meets this Standard.

III.D.3.c
The institution plans for and allocates appropriate resources for the payment of liabilities and future obligations, including Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB), compensated absences, and other employee related obligations.

III.D.3.d
The actuarial plan to determine Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) is prepared, as required by appropriate accounting standards.

Findings and Evidence

In order to comply with Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) Statement No. 45 regarding accounting for OPEB obligations, the District has been completing actuarial studies in accordance with the GASB standards, every two years. The last three actuarial valuations were performed in 2012, 2010, and 2008. COS has established an irrevocable trust through the CCLC JPA to account for its OPEB assets and payments. As evidenced in the June 30, 2012 audit report, the District has funded its OPEB Annual Required Contribution (ARC) at a level which exceeds the actuarially determined ARC. According to the audit report, as of June 30, 2012, the District had a net prepaid OPEB asset balance of $4.8 million. Other future obligations such as Certificates of Participation (COPs) and lease revenue bonds are accounted for in the District's financial and budgetary records as the applicable debt

payments are included in the District's annual budget projections. Obligations for compensated absences are also accounted for in the District's financial records as the District annually accrues a liability to cover accrued compensated absences.

Conclusion

The institution meets this Standard.

III.D.3.e
On an annual basis, the institution assesses and allocates resources for the repayment of any locally incurred debt instruments that can affect the financial condition of the institution.

Findings and Evidence

As previously indicated, COS is fiscally stable with adequate reserves and has accrued liabilities for its outstanding obligations. The District's long-term debt instruments include General Obligation Bonds, Lease Revenue Bonds, COPs, and a Bond Anticipation Note. The District is not required to allocate resources for the repayment of the General Obligation Bonds as they are to be repaid through local property tax collections, handled by the County Tax Assessor's Office. The annual repayment requirements for the Lease Revenue Bonds and the COPs are budgeted annually in the unrestricted general fund. The Bond Anticipation Note is due in April 2016 and repayment of this note will come from future bond issuances, as intended for issuing this type of debt instrument, and from facility project savings.

Conclusion

The institution meets this Standard.

III.D.3.f
Institutions monitor and manage student loan default rates, revenue streams, and assets to ensure compliance with federal requirements.

Findings and Evidence

COS monitors and manages its student loan default rates to ensure they are within federal guidelines. COS also provides student loan counseling to students and contracts with Default Prevention Service Providers. Revenue streams and assets are also monitored to ensure compliance with federal requirements, as is evidenced in the unqualified external audit opinions.

Conclusion

The institution meets this Standard.

III.D.3.g
Contractual agreements with external entities are consistent with the mission and goals of the institution, governed by institutional policies, and contain appropriate provisions to maintain the integrity of the institution.

Findings and Evidence

The District has established board policies and administrative procedures related to delegating authority for the approval of contractual agreements with external entities. As previously indicated, all non-instructional contracts are reviewed by the Vice President of Administrative Services for risk management, legal issues, fiscal issues, human resource issues, tax issues and consistency with the District's mission. Instructional contracts are reviewed by the Vice President of Academic Services to ensure consistency with the District's mission and alignment with the District Objectives and Goals. COS also utilizes external legal counsel to assist with reviewing and constructing certain contracts and to ensure that contractual agreements with external entities do not pose potential undue liability for the District. The satisfactory results of the external audits indicate appropriate oversight in this area.

Conclusion

The institution meets this Standard.

III.D.3.h
The institution regularly evaluates its financial management practices and the results of the evaluation are used to improve internal control structures.

Findings and Evidence

Financial management practices are regularly evaluated through the annual external audit process. This is evidenced through the unqualified audit opinions and minimal audit findings. And more importantly, evidence of using the results of the evaluation to improve internal control structures is evidenced through the fact that any recommendations for audit findings noted were implemented in the subsequent year. In addition to the external audit, and as previously noted, fiscal services staff utilize two self-assessment tools to ensure sound fiscal practices of which internal controls are a significant factor: the Budget Development Checklist and the Budget Accountability Report.

Conclusion

The institution meets this Standard.

III.D.4
Financial resource planning is integrated with institutional planning. The institution systematically assesses the effective use of financial resources and uses the results of the evaluation as the basis for the improvement of the institution.

Findings and Evidence

The College's newly revised integrated planning model includes specific processes that link resource allocations to institutional planning. These links are primarily done through Institutional Program Reviews and through the Strategic Plan (District Objectives). Beginning in fall 2014, Above-Base resource allocations made in one year will be

documented in the program review process in the subsequent year, in order to assess the effective use of financial resources. In addition, an annual Outcome Assessment is performed to analyze and document the effective use of financial resources by assessing the progress made toward achieving the District Goals. This information is included in the Annual Report on the Master Plan to summarize progress toward District Objectives, analyze effectiveness, and use the information to direct the District's actions in the coming year (as a basis for the improvement of the institution).

In addition, the Budget Committee will annually evaluate the resource allocation and budgeting processes and prepare a report for the District Governance Senate. The results of this annual process review may be used as a basis for improving the processes for the subsequent year.

Conclusion

In order to fully meet the Standard, the College will need to complete its first assessment of the District's newly revised integrated planning model which is scheduled to take place in spring 2015, and every three years thereafter.

2013 Recommendation – Planning

In order to fully meet the Standards, the team recommends that the College follow its new Model for Integrated Planning to demonstrate the integration of institutional planning, resource allocation, implementation and re-evaluation. These processes should include appropriate participation from constituent groups and should be evaluated based upon analyses of both quantitative and qualitative data. (Standards I.B.3, III.D.1.a, III.D.1.d, III.D.4, IV.B.2.b)

STANDARD IV – Leadership and Governance
Standard IV.A – Decision-Making Roles and Processes

Standard IV.A
The institution recognizes that ethical and effective leadership throughout the organization enables the institution to identify institutional values, set and achieve goals, learn, and improve.

General Observations

Since the last visit in October 2012, COS has implemented a new decision-making model with clear lines of authority, timelines, accountability, and goals that are clearly understood by the Board, College president, and all staff. Information about institutional performance has been widely circulated, discussed at numerous forums and accreditation summits, and posted on the College's website. There are also clear, appropriate roles and responsibilities for all constituent groups.

IV.A.2.a
Faculty and administrators have a substantive and clearly defined role in institutional governance and exercise a substantial voice in institutional policies, planning, and budget that relate to their areas of responsibility and expertise. Students and staff also have established mechanisms or organizations for providing input into institutional decisions.

Findings and Evidence

COS has a board policy in place (BP 2510 – Participation in Local Decision-Making) that ensures participation in decision-making processes. Additionally, to prevent a re-occurrence of the work slowdown that paralyzed the College during the last team visit, BP 2510 establishes that the participatory process will continue even if groups or individuals decide not to participate in opportunities provided for input into District or College decision-making.

Conclusion

The institution meets this Standard.

IV.A.2.b
The institution relies on faculty, its academic senate or other appropriate faculty structures, the curriculum committee, and academic administrators for recommendations about student learning programs and services.

Findings and Evidence

Board Policy 2510 spells out the circumstances upon which the Board will rely primarily on the advice of the Academic Senate and when it will seek to reach mutual agreement. BP 2510 also states that the Board will rely on the faculty for curricular and educational matters.

Conclusion

The institution meets this Standard.

IV.A.3
Through established governance structures, processes, and practices, the governing board, administrators, faculty, staff, and students work together for the good of the institution. These processes facilitate discussion of ideas and effective communication among the institution's constituencies.

Findings and Evidence

While on campus, the team observed various groups working in a collaborative effort on behalf of institutional improvements. Numerous sign-in sheets were provided to show that the College has made a conscience effort to get everyone's input into the new decision-making model. This culminated in an approval of the *2013 Governance and Decision-making Manual*. It was apparent to the team that everyone was well informed of their role and that participation (including students) is encouraged on all committees.

Conclusion

The institution meets this Standard.

IV.A.5
The role of leadership and the institution's governance and decision-making structures and processes are regularly evaluated to assure their integrity and effectiveness. The institution widely communicates the results of these evaluations and uses them as the basis for improvement.

Findings and Evidence

To evaluate its decision-making processes, the College did an overall assessment of what was working and what was not. Recognizing that there was no built-in accountability and that the College had structures that changed as the College's leadership changed, the College launched COS 2.0, which clearly defined a new direction for the College. Like the next generation of I-phones, COS 2.0 is a new "operating system" aimed at continual self-improvement. And even though the College has not completed a full-cycle of evaluation of its new governance structure, it is well on its way. It was obvious that a new accreditation culture has permeated the campus. Beginning in 2014, the College will do a formal assessment of all participatory governance committees.

Conclusion

The institution meets this Standard.

Standard IV.B – Board and Administrative Organization

Standard IV.B

In addition to the leadership of individuals and constituencies, institutions recognize the designated responsibilities of the governing board for setting policies and of the chief administrator for the effective operation of the institution. Multi-college districts/ systems clearly define the organizational roles of the district/system and the colleges.

General Observations

A five member Board of Trustees governs College of the Sequoias. Qualified voters of the district elect board members to serve for four-year terms. A nonvoting student trustee is elected by the students to serve a one-year term beginning in June of every year.

The Board members interviewed described the long-term stability of the Board, with most members serving between nine to 20 years or more. This has allowed the Board to stay in their role as policy makers who understand that they are not responsible for the daily operations of the College. Board members understand and recognize that they have only one employee—the Superintendent/President.

IV.B.1

The institution has a governing board that is responsible for establishing policies to assure the quality, integrity, and effectiveness of the student learning programs and services and the financial stability of the institution. The governing board adheres to a clearly defined policy for selecting and evaluating the chief administrator for the college or the district/system.

Findings and Evidence

A review of governing board policies demonstrate that the Board has in place policies that assure the quality, integrity and effectiveness of student learning and the financial stability of the College.

Board Policy 2431 (Selecting the Superintendent/President) states that the Board will establish a search process in the case of a Superintendent/President vacancy and that the process will be fair and comply with relevant regulations such as personnel policies for evaluating management employees (Personnel Policies for Management Council, Article 9).

Board Policy 2435 (Evaluation of Superintendent/President) states that the Board is responsible for the annual evaluation of the Superintendent/President. The team verified that the Board began the Superintendent/President's evaluation in March 2013 and completed it in May. The Board President stated that it was the Board's intention to start the process for next year's evaluation in January 2014 during the annual Board retreat in order to get back to the original timeline for conducting his evaluation.

Conclusion

The institution meets this Standard.

IV.B.1.g

The governing board's self evaluation processes for assessing board performance are clearly defined, implemented, and published in its policies or bylaws.

Findings and Evidence

Board Policy 2745 (Board Self-Evaluation) spells out the Board's self-evaluation process. A committee of the Board determines the evaluation instrument, and incorporates criteria contained in the board policies regarding Board operations, as well as criteria recognized as indicators of Board effectiveness. The Board's self-evaluation was completed at the Board annual retreat that took place on January 25-26, 2013. The Board used the results to identify accomplishments and set their goals for the 2013-2014 academic year.

Conclusion

The institution meets this Standard.

IV.B.2

The president has primary responsibility for the quality of the institution he/she leads. He/she provides effective leadership in planning, organizing, budgeting, selecting and developing personnel, and assessing institutional effectiveness.

Findings and Evidence

The team found that the Superintendent/President has provided transformational leadership and helped to create an atmosphere of inclusivity, collaboration and empowerment. He has also been responsible for ensuring a substantial voice for the entire institution in decision-making and institutional effectiveness. Evidence of this was seen in the documentation provided. Specifically, the team was told that the Superintendent/President listens to concerns, encourages all staff to participate in campus wide dialogues, and makes himself available to work out strategies for institutional improvement.

The Superintendent/President's evaluation established that he is responsible for providing effective leadership in the area of planning, organizing, budgeting, selecting and developing personnel, and assessing institutional effectiveness. A review of minutes of the governing board, campus committees, and interviews with campus constituencies verify that this role is appropriately exercised.

Conclusion

The institution meets this Standard.

IV.B.2.b

The president guides institutional improvement of the teaching and learning environment by the following:

- *establishing a collegial process that sets values, goals, and priorities;*

- *ensuring that evaluation and planning rely on high quality research and analysis on external and internal conditions;*

- *ensuring that educational planning is integrated with resource planning and distribution to achieve student learning outcomes; and*

- *establishing procedures to evaluate overall institutional planning and implementation efforts.*

Findings and Evidence

The Superintendent/President provides effective leadership in guiding institutional improvement of the teaching and learning environment. For example, he was instrumental in the creation of the principles of participatory governance (i.e., mutuality, collegiality, collaboration, transparency, representative participation, mutual accountability, and clarity of roles) contained in the new decision-making manual that forms the basis of institutional values at COS. Furthermore, through the institutional planning process, newsletters, senior management meetings, and campus wide meetings, he has established a collegial process for the establishment of goals and direction for the college.

In order to drive decisions that are based on data and sound research that analyzes institutional performance, the Superintendent/President has filled the Director of Research, Planning and Institutional Effectiveness position with an experienced researcher. This demonstrates the importance that he has placed on high quality research that includes both external and internal data analysis.

In 2013, COS revised its Budget Committee process to include a new process that integrates educational planning and resources to achieve student learning outcomes. Funding requests in instructional and non-instructional program reviews are required to be related to a student learning outcome, service area outcome, or a District strategic plan objective. These strategic plan objectives are tied to the District's mission. Interviews with the Superintendent/President, Academic Senate representatives, and college constituencies validated the positive direction that the new process is going and the easy access to information about how planning is now linked to resource allocations.

While the team did find that the Superintendent/President guides institutional improvement, it was also noted that the Director of Research, Planning and Institutional Effectiveness has only been in his position for two months. Therefore, the team found that educational planning and implementation are at the infancy stage and that the College still must demonstrate systematic evaluation that leads to improvement during the next evaluation cycle.

Conclusion

In order to fully meet the Standard, the institution must demonstrate that systematic evaluation, relying upon high quality research and analysis, leads to improvement during the next evaluation cycle.

2013 Recommendation – Planning

In order to fully meet the Standards, the team recommends that the College follow its new Model for Integrated Planning to demonstrate the integration of institutional planning, resource allocation, implementation and re-evaluation. These processes should include appropriate participation from constituent groups and should be evaluated based upon analyses of both quantitative and qualitative data. (Standards I.B.3, III.D.1.a, III.D.1.d, III.D.4, IV.B.2.b)

INSTITUTIONAL COMPLIANCE WITH ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Eligibility Requirement 10 – Student Learning and Achievement

COS has defined and published learning outcomes for all of its courses, programs, certificates, and degrees. Assessment is regular and systematic as a result of the newly established processes in curriculum and institutional program review, and the establishment of a three-year assessment cycle. By correcting the deficiencies identified in Recommendation 4, the College now meets Eligibility Requirement 10.

Eligibility Requirement 13 – Faculty

The core of full-time faculty at COS is qualified and sufficient to support its educational programs. Faculty participates in the assessment of student learning outcomes. The evaluations of both full-time and part-time faculty include language about the faculty member's participation in the learning outcomes process. By correcting the deficiencies in Recommendation 6, the College now meets Eligibility Requirement 13.

Eligibility Requirement 19 – Institutional Planning and Evaluation

Planning efforts have been streamlined into an Integrated Planning Manual with broad buy-in from the campus community. The Model for Integrated Planning and the planning calendar are now indicators of a sustainable effort to make evidenced-based decisions. Planning efforts are assessed annually through a Year-end Committee Evaluation Report and every three years by way of formal assessment by the District Governance Senate. Inherent in the planning processes is the cyclical nature of re-evaluation. As the new cycle begins, time is set aside for reflection on strengths and weaknesses.

As viewed in the Model for Integrated Planning, the mission is central to decision-making and provides the starting point for planning. As outlined in the *2013 Integrated Planning Manual*, the mission will be reviewed in fall of 2014 and every three years thereafter.

COS planning infrastructure is defined by three primary planning documents:

- *2013 Integrated Planning Manual*
- *2013 Governance and Decision-making Manual*
- *2013 Resource Allocation Manual*

Not only has the development of these documents streamlined the planning process, but it has also enabled the campus community to collaborate on the importance of planning. There appears more willingness to become involved in planning and an increased hope that planning will improve business processes campus wide.

COS uses qualitative and quantitative measures to assess institutional effectiveness and dialogue. Evidence of quantitative measures for institutional effectiveness can be found in the program review process and the Annual Report on the Strategic Plan. In addition, qualitative analysis is performed by way of various presentations regarding institutional-set

standards. A concerted effort has been placed on identifying District Objectives that are measurable, outcomes that are aligned with the these objectives, and program review budget requests that are identified to help meet the objectives.

Not only has COS worked diligently to develop an integrated planning process that addresses past deficiencies, but they have identified responsibility centers and accessed buy-in College wide to assure that this planning is sustainable. Although most planning processes are new and a complete cycle has not been completed, COS only needs to continue to implement the planning process according to their calendar, to be in complete compliance with Eligibility Requirement 19.

Eligibility Requirement 21 – Relations with the Accrediting Commission

Since the last visit, COS has developed a new integrated planning process that is well documented, identifies responsibility centers, and focusses on measures to assess effectiveness. The three primary planning manuals are the *2013 Integrated Planning Manual*, the *2013 Resource Allocation Manual*, and the *2013 Governance and Decision-making Manual*. The Institutional Planning and Effectiveness Committee guides the work needed for implementing the integrated plan which is aided by an institutional planning calendar and the oversight of the Implementation Task Force. Other planning efforts include the revision of the Strategic Plan 2010-2105 as evidenced in the Annual Report on Strategic Plan 2013. This annual report reveals COS's commitment to the original Strategic Plan and places the focus on continuous quality improvement as documented in mature institutions. Evaluation of the decision-making process for budget development is explained in the Resource Allocation Manual with oversight provided by the Budget Committee. Integrated planning timelines and measureable objectives used to meet COSs goals are communicated to the campus and the community at large as evidenced in the fall 2013 convocation.

In the effort to increase evidence needed for decision-making, the research capacity was increased. For instance, the newly hired Director of Research's plan is to improve the business processes between research and MIS and increase the use of the College of the Sequoias Extended Information System (CEIS) through communicating via the Solution and Innovations Work Group. Some projects have already begun such as the newly developed FactBook, a three-year research agenda, and a research request form. The development of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) reveals the concern for fundamental research techniques that protect participants.

Increased procedures for employee evaluations have been extended to include all employees (AP 7120 and BP 7150). The hiring process now has in place an evaluation component which includes all applicants completing the Candidate Exit Survey. This information will be collected by Human Resources and used to improve business processes within the department. In addition, a faculty evaluation page identifies faculty as participating in student learning outcomes.

In an effort to increase trust and to ensure that opportunities exist for collaboration, the *2013 Governance and Decision-making Manual* was developed. As a guide, this manual details the role of each constituency group and provides a framework for how communication can be

assured. With the District Governance Senate as the responsibility center, this manual was updated to align all governance groups. The fall 2013 convocation provided a venue for a detailed discussion regarding this manual.

The Institutional Program Review Committee ensures that outcomes are placed into course syllabi, are assessed on a three-year cycle, are a component of faculty evaluation, and lend themselves to program improvement. Outcome assessment is essential to the *2013 Integrated Planning Manual*, the *2013 Resource Allocation Manual*, and the *2013 Governance and Decision-making Manual*. TracDat is used to house the outcomes and consultants were hired to train faculty and staff to on the use of student learning outcomes as well as service area outcomes.

While attention was being placed on upgrading student services at the Hanford Center, the Tulare Center opened in spring 2013 requiring additional attention to student needs. The District has contributed several resources to both Centers as evidenced in the hiring of additional counseling staff, library resources and staff, and tutoring. In addition, software (e.g., Millennium) and web-enhanced tools (e.g., AskCOS) were purchased and the "Ask a Librarian" process was established to provide library services to online students as well as students attending the Centers.

After identifying that only one employee in the District had ever served on an accreditation team visit, momentum shifted to training faculty and staff as it pertains to accreditation and communicating the results of this training to the campus community. Campus wide dialogue about accreditation related efforts became common throughout the community as individuals realized that accreditation is a continuous process. And the communication did not stop at the campus community, the surrounding community also became informed about accreditation as evidenced in the local newspaper, on the COS website, and numerous community forums.

The institution realized that past systems were not sustainable due to the sudden expansion of two new Centers, leadership turnover, and the economic downturn. Even though COS had a long history of planning, past planning efforts had been disjointed and lacked responsibility centers. As characterized by a mature institution, COS rose to the occasion and noticed their weaknesses and remedied many issues. The institution has come together as shown by the Accreditation Response Task Force and created work systems to re-tool existing plans as evidenced in the Annual Report on Strategic Plan. COS should be commended for streamlining planning documents, creating responsibility centers, developing objectives that are measureable, and identifying ways to assess when the College has reached a goal. Because of these thoughtful planning efforts, COS has been able to expand student services for online and Center students, increased efforts for assessing SLOs and SAOs, and better communicate to the campus and the community in which they serve. Substantial work has been completed on this planning model, but most planning processes are new and a complete cycle has not been completed. The intensity and vigor with which COS has responded to the 2012 visiting team's recommendations is evidence that they are in compliance with Eligibility Requirement 21.

SECTION 2 – INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE TO 2012 EXTERNAL EVALUATION TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1 – Planning
(Repeats 2006 Recommendation 2)
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)

General Observations

Since the 2012 External Evaluation Team visit, COS has implemented a new Model for Integrated Planning and has developed three new manuals: *2013 Integrated Planning Manual*, *2013 Governance and Decision-making Manual*, and the *2013 Resource Allocation Manual*. This information was communicated to all constituent groups to ensure broad participation in the development of institutional plans and budgets and to clearly define integrated planning processes and resource allocation processes which are linked with institutional planning. The District has also modified the role and function of its Budget Committee to ensure its effectiveness in this process.

Various campus groups have been working collaboratively on behalf of institutional improvements. COS has made a conscious effort to get broad input on its new processes, keep everyone well informed of their role in ensuring the effectiveness of those processes, and to ensure that every participatory governance committee has full membership. In addition, the Superintendent/President has helped to create an atmosphere of inclusivity, collaboration, and empowerment. He has ensured a substantial voice for all constituency groups throughout the entire institution in decision-making and institutional effectiveness.

Through the new Model for Integrated Planning, COS has incorporated its mission by making it central to institutional planning and decision-making. In addition, COS reaffirmed its mission in 2011 and future plans to review the mission, on a three-year cycle, are formalized in the *2013 Integrated Planning Manual*. That manual also provides a timeline and identifies groups/individuals responsible for facilitating each major component of the District's planning process in order to ensure sustainability should additional turnover at the leadership level be experienced.

In addition to the College's newly integrated planning process, the Strategic Plan reporting structure provides the mechanisms to allow for reporting on the progress toward achieving the District's stated goals and objectives. COS has implemented the TracDat system to support, track, and compile much of the data that will support its overall planning processes to ensure integration, informed decision-making, and the basis for future recommendations in support of continuous quality improvement. The District also enhanced its research component by hiring a Director of Research, Planning and Institutional Effectiveness since the 2012 External Evaluation Team visit. This has allowed for newly defined methodologies and metrics as a basis for measuring effectiveness.

Findings and Evidence

COS has a board policy in place (BP 2510 – Participation in Local Decision-Making) that ensures participation in decision-making processes. It also establishes that the participatory process will continue even if groups or individuals decide not to participate in opportunities provided for input into District or College decision-making. (IV.A.2.a)

Furthermore, BP 2510 spells out the circumstances upon which the Board will rely primarily on the advice of the Academic Senate and when it will seek to reach mutual agreement. BP 2510 also states that the Board will rely on the faculty for curricular and educational matters. (IV.A.2.b)

Various campus groups are working in a collaborative effort on behalf of institutional improvements. The College has made a conscious effort to get everyone's input into the new decision-making model. This culminated in an approval of the *2013 Governance and Decision-making Manual*. Everyone was well informed of their role, and every participatory governance committee has full memberships. (IV.A.3)

The team found that the Superintendent/President has helped to create an atmosphere of inclusivity, collaboration and empowerment. He has ensured a substantial voice for the entire institution in decision-making and institutional effectiveness. The Superintendent/President's evaluation established that he was responsible for providing effective leadership in the area of planning, organizing, budgeting, selecting and developing personnel, and assessing institutional effectiveness. (IV.B.2)

As defined in the College's new integrated planning model, financial planning will stem from institutional planning at the point of developing the budget assumptions. This will be done through broad input by the Budget Committee. Since the newly revised integrated planning model became effective in fall 2013, the first opportunity to develop budget assumptions under this new model will begin with development of the 2014-15 budget, which will take place during spring 2014. Also related to the fiscal budgeting cycle and the new integrated planning processes, systematic assessment of the effective use of financial resources will begin in fall 2014 as resource allocations made in one year will be documented in the program review process in the subsequent year. In addition, an annual Outcome Assessment is performed to analyze and document the effective use of financial resources by assessing the progress made toward achieving the District Goals. The College's first assessment of its newly revised integrated planning model is scheduled to take place in spring 2015 and every three years thereafter. (III.D.1.a, III.D.1.d, III.D.4)

The team noted that the Director of Research, Planning and Institutional Effectiveness has only been in his position for two months. Therefore, the team found that educational planning and implementation are at the infancy stage and that the College still must demonstrate systematic evaluation that leads to improvement during the next evaluation cycle. (IV.B.2.b)

Conclusion

The institution has partially addressed this recommendation and is now in compliance with Standards I.A.3, I.A.4, I.B, I.B.2, I.B.6, III.D.2.d, III.D.3, IV.A.2.a, IV.A.3, and IV.B.2. In

order to fully comply with all aspects of Recommendation 1, however, more time is needed to allow COS to follow its new integrated planning model to ensure integration as it begins its resource allocation processes following its newly developed plans and the resulting implementation and re-evaluation processes, based on an analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data. (I.B.3, III.D.1.a, III.D.4, IV.A.2.b)

Recommendation 2 – Campus Dialogue
(Repeats 2006 Recommendation 1)
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)

General Observations

During the evaluation visit, the team verified that COS has strived to improve its campus climate by strengthening its participatory governance and decision-making processes and engaging in campus wide dialogue about student learning and institutional effectiveness. Furthermore, the team found that the College has made progress on faculty participation in assessing student learning outcomes. This topic was a source of tension on campus during the last visit.

However, the team found that COS is in a very different place a year later. In interviews with the Academic Senate Executive Board, College president, classified staff, students and the Board of Trustees, the team verified that faculty have participated in institution wide dialogues on student learning, outcomes, planning and decision-making. During the visit, the team also found that the campus has had numerous discussions about the events leading to the Show Cause action by the Commission. While the tension created around the imposition of a health benefits cap that paralyzed the campus last year has not been fully resolved, it also has not resulted in a work slowdown this year.

Additionally, the College has engaged in a nine-month dialogue to agree on the difference between governance and representation. The College discussed how governance and representation could peacefully co-exist in order to move the College forward by separating these two functions. Governance areas include policies, governance, decision-making, operations, accreditation, compliance, curriculum, outcomes assessment, and student achievement. Conversely, representation includes employee representation, advocacy, negotiations, grievance resolution, mediation, and arbitration. By clarifying these roles, the appropriate distinctions between college and union responsibilities has prevented the paralysis observed by the October 2012 visiting team.

Finally, the team noted that the College was successful in developing a set of principles of participatory governance that have been mutually agreed to by the Superintendent/President, Academic Senate President, and President of the Student Senate.

The COS principles of participatory governance include mutuality, collegiality, collaboration, transparency, representative participation, mutual accountability and clarity of roles. Each of these principles is clearly defined in the *College of the Sequoias 2013 Governance and Decision-making Manual.* This clarity of roles has moved the College forward with its institutional dialogue and led to demonstrated improvements in student learning that were clearly articulated in various interviews with team members.

Findings and Evidence

In evaluating the College's response to this recommendation, the team reviewed a significant amount of documentation including minutes, agendas and sign-in sheets of the 42 member Accreditation Response Task Force, opportunities for District wide dialogue at accreditation forums or summits, assessment workshops for faculty, assessment workshops for administrators, workshops for the Board of Trustees, and the broad based dialogue needed to develop, implement and formalize the new decision-making model. The team found that the College developed a process that led to widespread, inclusive dialogue and should be commended for doing so in such a relatively short period of time.

Going forward the College will need to follow through on the three actionable improvement plans that it has given itself:

1. The Superintendent/President, with the Implementation Task Force and the District Governance Senate, will ensure compliance with the timelines and processes in the *College of the Sequoias 2013 Integrated Planning Manual* for all institutional planning processes.
2. The Superintendent/President, with members of the Implementation Task Force and the District Governance Senate, will ensure compliance with roles and responsibilities placed upon each of the governance groups in the *College of the Sequoias 2013 Governance and Decision-making Manual.*
3. All committee co-chairs will provide training on each committee's unique role in the integrated planning process.

Additionally, the College will need to adhere to the timelines set in the ten-year Institutional Planning Calendar that assigns a responsible group or individual the various charges such as conducting training for faculty and staff on the program review process, preparing the annual report on the Strategic Plan, completing the Year-end Committee evaluation, etc. (IV.A.2, IV.A.2.a, IV.A.3)

Conclusion

The institution has addressed this recommendation and meets Standards I.B.1, I.B.4, I.B.5, IV.A.2, IV.A.2.a, and IV.A.3.

Recommendation 3 – Research Capacity
In order to fully comply with the standards, the team recommends that 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)

General Observations

COS has increased the research capacity at the College and has ensured that appropriate data is available to be used in decision-making for institutional effectiveness. The College recently hired a Director of Research, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness to guide business processes between the Office of Research, Planning and Institutional Effectiveness and MIS as more demands for data become apparent. In addition, some research projects that have been completed due to the increased research capacity include a newly developed FactBook, a three-year research agenda, a research request form, and the development of an Institutional Review Board (IRB) process.

Findings and Evidence

Team members verified that the College uses data to guide institutional planning, program review, outcome assessment, resource allocation, and decision-making for institutional effectiveness. Formal processes to request data have improved efficiency in the office and also help end-users align their requests with broader institutional planning. In addition, as the demand for data increases, the Office of Research, Planning and Institutional Effectiveness has increased communication with Technical Services to decrease replication of requests and assure data integrity as it pertains to internal and external reporting.

As noted previously the Director of Research, Planning and Institutional Effectiveness position has been filled only recently, so the College must ensure that the use of data continues to guide processes resulting in institutional effectiveness.

Conclusion

The institution has partially addressed this recommendation and meets 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, and III.A. In order to fully meet Standard IV.B.2.b, the College must demonstrate during its next evaluation cycle that data continues to guide effective planning, assessment, and decision-making.

Recommendation 4 – Student Learning Outcomes
(Repeats 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)

General Observations

COS has made progress to assure that learning outcomes are assessed, that assessment results are used to improve student learning and institutional effectiveness, and that effectiveness in producing learning outcomes is a component of evaluation processes for those responsible for them. The College developed an assessment cycle, began using TracDat as a management system for learning outcomes, developed a plan for systematic assessment of learning outcomes, encouraged institutional dialogue about learning outcomes, integrated program review and planning, developed assessment reports, identified strategies for the support of student awareness of goals, and changed faculty evaluation processes to include a component for the effectiveness in producing learning outcomes.

Findings and Evidence

Team members reviewed the TracDat system, verified that learning outcomes have been developed for all courses, programs, degrees, and certificates, and reviewed learning outcomes to assess their appropriateness. They also verified evidence of assessment of all learning outcomes and of the use of at least some the results for improvement. Because the campus community is still learning the TracDat system, there were some questions about missing pieces. So, team members interviewed members of the faculty and management and verified that assessment and improvement were occurring.

Conclusion

The institution has addressed this recommendation and meets 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, II.A.1.c, and IV.B.2. As a result, it also meets Eligibility Requirement 10 – Student Learning and Achievement.

Recommendation 5 – Student Support Services
(Repeats part of 2006 Recommendation 4)
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)

General Observations

COS has made significant strides to meet Standards II.B.3.a, II.C.1, II.C.1.c, and Recommendation 5.

Findings and Evidence

There is a full-time counselor at each Center. Each Center also has adjunct counseling services for EOPS students and students with disabilities during day and evening hours. The expanded service hours at each Center were improvements made as a result of evaluating student survey data and other research.

Counselors now offer online counseling through an online request form on the College website. This request form includes optional fields to survey student needs such as how online services could better support students.

Counselors enter Student Educational Plans online and students may access their educational plans online at any time.

The College has implemented new technology to help students get answers to their academic and support questions by entering their questions into AskCOS – an online knowledge management system. AskCOS is online and is dynamically configured to provide the most relevant responses as rated by other students.

The College has improved its online library services. They started a new "Ask a Librarian" service for students to email their questions to a reference librarian. The "Ask a Librarian" web page includes Frequently Asked Questions for students to get immediate answers to common questions.

The Visalia Learning Resource Center has installed "hotline" phones at the library desks at the Hanford and Tulare Centers. These phones are available for students to get immediate support from a reference librarian at the Visalia campus. The reference librarian is available to students at the Centers until 8:00 p.m. to provide equitable access to library services at all locations.

Conclusion

The institution has addressed this recommendation and meets Standards II.B.3.a, II.C.1, and II.C.1.c.

Recommendation 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)

General Observations

COS has established clear, written hiring processes and evaluation processes for all employee groups. Additionally, the College revised Board Policy 7120 (Recruitment and Hiring) so that it included the hiring of all constituent groups, not just the hiring of faculty and classified employees, and wrote Board Policy 7150 (Employee Evaluations) on employee evaluation. The evaluation process has the encouragement of improvement as its main goal. The College also included in the evaluation process a component for assessing the effectiveness in producing learning outcomes for those responsible for them.

Findings and Evidence

Team members reviewed the new hiring processes and evaluation processes and verified that they exist and have been put into practice. They also verified that effectiveness in producing learning outcomes is a component of the evaluation of those who are responsible for them.

Conclusion

The institution has addressed this recommendation and meets Standards III.A.1, III.A.1.a, III.A.1.b, and III.A.1.c. As a result, it also meets Eligibility Requirement 13 – Faculty.

Recommendation 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)

General Observations

During the period since the last evaluation team visit, COS has developed and implemented a new cycle of evaluation for its decision-making and budget development processes. A review of campus documents showed that every year, beginning in April 2014, the District Governance Senate will be charged with distributing a formal committee evaluation to the four committees that report to it: Institutional Planning and Effectiveness, Institutional Program Review, Budget Committee, and Technology Committee.

After the major college-level governance committees conduct their annual self-evaluations, the senate will create a consolidated District Year-end report. Eventually this report will be posted online to ensure widespread dissemination and shared with the Board of Trustees. Every three years, a formal assessment of the entire decision-making process will occur, beginning in spring 2015.

To evaluate the budget development process, the College also created a process for broad-based Budget Committee participation that was lacking during the October 2012 visit. The framework for the budget development process can be found in the *College of the Sequoias 2013 Resource Allocation Manual* that spells out the base budget development process, above-base resource allocation process, and the link between resource allocation and planning. In January of every year, the Budget Committee will evaluate the resource allocation and budgeting process and prepare a formal report to the senate.

Findings and Evidence

The team found evidence to support the finding that the College has developed an agreed upon system of evaluation of its decision-making and budget development processes. Once the Year-end report is completed, the College will use the results of those evaluations as the basis for improvement. (IV.A.2.a, IV.A.5)

The team also found that the Board is adhering to a regular cycle of self-evaluation and that the Superintendent/President has provided effective leadership in the area of planning, organizing, budgeting, selecting and developing personnel, and assessing institutional effectiveness. (IV.B.1.g, IV.B.2)

Conclusion

The institution has partially addressed this recommendation and now is in compliance with Standards III.D.2.d, III.D.3, IV.A.2, IV.A.5, IV.B.1.g, and IV.B.2. In order to fully meet the requirements of Standards III.D.1.a, III.D.1.d, COS should follow its new Model for Integrated Planning and budget development process including evaluation and the use of

those evaluations as a basis for improvement. To that end the visiting team created the new 2013 Recommendation on Planning.