

Standard I

Institutional Mission and Effectiveness

A. Mission

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.

A.1. The institution establishes student learning programs and services aligned with its purposes, its character, and its student population.

Descriptive Summary

The agendas and minutes of the master planning committees document the extensive discussion that has occurred by a broad cross-section of college staff concerning the college's mission and the important place student learning outcomes play in it. Goals have been set that reflect the goals of the college's mission statement. Statements about student learning are reflected in the mission, vision, and core values and belief statement. The mission statement is a broad statement that demonstrates the importance of all students and the college's commitment to their success. The goals of the Educational Master Planning Committee reflect Merced College's dedication to its mission.

Self Evaluation

The college meets the standard. Evidence that Merced College is addressing the needs of its student population is documented on many levels: research data; dialogue within divisions; minutes of division meetings, Faculty Senate, Classified Senate, Associated Students, planning committees, and task forces; dialogue about and preparation of five-year plans; current course outlines; various student clubs and activities; instructor discussions regarding student learning outcomes within disciplines; innovative programs and task forces dedicated to student success such as Partnership for Excellence, Early Alert, and LINC.

Planning Agenda

Merced College will continue to evaluate its mission statement on a regular cycle. Institutional dialogue regarding institutional-level student learning outcomes will continue.

A.2. The mission statement is approved by the governing board and published.

Descriptive Summary

The mission statement was adopted by the Board of Trustees on December 15, 1998. The mission statement, vision statement, and core values and beliefs statement are published in the Merced College catalog and faculty handbook.

Self Evaluation

The college meets this standard.

Planning Agenda

None.

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.

Descriptive Summary

The Board reviews its Mission Statement annually. The Board's goals, first published in September of 1999, were clarified in October of 2000 and reaffirmed at the September 2001 board meeting (Board of Trustees Goal Statements). After an initial reading, discussion, and minor revision at their April, 2002 meeting, the Board voted at the May, 2002 meeting to adopt the District Mission Statement, Vision Statement, and Core Values and Beliefs that are published in the current college catalog (2003-2004) and in the faculty handbook.

Members of the Board, faculty, staff, and administration all have an opportunity to serve on the six (6) master planning committees. Each planning committee may draft policy and make recommendations that are forwarded to the President and Board for final approval. The process allows for incorporating the interests of the institution's stakeholders. The dialogue is only as effective as the commitment to communicate within and between the elements of the college community. The actual membership of the planning committees is weighted heavily toward faculty and administration. There are currently no students on any of the six master planning committees (membership lists available on MC-net). The college catalog (p.28, under Student and College Services, Associated Students) informs students of their opportunity to participate in shared governance.

Self Evaluation

The college meets the minimum for the standard but could improve. One measure of the effectiveness of the process of developing, communicating, and approving the college's mission and goal statements is the level of participation by all constituencies. The evidence of membership lists, Faculty Senate activity, and the faculty handbook show that faculty, in general, do an excellent job of participating in developing and communicating the college's mission and goals. Communications with other staff and motivation and participation by students are not at the same level. There is no formal process for changing the mission statement, but it is reviewed annually as part of the institutional planning process.

Planning Agenda

To encourage student participation, faculty will be asked to announce in their classes when planning committee meetings are scheduled. A member of each shared governance committee will serve as an ASMC liaison/mentor who will take reports of meetings back to ASMC to encourage students to add their voice to the decision-making process. The Management Team and the Classified Senate will be encouraged to work with the Faculty Senate to develop communication networks using the Faculty Senate as a model.

A.4 The institution's mission is central to institutional planning and decision-making.

Descriptive Summary

The institution vision statement provides direction and an overall context for the planning process (see the Merced College Planning Handbook). Merced College's planning model directs the Educational Master Planning Committee to produce the college's educational master plan, based on the input from the five master planning committees (Administrative Services, Student Services, Instruction, Technology and Facilities) and from each division and department.

Self Evaluation

The college meets this standard. The planning guidelines direct the Educational Master Planning Committee and each contributing committee to develop their plans and recommendations in the context of the college vision statement. The master planning committees, divisions, and departments must justify all requests and recommendations based on the college mission and goals. (Published MPC Goals: EMPC 03/02, IMPC 12/02, TMPC 03/03, ASMPC.)

Planning Agenda

None

B. Improving Institutional Effectiveness

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.

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

Descriptive Summary

Merced College has a history of institutional processes that give form and structure to plans for student success. Board Policy #2505 is the foundation for collegial consultation on academic and professional matters. The committee structure at Merced College works to create a forum for dialogue and change.

The Faculty Senate meets at least once a month and serves as a medium for the exchange of information, ideas, and planning. The Faculty Senate has representatives from each division or instructional area and takes a proactive approach to planning, which helps ensure faculty and student success.

To deal with curriculum issues, the Curriculum Committee also meets monthly and consists of representatives from all divisions and areas of the college. Student learning outcomes form the basis for course outlines. Student matriculation through the college system is viewed critically, as each course is designed, structured, and then reevaluated on a six-year cycle by faculty representing all disciplines.

The Instructional Council is comprised of division chairs and area directors and meets monthly with the Vice President of Instruction, Dr. John Spevak. This group considers instructional issues that affect students and staff. The focus is on serving students to ensure barriers are anticipated, minimized, and prevented as student's progress toward their educational goals. This committee strives to build and support a sound instructional program, with the assistance of Administrative Services and Student Services.

To support students in vocational programs, the Vocational and Technical Education Administration (VTEA) group meets monthly. Comprised of representatives from all areas that conduct vocational education, this cohort of faculty and administration seeks to ensure that students receive an education that meets current industry standards. Dialogue is ongoing to ensure that instructional programs are crafted to meet federal and state

regulations impacting student employment goals. In addition, the VTEA group makes an assertive effort to support under-represented groups in all employment fields.

Also meeting on a monthly basis, the Student Services Committee strives to smooth the student's pathway through the college. Representatives from Instruction and all areas of Student Services coordinate and discuss current issues affecting the quality of student support services and their effect on student learning.

Robert Bauer, Research Analyst, attends many of the meetings listed above. He makes statistical data and analysis available to the constituent groups concerning student recruitment, progress, retention, transfer, and post graduation employment. Such statistics give faculty and staff the data necessary for a full view of student issues and student success.

Self Evaluation

Merced College has an excellent planning model, which allows for a regular and ongoing dialogue on the topic of student learning outcomes. Evidence of the achievement of student learning outcomes and institution and program performance needs to be more widely distributed and regularly updated. Dialogue regarding the effectiveness of indirect measures of student learning outcomes does not occur on a formal basis any longer.

The Partnership for Excellence Committee, which was formed when the funding was provided to the district, did evaluate campus measures such as graduation rates, transfer rates, basic skills improvement, and workforce training. These measures, while indirect, did provide for an effective discourse on the topic of student learning. The dialogue, as well as specific plans for improvement of those measures, was then shared with the various planning committees in order to implement the improvement plans. This committee has been disbanded with the elimination of PFE funding by the state.

Determination of institutional-level student learning outcomes was started during the Spring 2004, semester.

Planning Agenda

Institutional-level outcomes for students will be developed, adopted, and evaluated under the direction of the Instructional Master Planning Committee and the Educational Master Planning Committee, in cooperation with the Faculty Senate, Superintendent/President, and the Board of Trustees.

The model of the Partnership for Excellence Committee's dialogue, assessment, and planning for institutional improvement using indirect measures such as transfer rates, statistics on diversity of staff and faculty, and graduation rates, will, on an institutional level, continue be the responsibility of the Educational Master Planning Committee.

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.

Descriptive Summary

Goal setting is linked to the college's mission statement. Goals are revised, adopted, and renewed every year as a part of an ongoing review process. Once a year, each division or department takes a collaborative look at its current goals. Some goals are measurable and easily visible once achieved (e.g., doubling the Registered Nursing Program). Other goals are worked on over longer periods of time. For example, it took over ten (10) years from the first planning meeting until the first shovel of dirt was turned for the new classroom building now under construction. In addition to the Educational Master Planning Committee (EMPC), there are five master planning committees at the college: Instruction, Student Services, Technology, Facilities, and Administrative Services. Each of these five committees forwards their goals to the EMPC annually. To integrate planning goals with budget realities, the college has a Committee for Budget Review and Recommendation (CBRR). Throughout the planning process, the mission statement (students are our focus) serves as a foundation for planning. Goals must be changed when a review of the data indicates there are problems or successes that were not previously appreciated. External regulations generated by the legislature (e.g., the Scott Bill passed this fall), or the Chancellor's Office can alter the college's goals. Each year goals are reviewed with the needs of students balanced against the reality of financial or regulatory limitations.

Self Evaluation

The college articulates its goals and objectives well, but it needs to work more at stating them in measurable terms and then accurately measuring progress to date in achieving them.

Planning Agenda

The college should continue to implement the planning activities started in 2003-2004 to identify, assess, and evaluate student learning outcomes on various levels (including institutional, program, and course level) and use the results of this process to better determine how well it is meeting its goals and objectives.

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 reevaluation. Evaluation is based on analyses of both quantitative and qualitative data.

Descriptive Summary

Merced College understands and embraces the notion of ongoing planning. The college planning process is implemented on a regular cycle. Planning is integrated, has a broad base of participants, and utilizes the college mission statement to focus on student success. The term “success” has been quantified with data related to retention, transfer, and employability. Such data is reviewed on a regular basis and interpreted for faculty and staff by the college's Research Analyst. Data gathering and analysis has increased in frequency as the need for evaluation becomes increasingly more evident.

Self Evaluation

The college has a systematic cycle of evaluation, planning, implementation, and reevaluation, but it needs to better incorporate the systematic analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data in the course of the evaluation process.

Planning Agenda

The college should incorporate the results of the student learning outcomes process that it started in 2004, using both direct and indirect measures of success, into its regular cycle of evaluation on through reevaluation.

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.

Descriptive Summary

The Merced College planning process has been used since December 1998, when the Board adopted the “Merced College Planning Handbook.” The handbook describes the planning model of the six master planning committees (EMPC plus the five area committees), the relationship between the committees, the composition of the broad-based committee membership, and how the process of planning operates. The planning handbook was widely distributed to division chairs, faculty senators, MCFA and CSEA boards, and the management team. Copies of the handbook are housed in the offices of Instruction, Student Personnel, Administrative Services, the President’s Office, and the Library. The planning committees make requests for resources to a college-wide budget committee called CBRR (The Committee for Budget Review and Recommendation).

Self Evaluation

The college meets the standard. The planning process continues annually with its comprehensive approach and broad base of participants; this occurs even though resources cannot be found to fund everything.

Planning Agenda

None

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

Descriptive Summary

Merced College uses Datatel's Colleague Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) software. The software is an advanced information management solution for higher education. All required reports to the state are generated using Datatel and are reviewed by the governing board. All managers, division chairs, and program coordinators have access to Datatel. The college also publicizes enrollment statistics and other useful information on the Merced College Intranet, located on the college's web site. The college publicizes its list of graduates in the Merced Sun-Star every year. Robert Bauer, Research Analyst, provides the college community with accurate information about enrollment and student success. He also conducts research and produces data in support of various college planning bodies.

Self Evaluation

The college has developed an infrastructure to identify documented assessment results. It needs to develop ways to better communicate the results to all college constituencies and to encourage these constituencies to engage in more thorough analyses of these results and to determine whether these results yield quality assurance.

Planning Agenda

The Academic Senate and the Offices of Instruction, Student Personnel, and Administrative Services need to develop ways to post documented assessment results on the intranet. These same groups need to see that faculty and staff are trained in how to extract and analyze data, using the college's databases and other resources, that will enable them to better assess and assure quality in college programs and services.

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.

Descriptive Summary

The educational master plan is updated annually. The Educational Master Planning Committee (EMPC) receives input from the other master planning committees on an annual basis. EMPC subsequently sends forward their compiled master plan to the CBRR committee, which allocates resources according to the priorities established in college-wide budget workshops that are held annually in the spring of each year. Due to declining resources, these workshops have not been held recently. Instead, the Board of Trustees has annual budget workshops that are open to the public. A master planning calendar, which contains the yearly timeline is located on page iii of the Planning Handbook.

Self Evaluation

The college does not entirely meet the standard. The Merced College planning process has worked well since it was established in December of 1998. Planning starts at the division and department level and the plans that are created reflect the vision and mission of the college. The process itself has not been evaluated since its inception. In years when resources are slim, the planning process seems like a lot of effort for not much in the way of results.

Planning Agenda

The Educational Master Planning Committee, along with the other master planning committees and key campus-wide shared governance committees, will evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the planning process and make recommendations for improvement.

B.7 The institution assesses its evaluation mechanisms through a systematic review of its effectiveness in improving instructional programs, student support services, and library and other learning support services.

Descriptive Summary

Recently, a new program review process was established that more fully incorporates the use of student learning outcomes. This year the Business Division will be the first program to use the new program review process. (See also Standard II.A.2.e.) The college's Research Analyst provides statistical data on student outcomes and success to departments and divisions as needed for them to use in evaluating their programs. The Student Services Master Planning Committee evaluates student support services on an annual basis. The Instructional Master Planning Committee evaluates the Learning Resources Center and the Tutorial Center.

Self Evaluation

The college has begun to improve its program review process, which will be more focused on student learning outcomes to better assess program effectiveness.

Planning Agenda

The college will fully implement the new program review process, including the use of student learning outcomes.

Note: Electronic and paper documentation for each standard can be found in the last section of the Accreditation Self-Study, “A List of Documents Used to Prepare the Self-Study.”