

Standard III

Resources

The institution effectively uses its human, physical, technology, and financial resources to achieve its broad educational purposes, including stated student learning outcomes, and to improve institutional effectiveness.

A. Human Resources

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.

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.

A.1.a. 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. 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 plays 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.

Descriptive Summary

Merced College employs qualified faculty, staff, management, and administration. The Board of Trustees has developed hiring criteria for both faculty, classified, and management staff. The Faculty Senate has developed a Disciplines List that is consulted when faculty position announcements are created. Classified specifications are used for

classified jobs and job descriptions for management positions. To assure the hiring of qualified personnel, Merced College engages in a comprehensive hiring process, including application, interviews, demonstrations, and examinations when appropriate. The district developed a Faculty and Staff Diversity Plan in 1994.

Self Evaluation

The college meets this standard. The Human Resources Supervisor, in cooperation with faculty, management, administration, and area supervisors, announces criteria, qualifications, and procedures for selection of personnel, which are: 1) clearly posted online on CCC Registry, Higher Education Jobs.com, Nation jobs.com; 2) published in The Chronicle of Higher Education, and appropriate discipline journals after consultation with division chairs; and 3) sent to select community colleges and universities as appropriate.

Human Resources works closely with faculty and administration in establishing faculty job Descriptive Summaries and with management to create staff job descriptions as stated in BP 7120. It is implied but not explicitly stated that these job responsibilities are in keeping with the college's missions and goals.

Using the Disciplines List established by the Faculty Senate in conjunction with faculty from each discipline, Human Resources (HR) and the hiring committees assure that criteria for selection of faculty does include knowledge of the subject matter or service to be performed. HR assures that the minimum qualifications listed on the position announcement are met before applications are forwarded to the hiring committees. Instructional candidates invited to interview are required to perform a teaching demonstration on a selected topic, may complete a short written test, and also submit to an interview by a hiring committee. The hiring committee consists of a minimum of three faculty members appointed by the division chair in cooperation with the Faculty Senate, an area administrator, and a monitor (as outlined in The Faculty and Staff Diversity Plan, 1994). Following the panel interview, the Vice President of Instruction interviews all candidates. When completed, the Vice President consults with the hiring committee before making a final selection. Finally, the HR director conducts reference checks before the final decision to offer a job is made.

Foreign faculty applicants must submit their degrees to various institutions (some of higher learning) that offer Education Records Evaluation Services to obtain a certification of educational equivalency. Applicants refer to the equivalency criteria that outline documents candidates need to submit.

Classified applicants, after submitting an application and required material as outlined in classified job specifications and announcements, may be required to take a test and/or give a demonstration of skill and are required to undergo an oral interview.

There are no clearly established guidelines or specifications for the hiring of administrators, except for the position of superintendent/president as outlined in BP 2111 and 2112. Also, see BP 4002 Selection and Appointment.

To assure that the hiring process is consistently applied, monitors are appointed by the Office of Human Resources to oversee the process.

Planning Agenda

1. The Faculty and Staff Diversity Plan should be reviewed and updated, since it was last updated in 1994.
2. Guidelines and specifications for the hiring of administrators (vice-presidents and deans) should be established in board policy in conjunction with the Faculty Senate.

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.

Descriptive Summary

The institution requires a systematic evaluation of all personnel. A faculty evaluation process is in place that is negotiated with and monitored by the faculty association. Immediate supervisors evaluate classified staff members, as referenced in the CSEA Agreement. Managers are also evaluated. Administrators are to be regularly evaluated by the Superintendent/President or his designee. The President is evaluated annually by the Board of Trustees.

In addition to the regular timeline for classified staff evaluation, there are procedures and processes, such as the FRISK Model (Facts, Rule, Impact, Suggestions, and Knowledge) to identify and document inappropriate or inadequate performance, make suggestions for improvement, and clearly identify the directions for proper conduct, necessary timelines, and the consequences for nonperformance.

On November 9, 2000 management team members, division chairs, classified staff, Work Study supervisors, and other supervisors attended an employee evaluation workshop conducted by Dr. Tom Budde, Assistant Superintendent of Personnel for the Merced Union High School District. Release time was approved for classified employees who are in positions that require evaluating other workers.

During the 2003-2004 monthly management team meetings, the Assistant Superintendent of Administrative Services conducted mini workshops about employee evaluations, and

procedures/processes and documentation to work with individual employees to improve performance.

Self Evaluation

The College partially meets this standard. Non-tenured faculty are regularly evaluated every year until achieving tenure – once a year for four years -- by a team that includes faculty, the division chair or area director, and the area administrator. Tenured faculty are regularly evaluated every third year, in keeping with the requirements of the Education Code.

Staff are evaluated on a regular basis. However, several classified staff have not been evaluated in compliance with the schedule monitored by Human Resources.

Board Policy 4024 establishes a clear schedule for administrative evaluation, and, while the Superintendent/President has been regularly evaluated, administrators have not been evaluated according to the schedule established by the Board policy. The vice-presidents have not been evaluated in several years.

Both the classified and faculty evaluation forms allow for comments for improvement. These comments are reviewed prior to the next evaluation period to measure any progress.

Planning Agenda

Staff and administrator evaluations should be completed according to Board Policy 4024 and the schedule established by Human Resources.

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.

Descriptive Summary

Merced College is developing a plan to institutionalize Student Learning Outcomes.

Self Evaluation

Merced College does not yet meet this standard. The Instructional Master Planning Committee has adopted a five-year master plan for developing and implementing student learning outcomes at Merced College. The Office of Instruction has appointed a Student Learning Outcomes Coordinator to guide and monitor the process.

Planning Agenda

As the college develops Student Learning Outcomes, the appropriate constituencies should discuss the matter of including them into faculty evaluations.

A.1.d. The institution upholds a written code of professional ethics for all of its personnel.

Descriptive Summary

Board Policy 4008 describes employee standards, and the faculty handbook describes faculty duties and responsibilities. All employees must sign the loyalty oath before being hired. The Technology Master Planning committee is currently developing standards and responsibilities for Internet use.

This is no specific code of ethics for college employees other than that implied in Board Policy 4008 and elsewhere in the California Education Code and Board Policies that reflect the Education Code. The Faculty Senate only polices other senators and their ethical behavior as a senator.

Board Policy 2715 provides a code of ethics for the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees approved Board Policy 2715 on May 4, 2004.

Self Evaluation

The College partially meets this standard. While no board policies or campus documents directly mention a code of ethics for faculty, staff and administration, Board Policy 4008 does imply such ethics for all its employees.

Planning Agenda

The Faculty and Classified Senates and the Board of Trustees should discuss the creation of formal codes of ethics for faculty, staff, and administration.

A.2. The institution maintains a sufficient number of qualified faculty with full-time responsibility to the institution. The institution has a sufficient number of staff and administrators with appropriate preparation and experience to provide the administrative services necessary to support the institution's mission and purposes.

Descriptive Summary

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The College decides staffing needs through its shared governance model, which includes the master planning committees, the Instructional Council, the Budget Review and Recommendation Committee, the President's Staff Committee, and the two senates.

Self Evaluation

In recent years, given reductions in state funding, the college has been forced to freeze classified positions, reorganize the personnel structure, delay hiring of administrators and managers, and ask employees to assume additional responsibilities.

Ten vacancies were not filled due to budgetary constraints; these included eight classified and two management level positions. Other vacancies were filled internally by employees with transfer requests on file. Some positions were combined, such as the Director of Financial Aid and Registrar.

In the fall of 2003-2004, the college fell slightly short of its full-time faculty obligation. During January 2003, facing a fiscal crisis, the superintendent/president, after consulting with faculty groups, decided to suspend all new faculty positions for the year 2003-2004. This was in keeping with assumptions that the Chancellor's Office would suspend or waive full-time faculty obligations for that year. When the waiver was not granted, the college fell short in its full-time faculty obligation. Ultimately, the college was able to reclassify three temporary full-time faculty to tenure track full-time status and reassign parts of the load of two other faculty from non-credit to credit instruction; thus the college ended up only .4 of a position short.

The college has been and will continue to develop new campus facilities. The new Child Development Center was constructed in 2001-2002. Over the last few years, various technology programs have been established at various off-campus sites. The Cisco Academy was established at the Reno Ferrero Technical Institute. The Laser Electro-Optics Technician program was established at the Castle Science and Technology Building located on the former Castle Air Force Base site in Atwater. In 2004-2005, a new Interdisciplinary Academic Center, housing the Humanities Division, Social Science Division, Computer Lab, and Audio-Visual department, will be finished. Future plans include a new Learning Resource Center and a new Allied Health building. Plans are progressing for a new Los Banos Campus. Additional staff will be needed to maintain and support these buildings.

An increasing number of faculty, administrators, and staff are reaching retirement age. Naturally, they will need to be replaced.

Planning Agenda

1. Research the impact of potential retirements of faculty, administrators, and classified staff.
2. Consider staffing needs – custodial and otherwise – which arise from new buildings,

- expanded programs, and off-campus locations.
3. Hire enough faculty to meet the full-time obligation.
 4. Avoid making future decisions on staffing until waivers are secured and state budgets finalized.

A.3. The institution systematically develops personnel policies and procedures that are available for information and review. Such policies and procedures are equitably and consistently administered.

A.3.a. The institution establishes and adheres to written policies ensuring fairness in all employment procedures.

Descriptive Summary

Merced College's Faculty and Staff Diversity Plan has clearly established policies that ensure fairness and equity in all employment procedures. Board Policies 7100 and 7212 clearly establish criteria for hiring and the college's commitment to diversity. Board Policy 7211 establishes the college's commitment to adhering to minimal qualifications for all faculty to ensure fairness in hiring. Board Policy 7120 establishes policies for the recruitment and selection of faculty and staff. Board Policies are published online for all faculty and staff to review.

Self Evaluation

The College meets the standard. Human Resources audits hiring procedures to ensure that all federal and state regulations are followed. Currently, the Board of Trustees is reviewing all college policies using the Community College League Policy and Procedure Service. This has created some confusion as there sometimes are two sets of policies – the old and the newly revised.

Neither the classified handbook or the faculty handbook reference Board policies on fairness and equity in employment procedures. However, at new hire orientations full-time faculty and staff are made aware of hiring policies and procedures, including the tenure review process and classified probationary procedure. These processes are also included in the faculty and classified contracts that are given to all faculty and staff. However, while there is a part-time faculty orientation every semester, few part-time faculty attend. Review of these procedures with new faculty is left up to individual division chairpersons, with help from an administrative assistant. This can allow for inconsistencies in the review of hiring policies. Unlike faculty hiring, classified employment is sporadic since vacancies can arise at any time throughout the year. There is no group classified orientation, but the supervisor of Human Resources thoroughly reviews hiring procedures and policies with each new hire.

Planning Agenda

1. Complete updating Board Policies.
2. To better publicize hiring procedures, they should be included in both the faculty and classified handbooks.

A.3.b. The institution makes provision for the security and confidentiality of personnel records. Each employee has access to his/her personnel records in accordance with law.

Descriptive Summary

The Supervisor of Human Resources assures the confidentiality of personnel files, according Board Policies 4026, 4300, and 4608.

Self Evaluation

The college meets this standard.

Planning Agenda

None.

A.4. The institution demonstrates through policies and practices an appropriate understanding of and concern for issues of equity and diversity.

A.4.a. The institution creates and maintains appropriate programs, practices, and services that support its diverse personnel.

Descriptive Summary

Merced College's Faculty and Staff Diversity Plan has clearly established policies that ensure fairness and equity in all employment procedures. Board Policy 7100 states, "The Board recognizes that diversity in the academic environment fosters cultural awareness, promotes mutual understanding and respect, and provides suitable role models for all students." In the college's mission statement, it states, "Fostering and maintaining diversity is a strength of the institution."

Self Evaluation

Although Merced College has a Faculty and Staff Diversity Plan, it has not been updated since 1994. The college is waiting for recommendations from the Chancellor's Office Task Force on Equity and Diversity. Each hiring committee has a diversity monitor, but

hiring committees are not trained in issues of hiring and diversity. The Supervisor of Human Resources advertises positions on the Internet in an effort to increase diversity in the applicant pools, since the Internet reaches a world-wide audience. According to the applicant pool data for complete applications, the faculty hiring pools have remained fairly consistent over the last five years, with diverse candidates remaining at the same percentage. However, using the CCC registry, the Supervisor of Human Resources believes that job announcements are reaching more potential candidates.

Some efforts have been made to increase diversity in the faculty. For example, the Office of Instruction offered a series of seminars to encourage students from diverse backgrounds to consider becoming community college instructors.

We know of no college programs or services that directly support the college's diverse personnel. However, college programs, such as the Black Heritage Celebration and the annual Cinco de Mayo Celebration (which has included major Hispanic leaders), celebrate the college's diverse population.

Planning Agenda

1. Update the college's Faculty and Staff Diversity Plan.
2. Offer a Flex Day workshop to better train hiring committees and division chairs on diversity issues.
3. Investigate avenues for increasing diversity in the applicant pool and supporting the college's diverse personnel.

A.4.b. The institution regularly assesses its record in employment equity and diversity consistent with its mission.

Descriptive Summary

Through its Human Resources (HR) Department, Merced College reviews employment equity and staff diversity through federally mandated reports and annual reports to the Chancellor's Office.

Self Evaluation:

The College partially meets the standard. The HR department tracks employment diversity through data gathered from Datatel and Human Resources records.

Current data indicates:

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Ethnicity	Classified Staff	Management	Faculty
African-American	16	2	5
Amer.Indian/Alaskan Native	5	1	2
Asian	16	2	11
Filipino	3	0	2
Hispanic	76	8	16
Pacific Islander	1	0	0
White	152	29	115
TOTALS	271	42	151
Men	107	23	79
Women	164	19	72

There is a noticeable difference between the diversity of the student body and the diversity of the faculty, staff and management, despite efforts of the HR department and divisions to increase diversity among employees, particularly faculty.

Planning Agenda:

1. Investigate avenues for increasing diversity in the college's staff.
2. Regularly assess and publish data on the diversity of college staff.

A.4.c. The institution subscribes to, advocates, and demonstrates integrity in the treatment of its administration, faculty, staff and students.

Descriptive Summary

Through various programs, Merced College attempts to treat its administration, faculty, staff, and students with integrity.

Self Evaluation

Flex day workshops have helped faculty learn about various different student cultures and encouraged them to treat all students with respect. One such workshop focused on diverse communication behaviors. Various programs, such as the Black Heritage Celebration and Cinco de Mayo celebration, show a commitment to treating all students with integrity and respect. Various clubs, such as MECHA, the Anime Club, the Drama Club, and the International Student Club, show that the college is committed to providing “a nurturing and joyful environment” as stated in its mission statement.

To assure integrity in the treatment of its students, the college follows a grievance procedure that is separated into informal and formal stages. Board Policy 5239 outlines this procedure. Information about who to contact regarding grievances is contained in the college catalog and highlighted in the new student orientation video. In the Spring 2003 student handbook/calendar, these procedures, including sexual harassment procedures, were published. However, the 2003-2004 student calendar does not include these procedures. This information, however, can be found on the college's Intranet. Beginning with the 2003-2004 year, the intent was to publish a student calendar and a student handbook; however, only a student calendar was published. There is the intent to publish a student handbook for 2004-2005, as well as a 2004-2005 student calendar.

Also, the college has trained student mediators to help with conflicts between faculty/staff and students at an earlier, more informal level.

Complaint procedures also exist for employees at all levels who feel they have not been treated equitably or fairly. Board Policies 4030, 4400, 4700 outline these policies and procedures and are published in the various employee agreements.

Sexual Harassment workshops have been given on a regular basis, and such policies are regularly broadcast to faculty and staff and posted in appropriate areas.

Planning Agenda

Publish student grievance procedures in the student handbook for easier access by students.

A.5. The institution provides all personnel with appropriate opportunities for continued professional development, consistent with the institutional mission and based on identified teaching and learning needs.

A. 5. a. The institution plans professional development activities to meet the needs of its personnel.

Descriptive Summary

The College has various programs – including an annual convocation, flex days, and workshops – throughout the year that are devoted to staff development. The college has a Staff Development Coordinator who develops flex day agendas in coordination with faculty and a Staff Development Committee that represents all constituencies on campus.

Self Evaluation

The College meets this standard. Faculty and staff are offered various staff development opportunities throughout the school year. These are offered on Flex Days and at classified workshops. For example, in 2001 college faculty participated in a series of workshops led by Norton Grubb. The administration has partially supported new ideas from these workshops, for example, allowing for several linked courses and Internet offerings. However, often times new ideas and programs falter because of a lack of funding. For example, linked courses that are normally limited in enrollment to only those who participate in the link have been opened to others to maximize enrollment dollars.

There has been controversy over the Board's decision not to allow flex credit to instructors who attend conferences and workshops during normal college operating hours.

For the last several years, there has been no money for staff travel to conferences. While funds have been limited for staff development, some dollars have been available in categorically-funded programs. For example, the transfer counselor has been able to attend CSU and UC workshops. Cary Yanagi attended an articulation workshop for computer science at CSU-Chico. Stan Mattoon, Ron Chesley, and Ann Andersen attended a liberal studies workshop at CSU-Stanislaus (May, 2004).

Recently, the college instituted a Teaching and Learning Academy that is primarily aimed at assisting new faculty but is open to all. This academy has given classes in such topics as classroom assessment and learning styles.

Planning Agenda

1. The college community needs to discuss expanding staff development opportunities that include travel.
2. The Board should consider allowing for flex credit during regular college operating hours since it encourages growth and development.
3. Continue the activities of the Teaching and Learning Academy.

A.5.b. With the assistance of the participants, the institution systematically evaluates professional development programs and uses the results of these evaluations as the basis for improvement.

Descriptive Summary

The director of Staff Development regularly and systematically evaluates flex day workshops. She also surveys the needs of faculty as she develops flex day agendas. The Classified Senate surveys classified staff, and the college develops workshops for classified staff. All workshops have evaluation forms for participants.

Self Evaluation

The College meets this standard. The evaluations are used by the college to improve its staff development programs and offerings.

Planning Agenda

None.

A.6. Human resource planning is integrated with institutional planning. The institution systematically assesses the effective use of human resources and uses the results of the evaluation as the basis for improvement.

Descriptive Summary

Human resource planning is part of the Master Planning process at the college.

Self Evaluation

The College meets this standard. When a program is proposed or expanded, human resource considerations are a part of the proposal. The proposals are considered as part of the Master Planning process. The five-year plans must consider human resources or the appropriate planning committee sends the plan back for revision. At one time a Staff Priorities Committee existed, but it separated the proposal process from human resource considerations and was, therefore, eliminated in favor of integrating human resource needs into the planning process.

It is difficult to evaluate this standard since funding cuts have caused chronic understaffing on campus. While programs request or require more staff, inadequate state funding limits the ability of the college to hire the appropriate number of staff. Recently, the college has consolidated or eliminated positions after mid-year budget reductions. For example, the following positions have been consolidated: CalWORKs and ETC Director, Registrar and Financial Aid Director, and Community Services and Non-Credit. The following positions have been frozen: Administrative Assistant to the Student Services Dean, Admissions and Records Clerk, and the 19-hour Career Center Assistant.

Planning Agenda

1. Research the impact of consolidating and/or freezing positions on the efficiency and morale of college staff.
2. Hire enough staff to meet obligations as funds become available.
3. Avoid future decisions on staffing until state budgets are finalized.

B. Physical Resources

Physical Resources, which include facilities, equipment, land and other assets, support student learning programs and services and improve institutional effectiveness. Physical resource planning is integrated with institutional planning.

The Merced Community College District, which was established on July 1, 1963, officially serves a geographic area of approximately 2,380 square miles. In general, the boundaries encompass a large portion of Merced County, including the cities of Merced, Los Banos, Chowchilla, Atwater, Livingston and Dos Palos; the northeastern portion of Madera County; and a small portion of unincorporated northwestern Fresno County. Merced Community College District maintains two physical sites, the Merced Campus in Merced and the Los Banos Campus in Los Banos.

Descriptive Summary

Merced Campus: The Merced Campus was established in 1963. The campus is located one mile north of Olive Avenue in Merced, on the east side of M Street. It originally consisted of 110 acres presented as a gift to the College by the C-H-M Company and the Yosemite Land and Cattle Company through the efforts of Merced City officials. Additional purchases of adjacent land increased the size of the present campus to 269 acres.

Classes began for students September 10, 1963, on a temporary campus at the Merced County Fairgrounds. The College began construction on the permanent campus in the summer of 1966 and moved completely to the new campus in the Spring Semester of 1967. Dedication ceremonies were held on April 23, 1967.

The Administration Building, the Science Building, and a temporary library facility were the first buildings constructed. The Student Union was completed in November 1967 and, since that time, facilities added include a Gymnasium, Automotive Shop, Agriculture Facilities, and technical labs for Drafting, Engineering, Vocational Nursing, and Family and Consumer Science. The Leshner Library and the Merced College Theater were completed for use in the fall of 1972.

On February 6, 1973, District voters approved continuation of the 25-cent tax for continued growth and improvement of the college. Building continued with the addition of an Olympic-size swimming pool, with dressing rooms and spectator seats; a Track and Field facility; an Auto Body and Engine Shop in 1975; additional Agricultural Facilities, a Student Union Building addition, and an Art Building addition in 1977; a Welding Building in 1978; an Allied Health Center in 1980; and a Service Center for Security, Duplicating and Data Processing in 1992.

In 1997, a massive infrastructure corrections project began, and the Communication Building was completely remodeled. A new Child Development Center was opened in the spring of 2002, and construction will be completed in the spring of 2005 for an Interdisciplinary Academic Center.

Through its planning process, the District has received state funding for Preliminary and Working Drawings for the following Projects: 1) remodel of the Science Building, 2) a new Learning Resources Center, and 3) infrastructure and the first building for the new permanent Los Banos campus. The Construction and Equipment funds for these projects are being provided through the passage of Proposition 55.

On November 5, 2002, voters approved Measure H to build new facilities at Merced College to support education and occupational training in sciences; agriculture; technology; health; business, including classrooms, labs and lecture halls; a new library, with computer/research facilities; and the renovation of existing buildings, including provisions for disabled access, and for other specified projects.

The Los Banos Campus: The Los Banos Campus, an educational center forty miles from the Merced Campus, serves the people of Los Banos, Dos Palos, and the immediately surrounding areas. Merced College has operated a center in Los Banos since 1971, starting in a rented building and then moving to the current facility in 1982. The current facility is comprised of portable buildings. Because of increasing community needs, the Los Banos Campus is using additional portable buildings to provide a Child Development Center and Student Services Center at its current location. Because of additional space needs, another portable building was added in the spring of 1996. This addition provided another classroom, a tutorial center, and a first aid/security station. The Campus provides educational opportunities to many people for whom commuting to Merced is a physical or economic hardship, and it serves as a cultural and intellectual center for the west side of Merced County.

As mentioned above, the District is in the planning stages for developing a permanent facility in Los Banos. The District has received state funding for preliminary and work drawings for this project.

On November 5, 2002, voters approved Bond Measure J to establish a new and permanent Los Banos campus of the Merced Community College District on land donated to the College. The bond provides financing for construction of permanent buildings for classrooms, laboratories, a library, technology and vocational education programs, and development of the physical site, as well as other specified projects.

The Merced College Planning Model: Established in 1990, Merced College's Planning Model is based on the principles of shared governance. It involves a comprehensive process that encompasses both short and long-range planning in a broad-based committee structure.

The planning process incorporates input from various institutional planning committees. These master planning committees process information related to staffing, facilities, instruction, technology, administration and student services needs and interrelate these needs with the College's budgetary resources. Planning committees identify institutional priorities and influence the acquisition and allocation of human, financial and physical resources.

The planning process involves all segments of the campus community and the governing board. The master planning structure was developed to encourage widespread support and involvement in the planning process. Staff participation is essential for the successful implementation of the planning process and the development of an effective five year plan, an important part of the College's development strategy. It sets long-term goals and objectives and the basic guidelines for their achievement.

The Facilities Master Planning Committee (FMPC), established in 1991 as one of the six master planning committees, includes faculty, classified staff, administration and students. Membership is generally chosen from representative campus groups that include: Faculty and Classified Senates, Faculty and Classified Associations, Associated Students, and the Management Team. In addition, there is also representation from the Los Banos campus.

The function of FMPC is to plan for new and remodeled facility projects, to produce the appropriate requests for "campus build out" and to submit Capital Outlay Budget Change Proposals, Preliminary Plans Proposals and Final Project Proposals to the state. FMPC, in coordination with the Educational Master Planning Committee (EMPC), is also responsible for "In Cadence With the Future", an educational and facilities master planning document. As a follow up to "In Cadence With the Future", the "Merced College Long-Range Master Plan" was completed in March of 2001 to "graphically depict the facility needs of the campus at its build out, as well as address some incremental first steps." This plan projects the growth of the campus through 2040.

Self Evaluation

The Merced College planning model has proven to be highly effective when it comes to physical resources. The College was in the queue for new facility projects when the Governor announced his economic recovery plan. Merced College received state funding for the new Interdisciplinary Academic Center (IAC), currently under construction and slated to open in spring, 2005. Through its planning process, the District has qualified three projects for State funding. These projects are: the Science Building Remodel, the new Learning Resource Building, and the Los Banos permanent site Infrastructure and first building. The passage of Proposition 55 in fall of 2003 will provide the funding for those projects. The District is also planning the completion of the North Loop Road. This project is scheduled to begin in the spring of 2004 and is a key piece in the completion of other planned projects on campus. Planning for the Business Resource Center in downtown Merced is progressing, with construction slated to begin in late the spring of

2004. Planning has begun for the new Allied Health building. Merced College meets standards for this area.

The District is also using Measure J bond funds to plan and construct the second and third buildings for the new Los Banos campus.

Planning Agenda

Merced College should continue to plan for both short and long-term physical resource needs.

B.1. The institution provides safe and sufficient physical resources that support and assure the integrity and quality of its programs and services regardless of location or means of delivery.

Descriptive Summary

Planning and prioritization of new facilities is coordinated by the Facilities Master Planning Committee (FMPC), which is described in detail in standard III.B above. The Technology Master Planning Committee (TMPC), described in standard III.C.1.d, coordinates purchasing and maintenance of hardware and software and has developed an "acceptable use" policy for the use of technology.

The management, maintenance, and operation of the district's physical facilities are organized under the Administrative Services Division of the college and are the responsibility of the Vice President of District Administrative Services. There are three departmental managers: the Director of Operations, Grounds and Health and Safety Training; the Director of Maintenance and Transportation; and the Director of Purchasing and Facilities Development. Each of these managers oversees the physical facilities of the campus and strives to provide the highest quality physical environment in support of the college's goals.

The Director of Maintenance and Transportation, with the support of the other two departmental managers, conducts preventative maintenance and routine safety inspection of district buildings and grounds. Most of the preventive maintenance and repairs in this category are funded through individual departmental budgets. However, requests for scheduled or deferred maintenance requiring larger amounts of capital outlay funding are submitted to Facilities Planning unit at the Chancellor's Office for review and potential funding.

Each fiscal year, the Vice President of District Administrative Services approves the five-year maintenance master plan and submits it as a funding application to the Chancellor's Office. Upon approval of the projects for funding by the Chancellor's Office and following Board approval of bids and execution of the contracts, the Director of

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Maintenance proceeds with the completion of the projects. In addition, the Maintenance Department conducts a preventative maintenance program for all equipment attached to or primarily serving buildings, e.g., air conditioners, fans, and lighting. Equipment is visually inspected periodically, and a file of permanent records is maintained for the life cycle of the equipment.

The district has established and maintains effective procedures to ensure that the selection, maintenance, inventory, and replacement of all equipment is accomplished systematically to support institutional programs and services.

Maintenance of instructional and specialized equipment assigned to departments is normally the responsibility of the individual department.

The Purchasing Department tags all district equipment and enters every item into a formal inventory. Equipment is inventoried annually.

Computer hardware and software is updated regularly as described in Standard III C.1.c.

The college maintains service agreements with companies who monitor and service their equipment on a regular basis to ensure that it is functioning safely and properly. The Director of Operations and the Director of Maintenance each “walk” the campus prior to each new semester to check each of the classrooms, labs and offices to make sure conditions are safe for students and staff. Custodial and Maintenance staff are on campus daily and regularly report any unsafe conditions, as do staff and instructors.

In 2003, 3DI (a facility assessment company contracted by the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office) was contracted to conduct a facilities assessment of the district. Professionals were hired to identify hazardous substances on campus. The college continues to work annually with the State to abate any identified problem areas.

Every two years, the district employs a safety consultant to conduct a safety inspection for the entire district and to report all findings. From this report, all affected departments make every effort possible, “budget allowing”, to make necessary corrections.

The district annually inventories its facilities to ensure its records are current and correct. The district submits a Space Inventory Report to the Chancellor’s Office October 1st of each year.

The district annually reviews its Five-Year Construction Plan to determine which facilities are being over utilized. District Administration and the Master Planning Committees, EMPC, IMPC, FMPC, ASMPC, SSMPC, and TMPC make recommendations regarding the need for new facilities. The district also employs an Educational Facilities Consultant, Merle Cannon, to review college programs and facilities and to make recommendations for new building projects.

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The district has been very proactive in moving classes to rooms that better accommodate class enrollments and new programs and services. While classroom space is at a premium during some prime time slots, needs are being met. As the College continues to grow, the current planning and build-out program should be sufficient to meet current and future facility needs.

The same criteria and processes are used to establish safety standards for off-campus sites. This includes regular safety inspections by in-house staff, as well as district consultants. There are annual inspections by the fire department and by a consulting fire extinguisher company. A pest management company has been contracted to control vermin on campus.

The existing Los Banos Campus, about forty miles from Merced, is not considered sufficient for district needs. Although there are no pressing safety hazards, the facility consists of aging portables that do not meet current curricular demands. As a result, local and state funding has been identified to build a new campus, which is expected to open in 2007. Planning is underway for the campus, which will provide a safe and attractive environment. There will be more classes offered, both in number of sections and types of offerings.

The Delhi Unified School District is allowing the district to offer classes in a new, 8,000 square foot facility at their Educational Park, which is enabling an expansion of services in the northern part of the college district. This facility is being provided to the College at no cost. Classes at this new facility began in the fall of 2004.

Classes are held at several community locations, including high schools, nursing homes, and other public facilities. Each of these locations must be accessible to persons with disabilities and provide a safe environment. The facilities are visited regularly by college employees, and any safety issues are addressed as needed. However, the owners of these facilities are responsible for maintenance or structural repairs.

Off-campus sites have been safe instructional environments and, generally, are considered efficient. As mentioned, the Los Banos Campus is not considered optimally efficient because the facility does not permit the offering of some classes, such as chemistry, or because of space limitations. The HVAC systems are not economically efficient, and problems frequently associated with portable facilities have occurred. The new Los Banos Campus should be considerably more efficient.

Required repairs and/or replacements are made with district funds or through the Five-Year Replacement Plan using Scheduled Maintenance and Hazardous Substances Funding.

Annual service/maintenance agreements are in effect with: Cummins West (Generator), Siemens (Fire Alarms), Honeywell (Energy Management/HVAC), Jorgensen (Fire Extinguishers), Hoffman Electronics (Security Systems), and Thyssen (Elevators).

A variety of funding sources are used to meet equipment needs for distance education delivery modes. These sources vary and include funds from State Instructional Equipment (SIE), Title V HSI Activity II, Vocational and Technical Education Act (VTEA), Telecommunications and Technology Infrastructure Program (TTIP), as well as other categorical and district resources. These funding sources cover the acquisition of servers, telecommunications costs, computers in laboratories for student use, software at the server and local computer levels, appropriate training, and computer systems for faculty use.

In past years, the district has been able to meet the needs for new and replacement equipment through a variety of funding sources. This year we have limited resources and must be especially cognizant of wants, needs and required replacements in an effort to maintain current equipment inventories.

We have in place processes, based on agreed upon standards, to acquire appropriate computer equipment and software that allows remote management. To date, over 350 systems can be remotely managed, with approximately 280 being managed in computer laboratories on the Merced campus. As time goes on, more systems will be acquired that can be remotely managed. Systems with limited management ability are being managed as best possible within the capabilities these systems possess.

Self Evaluation

Merced College meets the standard in this area. Severe budget constraints have limited the college's ability to purchase new equipment in many areas. Alternative funding is being sought to update the equipment in the automotive program (e.g., donations are being sought from members of the Advisory Committee). Grant funding is used to update some older computer resources.

Planning Agenda

Merced College will continue to explore alternative funding sources where applicable. The college will also explore options to extend the life of current equipment.

B.1.a. The institution plans, builds, maintains, and upgrades or replaces its physical resources in a manner that assures effective utilization and the continuing quality necessary to support its programs and services.

Descriptive Summary

Once the need for a building has been identified and the specific programs that will be housed in the building have been identified, the District brings together the appropriate staff from the programs, FMPC, and the District's architectural firm and educational

planner to develop plans for the new building. This process is designed to allow input from everyone (faculty and staff) that will be housed in the specific building, from the design stage through project completion. Opinion surveys are sent to students asking them to respond to a variety of issues, including the adequacy of facilities. Responses in 1999, 2001 and 2003 all were in a range from a low of 3.56 to a high of 4.00 on a 1 to 5 scale, with 1 being very dissatisfied and 5 being very satisfied.

Each year that funds have been available for new or replacement equipment, a process has been used to determine the priority for distributing funds. This process takes into consideration as many of the funding sources as possible, the needs in all three areas of the district (Administrative Services, Student Services and Instruction), availability of funds for specific areas, and the needs that have been identified through the Master Planning Process (one-year and five-year plans).

The district requests a Five-Year Plan from each Instructional Division in an effort to identify facility and equipment needs unique to each division. The district also has a program review process that goes through each program on a scheduled basis to ensure that needed facilities and equipment are identified.

The district has adopted a procedure whereby classrooms and laboratories are scheduled in a manner to maximize their usage. This includes offering classes beginning at 7:00 a.m. and continuing until 10:00 p.m. and on weekends. The college also plans for classes during the spring intercession and plans extensive summer offerings. Since the district has adopted this procedure, the Five-Year Plan continues to indicate that district facilities are being utilized beyond their maximum recommended use.

Self Evaluation

The college meets the standard in this area. The passage of the two bond issues, one in Merced and one in Los Banos, will go a long way toward completing the build-out of the Merced campus and the new permanent campus in Los Banos.

Planning Agenda

The college will continue the master planning process to ensure that the building, maintenance, and upgrading of facilities occurs in a timely and orderly fashion.

B.1.b. The institution assures that physical resources at all locations where it offers courses, programs, and services are constructed and maintained to assure access, safety, security, and a healthful learning and working environment.

Descriptive Summary

- Merced College 2004 Accreditation Self-Study -

All facilities are built and remodeled to the highest standards required by the Office of the Division of the State Architect. Any work performed by district staff is done with the California Building Code (CBC), Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and other relevant requirements in mind. All building projects are continuously monitored by a state certified building inspector, pursuant to Title 24 requirements. One of the primary criteria of the Office of the Division of the State Architect is that of access compliance. Aside from recently passing a local bond that specifically earmarks funding for access compliance, the district has instituted and delivered numerous facility-remodeling projects to remedy ADA concerns.

Control over off-campus facilities occurs in several ways. First, the Los Banos Campus is a full service campus and has a variety of instructional and classified employees who provide a high level of instruction and services, despite the quality of the existing facilities (aging portables that do not meet current curricular standards). These portables are maintained to the best of the district's ability while planning continues for the construction of a permanent site.

Instructional sites that offer multiple courses have local site coordinators who assist with the assignment of classrooms and other facilities issues. The Dean of Off-Campus Centers and the Administrative Assistant maintain frequent contact with the sites, and visits are made regularly to ensure that classes are proceeding smoothly.

Memoranda of understanding, facilities usage agreements, and/or resolutions are created with all off-campus sites in order to delineate the cost (if any) for using the various facilities and agreed-upon mutual expectations.

Self Evaluation

The college meets the standard in this area. Rental facilities are regularly inspected to ensure that standards are being met with regards to ADA requirements. While some facilities are less than ideal, every effort is made to upgrade these facilities to meet requirements. Maintenance at these off-site facilities is supported by both college and owner-provided resources.

Planning Agenda

In the spring of 2004, construction will begin on the Business Resource Center, a 25,000 square foot facility located in the center of downtown Merced. This new facility will consolidate classes and programs from three different locations. The plans for the building are in the final phase and coordination with the Division of the State Architect will begin very soon. Occupancy of the building is expected in late 2005. During the summer of 2004, construction of the North Loop Road, a necessary infrastructure project, will begin. In January of 2005, the project to remodel the Science Building will begin as well as construction of the Learning Resources Center. Both of these projects will require approximately 12 to 18 months to complete.

B.2. To assure the feasibility and effectiveness of physical resources in supporting institutional programs and services, the institution plans and evaluates its facilities and equipment on a regular basis, taking utilization and other relevant data into account.

Descriptive Summary

Facility and equipment evaluations occur on a regular basis as outlined below.

Monthly - Elevators are regularly inspected by Thyssen.

Quarterly - Maintenance staff perform mechanical inspections on HVAC systems and filters. Honeywell conducts inspections to campus and pool boilers and chillers.

Semi-Annually - Maintenance staff check fire suppression systems and all roofs are inspected for leaks and general wear and tear. Maintenance staff lubricate and exercise all gas and water valves.

Annually - Siemens tests and services all fire alarms. Jorgensen inspects and services all fire extinguishers. Maintenance staff perform a campus-wide power shut down to evaluate electrical equipment.

Required repairs and/or replacements are made with district funds or through the Five-Year Replacement Plan with Scheduled Maintenance and Hazardous Substance Funding.

Self Evaluation

The college meets the standard in this area.

Planning Agenda

Continue to conduct regular, preventive maintenance inspections. Provide funding for necessary repairs to maintain the physical plant in the condition necessary for quality education.

B.2.a. Long-range capital plans support institutional improvement goals and reflect projections of the total cost of ownership of new facilities and equipment.

Descriptive Summary

Projects are identified through input from district administration, division five-year plans, and recommendations from consultants (architect, educational planner, etc.) and from the Facilities Master Planning Committee (FMPC).

District administration and the FMPC analyze the identified projects and determine which would be eligible for state support. Those eligible for state support begin the

capital outlay process (IPP, FPP etc.). Those projects not eligible for state support are considered for funding through local resources.

The district has completed and recently updated its Educational Facilities Master Plan through 2040. This plan identifies long-term growth and short-term projects. The plan is the result of a shared governance process in which all segments of the campus were given opportunities for input. The consultants, architects and district educational planner then reviewed the information and helped the District complete the plan.

The college utilizes the following elements in its total cost of ownership model:

1. The total cost to design and build.
2. The total cost to maintain and operate.
3. The total cost to warrant and insure.
4. The total cost to retrofit and/or expand.
5. Life cycle cost analysis and empirically determined trade-in values.

The college's procurement office employs two Certified Purchasing Managers (C.P.M.), who utilize the latest tools and systems recommended by the Institute for Supply Management.

Through the shared governance process, both FMPC and the Educational Master Planning Committee (EMPC) review the projects before they are submitted to the Board for approval. At each step the project is evaluated to ensure that it is in line with the district's established goals.

The district developed its shared governance process for facility planning in 1991. Since that time, the district has had several projects approved and funded through the capital outlay process. In addition, the district used this planning model to identify projects for two separate bond elections that were both successful. The net result of these bond elections is that the district can complete 100 million dollars worth of needed building projects in the next 10 years.

Self Evaluation

The college meets standard in this area.

Planning Agenda

The college's master planning process has proven effective as a methodology for ensuring that future needs are met. The college should continue the master planning process.

B.2.b. Physical resource planning is integrated with institutional planning. The institution systematically assesses the effective use of physical resources and uses the results of the evaluation as the basis for improvement.

Descriptive Summary

All projects are taken through the shared governance process, which allows for input from all areas on campus, including students.

The capital outlay projects identified through the shared governance process have been and are being approved by the state for funding. The district has also been very proactive in applying for scheduled maintenance funds and energy management funds.

For academic and other institutional equipment, the college has utilized the Master Planning Process to assist in determining equipment needs. Each master planning committee (Instructional Master Planning, Facilities Master Planning, Student Services Master Planning, Administrative Master Planning and Technology Master Planning) submits prioritized lists to the Educational Master Planning Committee for review and recommendation. In conjunction with that process, recommendations are made with regard to State Instructional Equipment funds as well as Vocational Equipment funds. These are prioritized by divisional areas and sent to the Vice President of Instruction.

The district retains several key consultants to evaluate physical resource needs based on enrollment projections, occupancy ratio guidelines, and service needs. These consultants include:

1. District Architect Lionakis Beaumont Design Group Inc.
2. Engineering and educational space use consultants Merle Cannon, and Turley and Associates
3. Ken Rubitsky and Associates
4. Smith Fause McDonald
5. Tolladay, Fremming and Parson
6. Dave Bigler Associates

Services and programmatic needs are primary considerations when consultants submit their physical resource and facility recommendations. All preventive maintenance on equipment (HVAC, roofs, electrical, valves, etc.) is also documented.

Self Evaluation

The college meets the standard in this area.

Planning Agenda

Through coordination and cooperation between Educational Master Planning, Instructional Master Planning and Facilities Master Planning, physical resource priorities are established across the district. As these are true shared governance committees, all constituencies are given the opportunity to have a part in the process. The college should continue to utilize the established master planning process.

C. Technology Resources

Technology resources are used to support student learning programs and services and to improve institutional effectiveness. Technology planning is integrated with institutional planning

C.1. The institution assures that any technology support it provides is designed to meet the needs of learning, teaching, college-wide communications, research, and operational systems.

C.1.a. Technology services, professional support, facilities, hardware, and software are designed to enhance the operation and effectiveness of the institution.

Descriptive Summary

Planning, acquisition and support of technology for the administrative areas of the institution are principally carried out by Information Technology Services (ITS) under the guidance of a number of cross-divisional committees, including the Technology Master Planning Committee (TMPC), Merced College Technology Advisory Committee (MCTAC), and Merced College Datatel Users Group (MCDUG). The Audiovisual Department and the Learning Resources Technical Manager are primarily responsible for planning, acquiring, and supporting technology for use in the classroom, for the use of faculty developing multimedia, and for use in the distance education program. The Instructional Master Planning Committee (IMPC) acts as an advisory committee in prioritizing instructional needs, including the use of technology in classrooms and computer labs, and organizing the development of student learning outcomes to determine what technology is necessary to support instruction. The Learning Resource Center (LRC) also has input to the TMPC for planning, budgeting, and placing of technology to best support classroom instruction at both campuses. ITS provides technical support for Datatel, networking, web page development, and maintenance. The Learning Resources Center supports technology in the classroom, including multimedia classroom equipment. Decisions about technology services, facilities, hardware, and software are discussed at the master planning level as well as at the operational level. Technology for facilities such as the Interdisciplinary Academic Center (IAC), the new Learning Resources Center (LRC), and the new Los Banos Campus is discussed by LRC staff with the architect and with the engineers.

TMPC plans and prepares a budget for funds from the Telecommunication and Technology Infrastructure Program (TTIP - which lists requirements for expenditure of categorical funds from the Chancellor's Office) and participates in the planning for State Instructional Equipment (S.I.E.) funds. Areas that are addressed in this funding include CENIC (Corporation of Education Network Initiatives in California) connection charges, library automation and electronic resources, and technology for access through Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) options. Technology training for faculty has been provided through Title III and Title V HSI grant funds through the Technology Resource Center. Other concerns addressed by the TMPC include student learning, student services, administrative services, and accessibility.

For some time, the college has worked closely with Merced County information technology staff to deliver not only Merced College Library services, but also Merced County Library services. This association also allowed the college to develop distance education coursework at a time when our own ITS was unable to provide the needed connectivity. The Distance Education Committee, a sub-committee of the Curriculum Committee, with input from the campus Accessibility Specialist, established standards for course management software to facilitate distance education. The Technology Resource Center (TRC) provides necessary faculty training, as teachers develop content to be delivered via mediated technology. Distance Learning curriculum is addressed by the Curriculum Committee and the Distance Learning Subcommittee. Distance education technology support is provided by the LRC. The LRC has educational media support staff and media available for faculty to check out for use in the classroom. Using WebCt, the college is able to provide several online courses and plans to expand its offerings in the future. Some instructors utilize their web sites and textbook publishers' servers to augment on-campus classes. Web site support is provided by the college Internet Services Specialist for web page development and an Access Specialist for accessibility issues. Educational Media Support staff in AV also provide training for faculty in the development of web pages and use of web software. The TMPC and the College Board have published policies treating such issues as appropriate use, accessibility, and copyright.

Accessibility issues are addressed at both the student and faculty level. A campus Accessibility Specialist helps to provide the means for making course material and study aids accessible to the hearing and visually impaired. As a consultant to faculty, the specialist helps teachers to review and develop accessible material for use in and out of the classroom. Learning material that is prepared for accessibility includes, but is not limited to, classroom and computer lab multimedia, web site development and other learning assignments available on the Internet and in hardcopy. To some extent, publishers also provide material that is accessible to the hearing and visually impaired. The Accessibility Specialist also provides useful suggestions and recommendations for instructors to help them in the selection of appropriate accessible material.

The college's presence on the web through mccd.edu, as well as through college e-mail, is provided through a collaboration between California higher education institutions and

information technology industries. Post secondary educational partners in this collaboration include the California Community College (CCC) system, California State University (CSU), University of California (UC), Stanford University, and the California Institute of Technology. This collaboration is known as CENIC (Corporation for Education Network Initiatives in California). CENIC requires member institutions to maintain an acceptable use policy (AUP) in conformance with CENIC AUP. Elements contained in these policies include: the rights of users, privileges, user responsibilities, accounts, confidentiality, system usage, and acceptable and unacceptable uses.

A web master coordinates web page development at the division and faculty level. Certain consistencies, as outlined in the Board's Acceptable Use Policy (BP 3140 is presently being updated and awaiting Board approval), are mandated, and information and procedures for web developers (including faculty and staff) may be found in this document. A method to insure consistency and legal adherence is being developed by the Web Advisor and other technical staff and is being discussed in TMPC.

Technology is provided by the college through a much improved system that incorporates reliability and disaster recovery through system redundancy and timely backup of data, including an off-campus data repository should a disaster occur.

Self Evaluation

The development of standards has begun to allow the district to realize its effectiveness in meeting a range of technology needs. This is indicated in both hardware and software areas, including: in hardware - desktop systems, wire standards, Main Distribution Frame (MDF), Intermediate Distribution Frame (IDF), servers, printers, and video projection in classrooms; in software - software licenses (e.g., Microsoft Office Suite), software used to maintain the college's web presence (Dreamweaver and Frontpage), desktop management software (Altiris Software Management Software and Microsoft Software Update Services), and in software used to assist in maintaining accessibility (Section 508, ADA and Title V standards). Because of the standards developed, the college is better able to evaluate the current status of its technology infrastructure and hardware in use, address issues of software updates and accessibility, and develop protocols for the overall maintenance of systems (from servers to desktops, video, and voice).

The district continues to struggle with how it will continue to meet its technology needs. Funding has been drastically reduced, while at the same time the college is attempting to maintain the technology that students, faculty, and staff have come to rely upon in the classroom, instructional laboratories, and offices. Had fiscal resources been maintained and enhanced as proposed, the district would be working toward the Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) model, put forward by the community college system in an effort to address the need to maintain and update computer systems in classrooms, laboratories, and offices throughout the entire California Community College system. Additionally, the TCO model provides guidelines for the number of technical support staff needed to

maintain and enhance technologies in use and would provide part of the justification necessary to hire additional technical support staff.

The TTIP Program model will continue to serve as a guide for planning technological solutions when the budget improves. The college should be able use this planning process to update computer hardware and software. Planning and recommendations can then be processed and facilitated by the TMPC.

Planning Agenda

1. Plans have been developed for a complete disaster recovery mechanism through a consortium of community colleges. If possible, these plans should be implemented.
2. The college should continue to engage in planning for the development of web-based registration and Web Advisor, which will more effectively help students plan their course of study and register for classes. Eventually, this will also help counselors and instructors better manage enrollment needs and issues, including waiting lists, prerequisites, and course sequence.
3. The college should continue its current efforts in reevaluating and planning for a more extensive distance education program. The college recently secured two new servers, upgraded to a new edition of WebCT, and will be developing staff training workshops to cover the different aspects and needs of teaching online. There are a number of faculty who have taken online courses offered by Cerro Coso College on teaching distance education. These faculty are now teaching online or are planning to do so. Recently, many faculty have expressed an interest in developing courses online, and flex workshops and informational meetings are now being planned. It is the intent of the college to increase its online offerings. The faculty senate has approved a resolution to support moving forward in planning for more distance education.
4. Also in the planning stages is a student help desk. Since student use of technology has increased on campus, and courses are increasingly requiring the use of technology to research and write papers and promote student presentations, the need to help our students with technology has become a more pressing need. Just as our faculty and staff have a help desk to help them in technology use, our students will soon be able to do the same. The work in this area should continue.

C.1.b. The institution provides quality training in the effective application of its information technology to students and personnel.

Descriptive Summary

The college has hired two additional staff members whose responsibilities include facilitating training for faculty in the development of multimedia materials, web page development materials, and course management materials related to distance education. These staff are available for individual training by appointment and for group training during flex days and at other appropriate times. Additionally, the @ONE project, funded by the Chancellor's Office of the California Community Colleges, provides instruction and services related to the use of technology in the colleges. @ONE has established a comprehensive statewide training and development infrastructure to support faculty and staff at the 108 California Community Colleges, based upon a recent survey of the technology skills and technology training needs of over 1,300 staff at 92 California Community Colleges. The results indicate that staff have relatively high technology skills, are frequent users of training, and are interested in increased training resources. A number of online workshops are available, and some Merced College faculty and staff are engaged in these efforts for ongoing staff development. Local staff development activities are offered during flex days to meet the needs of faculty interested in a variety of technologies, including distance education. In addition, the California Virtual Campus Region 4 (CVC4) has provided free online workshops for faculty and facilitated online discussions on distance education and web-enhanced course development.

Training in technology is available for students through various coursework available in credit, non-credit, and community services (fee-based) classes. The college has established a computer information competency requirement for graduation, and several credit classes contain all or parts of the necessary competencies that meet this requirement.

Self Evaluation

Over the years, a number of different techniques have been used to assess training needs in technology. These have ranged from informal surveys of faculty and staff to more formal needs assessment surveys. Both flex-day workshops and individual training are offered based upon these expressed needs. At the conclusion of group training sessions offered on campus, an evaluation of the usefulness of the training is conducted. These evaluations are used to gauge the effectiveness of the training. An informal measure of the effectiveness of the training is the explosion in the use of multimedia in classroom instruction that has occurred at Merced College in the last few years. Over one third of full-time faculty now routinely use some form of multimedia in their classroom presentations.

Assessment of student needs is taken from informal in-class assessment and is partly driven by assignment requirements. Since the college serves a relatively large group of students who intend to join the job market, employer needs are informally surveyed as well. Employer advisory committees support vocational programs as a way of ongoing assessment and needs development. These advisory committees not only help to maintain these programs, but they also satisfy the VTEA and state Education Code legal requirement for institutions to involve employers in such programs.

Planning Agenda

1. Formalize specific surveys for administration, faculty, staff, and students, based on needs.
2. Formalize a specific survey for potential employers and transfer schools.
3. As we plan our student learning outcomes, it has become more evident that training in information technology, technology applications in the classroom, and technology as a powerful research tool are all necessary components of the college's education plan. Student learning outcomes in this area are directly related to student success (and college accreditation). The college should continue planning to discover the best methods for training for its students, helping to provide for their technology needs, and providing them with an online help desk as soon as possible.

C.1.c. The institution systematically plans, acquires, maintains, and upgrades or replaces technology infrastructure and equipment to meet institutional needs.

Merced College has supported the Director for Information Technology Systems (ITS) position for some time. A management-level network position was recently added to the already existing network technician positions. Two programming positions have been added to support the Datatel system. A database position was recently added, as well as a web design position. This is in addition to existing technician positions, as well as recent changes in data entry positions to staff the Help Desk and provide other kinds of information assistance. These positions provide support for the hardware and software used by the district in the ITS area.

The TCO model, put forward through the community college system, would provide a means for updating current computer systems in classrooms, laboratories, and offices throughout the district. The TCO model has been discussed and refined in various planning committees, but it has never been fully implemented. Timely replacement and updating of technology continues to be a challenge at Merced College.

Technology is provided by Merced College through a much improved mechanism that incorporates reliability measures and disaster recovery through a redundancy of systems and the timely backup of data, with an off campus repository for data in case a disaster should occur. Plans have been developed for a complete disaster recovery mechanism through a consortium of community colleges. These plans have yet to be implemented. Servers provide redundancy through RAID (Redundant Array of Independent Disks) Array Level 4 technology.

The college provides a service called the "Help Desk" where faculty and staff are able to request help with technology problems ranging from personal office computers to network issues. Prioritized technical support is offered in a timely manner to try to solve technical problems as they arise. Advance notification of network maintenance is also

communicated by way of e-mail and sometimes voice mail to alert faculty and staff of any expected downtime.

Self Evaluation

The College has not done a very good job of maintaining the equipment and infrastructure that is in place. For instance, there is no ongoing funding for replacement of equipment in the classrooms or in staff or faculty offices. As of this spring, all of the classroom multimedia equipment at the Los Banos campus library and most of the computers on staff desks at that campus need to be updated because they are at the point of becoming incapable of using current software and web applications, including the college Datatel system. There are no general fund dollars to address this issue. There is no ongoing support of technologies used at distant sites such as web counseling or video conferencing. With the exception of increased staff in the ITS department, the college has not added technical support for instructional services or students services technological enhancements over the last five years.

We meet the standard, although the current budget situation has required the college to delay the three-year replacement cycle in 2003-2004 and possibly also in the upcoming academic year. All advisory bodies and the TMPC remain committed to regular replacement and upgrades of the college's technological infrastructure. Establishment of an ongoing technology and equipment replacement budget following the TCO model, as soon as funding allows, is a high priority for the college. This would include consideration of the growing number of course-specific software applications that would need version upgrades.

The Help Desk does not provide specific support to classroom instruction; this is provided by the Learning Resources Center audiovisual staff. The TCO model has never been fully implemented on campus.

Planning Agenda

1. Plans have been developed for a complete disaster recovery mechanism through a consortium of community colleges. These plans should be implemented soon.
2. With the continuing growth of technology and software use in the classroom, a campus-wide plan for software and hardware upgrading should be developed and budgetary considerations established to address technological instructional needs. The college needs to set aside funds for the replacement of equipment, including hardware and software, in order to maintain reliable instructional and student service activities and programs.

Consideration should be given to hiring additional technical staff at the Los Banos campus, particularly as they will be moving to a new facility and expect to expand

their use of technology. The current technician does not have the time to take care of current needs.

3. Serious consideration should be given for additional technical staff to support the expanding discipline-related computer labs at the main campus. The current staff are fully employed, and there are labs without dedicated technical support.

Overall, the college must take into account the long-term costs of maintaining technology so that it works well enough to carry out the programs and services it offers its students. If we are committed to student learning outcomes, with that commitment must come technical staff and current equipment to make sure students reach those outcomes.

C.1.d. The distribution and utilization of technology resources support the development, maintenance, and enhancement of its programs and services.

Descriptive Summary

The district has implemented a plan to update a majority of the infrastructure on campus. This includes wiring from standardized Intermediate Distribution Frame (IDF) wiring stations to workstations, optical from IDF to Main Distribution Frame (MDF), and the server farm located in ITS (Information Technology Services), as well as other strategic locations within the district. The equipment (servers and switches) is leased with a five-year turn around, ensuring our technology infrastructure will be upgraded on a periodic basis.

The California Community College Telecommunications and Technology Unit has worked to establish standards for all community colleges based on a planning model known as the Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) model. The model addresses specific directions on funding, refreshing of desktop equipment, training, and technical support staff. Although funding for the model is not available, colleges are still working toward implementing attributes of the model. As a result of local work to implement this model, Merced College has developed a standardized requirement for computer workstations and specifications for their acquisition following the standard. Additionally, the TMPC has developed standards for software acquisition on campus that comply with accessibility requirements described in ADA and Title V.

The backbone for all telecommunications used by California Community Colleges has recently moved from 4CNet (a collaboration between the California State University system and the California Community Colleges) to CENIC (Corporation for Education Network Initiatives in California - a collaboration between all California education segments, public and private, K-20). As a result of both 4CNet and CENIC, Merced College now has a DS3 link to the Internet, one for data and the second for video. The change from T1 capability has required that we rethink the uses of technology resources

to assure they are in line with the district's "Acceptable Use Policy." A number of communiqués have been distributed to the college community reminding faculty and staff of the appropriate uses of technology, as well as examples of what constitutes inappropriate use.

Student e-mail has been provided to each student through Juno. This service is free of charge and Juno will give each student free internet access if needed. Students account requests are sent to Juno on a regular basis through ITS during registration periods. Adjunct faculty e-mail is provided through the college e-mail system.

A number of communiqués have been sent out to all faculty and staff regarding security issues in the use of technology on campus. Areas include phone use, fax, video conferencing, e-mail and Internet use. Topics covered include but are not limited to: network and desktop security, viruses, Trojan horses, worms, peer-to-peer software, confidentiality, password changing and use, spyware, appropriate use of telephones and computers, and other information as covered by Board Policy 3721.

Self Evaluation

The college is beginning to expand its development of distance education. Faculty interest has been solicited, with a number of faculty responding. The intent is to deliver more classes, more effectively and efficiently to a greater number of students, based on student interest. Merced College serves a relatively large area, including students from as far away as Yosemite, Mariposa, Los Banos, and Chowchilla. Distance education is a very important component in allowing more students access to education, while alleviating stress on the environment by reducing auto emissions. Distance education will be a growing concern and need in the college's service area.

The addition of web registration will also enhance the ability of the college to more effectively enroll students in classes in a convenient and environmentally sensitive fashion. Merced is very close to installing this system and is now in the final testing stages.

The use of multimedia and web-based materials in curriculum delivery has exploded in the last ten years at Merced College. With one-time funding from Title III, Title V, and state instructional equipment money, the college has been able to equip over 30 classrooms with multimedia capability and network access. These technological enhancements have allowed faculty to expand their methods of teaching and bring web-based and networked-based resources into their classrooms.

The use of labs to deliver instruction and support classes has experienced tremendous growth. A major remodel of the Communications Building allowed for the development of three computer labs: an open computer lab that primarily supports Business division classes, a writing computer lab that primarily supports English A, and a developmental education lab that supports developmental reading and writing classes. The campus also

contains other computer labs that support specific curriculum areas (math, biology, CAD, agriculture) as well as labs at the Los Banos campus. These labs have grown up in separate areas because of an expansion of computer use in specific programs and the need to work with limited space. The new Instructional Academic Classroom building will have a larger lab area for the open computer lab and for the writing lab, but will not reduce the number of computer labs on campus.

For years, Merced College has provided e-mail to its faculty and staff. This service is available for both full time and adjunct faculty and for full-time and contracted part-time staff. E-mail is available on campus and through an exchange server to those who need to access their e-mail from home or at an off-campus location. This year, through a collaborative effort with Juno.com, ITS and Admissions and Records have devised a method to provide all students with an e-mail account. The purpose of this was to provide a stable and free e-mail service to students so that the college could contact them on a variety of issues. This project began in the early part of the spring semester of 2004 and is just now taking hold with students.

Enhancements to specific technologies (lab computers, classroom multimedia stations, network capabilities) have been available on a sporadic basis, as funding has allowed. Title III and Title V HSI funding has provided the majority of funding for classroom technology, and VTEA and other grant funds have provided for enhancements in other program areas.

Providing appropriate security for these valuable technological resources has been an ongoing priority for the district. ITS has been encouraged to find appropriate software and hardware mechanisms to provide for the security of the college's information resources. Over the last two years, there have been thefts from classrooms and labs of computer and computer projector equipment. The college has formed a campus security committee to address this issue and recommend appropriate methods and resources to the college administration for slowing down or stopping this trend.

Planning Agenda

The Technology Master Planning Committee (TMPC) is currently engaged in discussions about the possibility of the campus moving from its current digital telephone switch to voice over Internet protocol (VoIP). This functionally may provide enhanced services at reduced costs. Additionally TMPC is investigating the potential of using blade computers for instructional use, and, eventually, for all staff computers within the district. The investigation is preliminary but may provide direction for meeting future equipment needs while reducing equipment costs, enhancing services to end users, and allowing technical support staff to meet additional needs. This dialogue feeds into and is evaluated by EMPC, the committee to which TMPC reports. The goal is to insure sound applications of technology which reflects the educational master plan for the college.

C.2. Technology planning is integrated with institutional planning. The institution systematically assesses the effective use of technology resources and uses the results of evaluation as the basis for improvement.

Descriptive Summary

Decisions regarding the appropriate types of technology for use at the college result from needs assessments generated through the district's planning process, especially the master planning process, and the college's budgetary ability. Based upon the overall direction technology is moving, the TMPC recommends hardware and software specifications, investigates new technology, and generally assures the college's infrastructure is appropriate for future technology. TMPC reports to EMPC, which then makes institution-wide plans and recommendations. Technology needs are made known by the requests from users of the technology on campus. These requests have grown in a very short period of time and include: network printing, file sharing, web page development, and e-mail use.

Technology planning is integrated with the institutional planning process. MCTAC, the Merced College Technology Advisory Committee, is designed to deal with technology issues on campus and is made up of representatives from faculty, instructional services, student services, administrative services, and information services. Through this broad representation of all campus elements, discussion is entertained that is campus-wide in scope and covers technology from the delivery of instruction to its reception and use by students, as well as its use for the administration of day-to-day college activities. Much of what is discussed in MCTAC is relayed to and addressed by TMPC and EMPC in order to integrate college-wide participation in solving technology problems and promote the effective use of technology in and out of the classroom.

Self Evaluation

Normally there is a balance between requests from various programs and fiscal resources available to implement those requests. Currently, few technology requests are being met. This is a reflection of the current fiscal constraints within the state. Assessment concerning the use of technology are not being conducted. Often, a need is identified and steps are taken to meet it, but once the technology is deployed, there is rarely follow-up to see if the implementation was effective in meeting the stated instructional or other needs.

Planning Agenda

1. We are continually using input from the above-mentioned areas to plan for the needs of the college and the integration of technology in all aspects of college activities. Even though money is presently limited, the planning process should continue to gather input from the different areas in order to satisfy the present and future needs of the college and the community it serves. Plans for future endeavors such as expanding

distance education and college offerings to more of the community and the use of Web Advisor to better serve student enrollment and matriculation should continue in order to more efficiently serve present needs and to be prepared in the event of improved funding. Plans to consider and utilize the Total Cost of Operation model should be revisited in light of changing funding opportunities.

2. Assessment of all areas of planning, including technology, will be conducted as part of the Educational Master Planning Committee's cycle of evaluation, planning and assessment.

D. Financial Resources

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 resources planning is integrated with institutional planning.

D.1. The institution relies upon its mission and goals as the foundation for financial planning.

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

Descriptive Summary

According to the Board of Trustees of Merced College, budget planning must support institutional goals and be linked to other institutional planning efforts (see Board Policy 6200). This coordination of institutional planning and budgeting can be witnessed through the cooperation of the Committee on Budget Review and Recommendations (CBRR) and the Educational Master Planning Committee (EMPC).

The Master Plan for Merced College, as developed by EMPC, establishes the institution's goals. They are a compilation of the goals established by the other subsidiary planning committees: Instructional (IMPC), Student Services (SSMPC), Administrative Services (ASMPC), Facilities (FMPC), and Technology (TMPC). The goals of the Master Plan direct financial planning. Funds that are spent at the college must be tied into the Master Plan, as well as the mission and goals set by the Board of Trustees (see Master Plan and Board of Trustee Mission and Goals).

EMPC is responsible for prioritizing the different funding needs on campus. When funds become available, EMPC decides which need is appropriate to fund at that time.

Merced College has timelines regarding the development and delivery of the budget to the Board of Trustees (see CBRR Web Page, Budget Calendar). This institutional calendar is designed to work in concert with the budgeting process of the State of California. The steps in budget development are outlined in the procedures for budget development (see CBRR Web Page, Procedures Manual).

Evidence that the budget is directed at achieving institutional plans and goals can be found in documents such as the yearly budget and program reports (see 2000-2001, 2001-2002, 2002-2003 budgets).

Self Evaluation

Merced College meets this standard. The budget is developed based on the mission and goals of the college.

Planning Agenda

Merced College should continue to assure financial planning is integrated with and supports all institutional planning.

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

Descriptive Summary

The need for a financial resource allocation process is extremely important, given that the college has limited funds to spend. An understanding of the availability of funds and their source is necessary to support the college's stated goals. Just as important is knowledge of how much is needed to take care of day-to-day business, as well as make institutional improvements. It is the job of Committee on Budget Review and Recommendation (CBRR) to discuss these issues and provide information to Educational Master Planning Committee (EMPC), as well as the entire campus community.

Merced College receives about two-thirds of its general fund money from State of California apportionments, which are based on FTES (full-time equivalent student) totals and approximately another one third from local dollars. Other, more restrictive, sources include categorical funds.

CBRR members are provided regular updates regarding the status of the current budget and what might be expected in the future. This information is used to make recommendations regarding current budget expenditures and how to deal with changes that might affect the future budget. It is CBRR's responsibility to inform EMPC of the

availability of financial resources. When EMPC receives information that funds are available, recommendations for funding institutional improvements are made.

EMPC attempts to focus financial resources on student learning. This is driven by the first goal of the Educational Master Plan, which is to develop and maintain an instructional process that provides students with appropriate and effective modes of instruction (see EMPC Web Page, 5-Year Goals). This focus on student learning is further supported by a Board of Trustees Goal Statement that states it is an institutional goal to designate the largest share of fiscal resources possible to expenditures that directly support students (see Board of Trustees Web Page, Goal Statement).

Self Evaluation

Merced College meets the standard. Through CBRR, financial information that affects planning is made available to the campus community.

Planning Agenda

Merced College should continue to assure that institutional planning reflects a realistic assessment of the availability of funds, the development of financial resources, and ongoing expenditure requirements.

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.

Descriptive Summary

Projections of increases in health benefits, insurance costs, building maintenance costs, and so forth, are made on a yearly basis. There is an expectation of increased costs for the future, and this is reflected in the list of assumptions developed for each year's budget (see 2003-2004 Budget, health benefit increase). The Director of Business Services forecasts trends in cost increases and incorporates these increases into each new budget.

Self Evaluation

Merced College meets the standard. Besides keeping track of incoming and outgoing funds, an additional fiscal responsibility is to estimate future needs and the resources available to meet them.

Planning Agenda

Merced College should continue to assure that long-range financial priorities are considered when developing short-range financial plans.

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

Descriptive Summary

The Committee on Budget Review and Recommendation (CBRR) is a 17-member group, which represents administrators, managers, faculty, classified staff, and students. The guidelines and processes for financial planning and budgeting are clearly outlined by CBRR for the entire campus community to see. Budget parameters are developed in January and are sent out to financial managers in February. The budget is then developed throughout the year, with a tentative budget presented to the Board of Trustees before July 1st. Assuming that a State budget is adopted in July, the Board of Trustees must then receive the Final Budget by September 15th (see CBRR Web Page, Budget Timelines).

Self Evaluation

Budget development is clearly outlined for the campus community. This process is guided by budget development instructions and timelines. Merced College meets the standard.

Planning Agenda

Merced College should continue to assure that guidelines and processes for financial planning and budget are clearly defined.

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.

D.2.a. Financial documents, including the budget and independent audit, reflect appropriate allocation and use of financial resources to support student learning programs and services. Institutional responses to external audit findings are comprehensive, timely, and communicated appropriately.

Descriptive Summary

The allocation of financial resources is detailed in the annual budget, including funds allocated toward student learning programs and services.

The Board of Trustees, the Chancellor's Office, and State Education Code all require a yearly outside audit that the college complies with. The intention of this external audit is not to make subjective statements about financial practices. It is, instead, a means of monitoring the legality and accuracy of financial expenditures and record keeping.

Self Evaluation

While the budget outlines the allocation of financial resources, it does not indicate whether the appropriate amount of funds have been applied toward student learning programs and services. The audit does not address this either.

In the past, there have been audit findings regarding financial statements, state awards, and federal awards. Merced College's response has been to fix the problems noted (see 2000, 2001, and 2002 audits). Some problems take longer to fix than others. Most findings were addressed before the following year's audit, but there were two findings in 1999 that were not noted as addressed until the 2001 audit.

Planning Agenda

Regarding the allocation of funds for student learning programs and services, Merced College might consider making CBRR responsible for reviewing the annual budget and comparing the overall student-related allocations to other similar colleges. There are publications addressing this type of comparison, such as Financial Statistics for the Current Cost of Education.

D.2.b. Appropriate financial information is provided throughout the institution.

Descriptive Summary

Financial information is provided through budgets and audits, which are made available in the library for public viewing. There is real-time, open access financial information at the touch of a button through the Datatel system, which details intricate financial transactions for the entire college. Financial information is supplied on a continuous basis to the Board of Trustees and CBRR regarding budgetary changes and anything that might affect future financial planning.

Self Evaluation

The dissemination of information in a timely manner has been the topic of some debate on the campus. Information is maintained in an automated system that is password

protected, and printed copies of the annual budget and the expenditure of budgetary items is difficult to monitor unless one has access to that information online.

The Board of Trustees approves all line item transfers and unbudgeted expenditures in public sessions using a published agenda. These simply list the dollar transfers with no reference to the total funds in the individual line item. The content of the entire budget, line item by line item, is not available to the general public or to staff who don't have passwords to those budgetary lines. The printed budget is summary in nature and is printed only upon demand by interested parties.

Planning Agenda

Regarding budget information, Merced College should consider providing a detailed budget on the CBRR web page.

D.2.c. The institution has sufficient cash flow and reserves to maintain stability, strategies for appropriate risk management, and realistic plans to meet financial emergencies and unforeseen occurrences.

Descriptive Summary

As of the date of this document, Merced College is expecting to bring in less income than is required to pay for budgeted expenses. Funds from the ending balance of the previous year (the reserve) will be used to balance the budget. So, even though Merced College is facing a time of instability, previous planning enables the college to continue serving its students.

The largest share of income for Merced College is received through State of California apportionments, which are based on FTES – full time equivalent students (see 2003-2004 Budget). This money is received in monthly installments throughout the year. Cash flow difficulties do not normally arise from this system of income payments because the financial planning process takes into account the receipt of funds in this fashion.

In order to address financial emergencies, Merced College is required by the California Education Code to carry a 5% reserve. The Board of Trustees actually requires an even higher 6% reserve for emergencies. For the past three budgets, we have had reserves that have been much higher than the 6% that the Board requires: 12.7%, 14.6%, and 10.8% respectively (see 2003-2004 Budget). This has been done by design in order to prevent layoffs of faculty and staff and to generally survive in these tough budgetary times. If a need were to arise for funds in excess of the existing reserve, Merced College has temporary access to internal cash, such as the Retiree Health Fund, and external cash through TRANS – tax revenue anticipation notes.

Regarding institutional stability other than finances, Merced College ensures itself against liability through the JPA – the Joint Powers Authority – which is a group of institutions that have joined together for self insurance in order to cut costs and provide sufficient funds to insure against any unexpected liability.

Self Evaluation

For the past couple of years, there has been a certain sense of financial instability, but that's probably been the case for almost any institution that relies on the State of California for funding. There have been concerns expressed regarding the high level of reserves maintained in each of the last three years. While they have been quite high, Merced College is dealing with financial uncertainty because of the ongoing state budget crisis. So, it seems to be a prudent decision to take a more conservative stance until financial uncertainty decreases.

Planning Agenda

Merced College will continue to maintain sufficient cash flow and reserves for stability, develop strategies for appropriate risk management, and create realistic plans in order to meet financial emergencies and unforeseen occurrences.

D.2.d. 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.

Descriptive Summary

There is an annual external audit that is required by the Board of Trustees and the California Education Code. This audit provides an in-depth look at financial practices in general and the individual elements that comprise the General Fund and categorical programs.

The external audits of 2000, 2001, and 2002 all have revealed audit exceptions (see 2000, 2001, and 2002 Audits). These problems have been addressed.

Internally a system of checks and balances is in place to ensure the appropriate use of finances. For instance, the Director of Business Services and the Director of Fiscal Services both monitor the financial practices of Merced College programs. Their efforts represent a kind of ongoing internal audit.

Self Evaluation

While there have been some audit exceptions, Merced College has responded by implementing recommendations provided by the auditor.

Planning Agenda

Merced College will continue to practice effective oversight of finances and to modify its financial management to meet future needs.

D.2.e. All financial resources, including those from auxiliary activities, fund-raising efforts, and grants are used with integrity in a manner consistent with the mission and goals of the institution.

Descriptive Summary

Additional financial resources – not including federal, state, and local income – are derived from grants, contracts, and various college groups. Examples of current or recent grants include: the Title V HIS Individual Institutional Development grant, Title V HSI Cooperative grant, the Charter School grant (partnership with the Merced County Office of Education), the Hispanic-Serving Institutions Assisting Communities grant (HSIAC), and the Center for International Trade Development grant (CITD). Examples of Merced College contracts include: the CalWORKs and the Independent Living Skills programs. Examples of college programs that generate funds include: the Merced College Foundation, the Merced College Bookstore, Food Services, Associated Students, and the Merced College Farm.

Grants and contracts are used to fund special programs at Merced College. The funds received from each grant are used to address the objectives of the grant-funded program.

The primary purpose of the income generated by the Merced College Foundation is to provide scholarships for students. The Merced College Bookstore and Food Services both provide sufficient income to be self-supporting and to contribute to the college. The Associated Students brings in much of its income through sales of student identification cards, and this money is used to pay for the Associated Students' expenditures. The income generated by the Merced College Farm is used solely for the purpose of education in the agricultural science department.

Self Evaluation

The funds provided to the college by grants, contracts, and other auxiliary sources are being used in the proper manner. One determining factor of misuse would be if the college had to return money to the funding sources. This has not happened.

Planning Agenda

Merced College will continue to assure that all financial resources are used with integrity and in a manner consistent with its mission and goals.

D.2.f. 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.

Descriptive Summary

At Merced College, the President, Vice President of District Administrative Services, and the Director of Purchasing are given the authority to enter into contracts on behalf of the district. Contracts are not enforceable until they have been approved by the Board of Trustees. Information regarding bid specifications, call for bids, awarding of bids, etc. is detailed in board policy referencing contracts (see Board Policy 6340).

Self Evaluation

Merced College meets the standard.

Planning Agenda

Merced College will continue to assure that 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.

D.2.g. The institution regularly evaluates its financial management processes, and the results of the evaluation are used to improve financial management systems.

Descriptive Summary

Each year, as preparation begins for development of the new budget, the previous year's fiscal planning is reviewed for its effectiveness. If some things did not work well, they are modified for the coming year's budget. This evaluation process is performed by CBRR.

Self Evaluation

While the budget is reviewed, the process for budget development is not.

Planning Agenda

The college should consider assigning CBRR the task of reviewing the budget development process. CBRR could make annual recommendations on improving the process itself.

D.3. The institution systematically assesses the effective use of financial resources and uses the results of the evaluation as the basis for improvement.

Descriptive Summary: The Merced College budget development calendar directs the process by which the annual budget is developed. Following the steps in the budget development calendar provides a built-in and systematic assessment of the effective use of financial resources. This assessment is accomplished with the cooperation of EMPC, CBRR, and the Assumptions Committee, a sub-committee of CBRR.

CBRR makes recommendations and determines how many one-time and ongoing dollars are available in any budget year. The second "R" in CBRR stands for review; therefore CBRR also looks at the assumptions of the previous budget to see if adjustments are needed.

To get to that final determination of needs and wants versus the actual funding available, the Assumptions Committee develops the assumptions on which the budget will be built. The Assumptions Committee forwards these recommended assumptions to CBRR for approval. The budget is then developed.

The master planning committees make recommendations to EMPC. From these recommendations, EMPC develops the priority list and submits the list to the Superintendent/President as a recommendation. The Superintendent/President can make changes to the recommendation by EMPC before forwarding it to the Board of Trustees as a recommendation. The Board of Trustees can accept the recommendation as presented or make changes as they see fit.

The Program Review Committee looks at programs and may make recommendations that involve increased funding. The appropriate area master planning committee considers these recommendations and may forward them to EMPC for their consideration.

Self-Evaluation: Merced College systematically assesses the effective use of financial resources by means of the annual budget development process and uses this information to develop a budget to effectively address the requirements of the coming year.

Planning Agenda: Merced College will continue with its current budget process, which has a built-in mechanism for assessing the effective use of financial resources.

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."