# Merced College
# 3600 M Street
# Merced, CA 95348

## A Report Prepared for the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges

## This report represents the findings of the evaluation team that visited Merced College March 6-9, 2017

## Rajen Vurdien, PhD
## Chair

**NOTE: this page shall be added to the team report noted below, immediately behind the cover page, and shall become part of the final evaluation report associated with the review.**

DATE:                                    June 23, 2017

INSTITUTION:                     Merced College
                                            3600 M Street
                                            Merced, CA 95348

TEAM REPORT:                   Comprehensive Evaluation Report

This report represents the findings of the evaluation team that visited College March 6 – 9, 2017.

SUBJECT:                             Commission Revisions to the Team Report

The comprehensive External Evaluation Report provides details of the team's findings with regard to the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies, and should be read carefully and used to understand the team's findings. Upon a review of the External Evaluation Report sent to the College, the College's Self-Evaluation Report, and supplemental information, oral testimony evidence provided by the College and the District, the following changes or corrections are noted for the Team Report:

1. In Recommendation 2, add a reference to federal regulations to the Commission Policy on Distance Education.
2. Change Recommendation 4 to a Recommendation to Improve Effectiveness.
3. Change Recommendation 5 to a Recommendation to Improve Effectiveness.
4. Change Recommendation 6 to a Recommendation to Improve Effectiveness.

# List of Team Members

Dr. Rajen Vurdien (Chair)
Superintendent/President
Pasadena City College

Crystal Kollross (Team Assistant)
Executive Director Institutional
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Pasadena City College

Dr. Susan Inouye
Linguistics and Writing faculty
Kapi'olani Community College

Dr. Gerald Sequeira
Dean of Admissions and Records
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Dr. Richard Storti
Assistant Superintendent, Vice President
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Joyce Johnson
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Student Services
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Ronald Gerhard
Vice Chancellor, Finance & Administration
City College of San Francisco

Katiina Dull (Team Observer)
President
Young Americans College of the
Performing Arts

# Summary of the External Evaluation Report

INSTITUTION: Merced College

DATES OF VISIT: March 6-9, 2017

TEAM CHAIR: Dr. Rajen Vurdien

A fourteen member external evaluation team visited the Merced College campus from March 6 through March 9, 2017 for the purpose of determining if Merced College continues to meet the Accreditation Standards, Eligibility Requirements(ER), Commissions Polices and United States Department of Education (USDE) regulations. The Team included an observer who was not responsible for evaluation of the institution's compliance with commission standards, regulations and ERs, but fully participated in interviews and team discussions.

Groundwork for the full accreditation site visit began in December of 2016 when the Team Chair participated in an ACCJC Chair training session.  Additionally, on January 12, 2017 the Team Chair and Team Assistant visited the Merced Campus for initial meetings with the Superintendent/President and members of the college constituencies who had been involved in the preparation of the Merced Self-Evaluation Report (ISER).  The Team Chair and Team Assistant toured the campus and made arrangements for the full team site visit in March 2017.  The team received the college's self-evaluation report and supporting evidence prior to the comprehensive visit. Members of the external evaluation team, along with the Chair, attended a training workshop on January 19, 2017, in Los Angeles, CA presented by staff from the ACCJC.  Additionally, team members we asked to complete general and standard-specific assignments before the full team site visit in March.

The full external evaluation team met the evening of Sunday, March 5, 2017, in the hotel team room in Merced to discuss impressions of the overall Merced Self -Evaluation Report. The Team found that in many instances throughout the document not enough narrative and evidence was provided to substantiate the College's compliance with the standards.

On Monday the team worked together reviewing the additional evidence provided by the College and discussing interview questions and protocols.  Members of the team also visited the Los Banos center and the Downtown Business center on Monday afternoon. Merced College hosted a meet-and-greet with the visiting team and members of the College community on Tuesday morning March 7, 2017, prior to the beginning of the team's scheduled interviews.

During the visit, the team met with over 85 members of the college faculty, staff, students, administration, and members of the Board of Trustees and conducted interview sessions from 30 minutes to an hour in length. The team conducted more than 50 of these interview sessions over two days and held three open forums.  Two forums were held on the Merced

Campus and one forum was held on the Los Banos campus. The first forum held on the Merced campus was attended by over 75 members of the campus community.  The second forum on the Merced campus was attended by over 85 members of the campus community. The final forum held on the Los Banos campus was attended by 50 people. During all three forums, attendees were engaged and thoughtful with the visiting team.

The faculty, staff, and administration of Merced College were very accommodating and responsive to team needs and requests.  The staff at Merced College provided requests for additional evidence and interviews expeditiously. The hotel and campus team rooms were well supplied, secure, and met the needs to the team members appropriately. College faculty, staff, administrators, and students were available to team members for interviews, evidence requests, and consultation. The team appreciated the engagement and support provided by the Merced faculty, staff and administration.

The team provided the college with commendations and recommendations for quality assurance and institutional improvement and submitted a final external evaluation report to the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) regarding the accredited status of the College.

# Major Findings and Recommendations

**Team Commendations**

**Commendation #1:**
The team commends the college on its comprehensive program review process that identifies the strengths and weaknesses of programs in order to inform resource allocation.

**Commendation #2:**
The team commends the College faculty and Student Services personnel on the application of multiple measures and the development of an accelerated pathway to college level English that will serve students in reaching their educational goals in a timely manner.

**Commendation # 3:**
The team commends the college for its robust suite of professional development opportunities that support all employee groups and, for faculty in particular, focuses on innovative practices that support the learning needs of diverse students.

**Commendation #4**:
The team commends the college for its Shared Governance Handbook, Integrated Planning Handbook, and Program Review Handbook which are thoughtful and comprehensive guiding documents.

**Commendation #5:**
The team commends the college for the robust and comprehensive student services offered on the Los Banos campus.


**Recommendations to Meet the Standards**

**Recommendation #1:**
In order to meet the Standard, the team recommends that the College engage in robust data analysis including data disaggregation to identify the underlying causes that impede student success, develop interventions to improve student performance, assess the effectiveness of interventions upon implementation, and communicate the results to the campus community. (I.B.3, 8, 9, I.C)


**Recommendation #2:**
In order to meet the standards, the team recommends that the College engage in processes that ensure the quality, integrity and effectiveness of its distance education program, including:

a. A framework that identifies the rationale for which courses are delivered in the DE format (I.A.1)
b. Mechanisms for determining selection of faculty for teaching in distance education and the training of those faculty (II.A.16)
c. The development and evaluation of DE courses to ensure faculty initiated regular and substantive contact. (Commission Policy on DE)
d. The disaggregation and review of data SLO data by mode of delivery and an evaluation of the implications for the DE program (II.A.3)
e. The development of equitable and accessible student support services and processes for evaluating for quality, demand and sufficiency.(II.C.1)

**Recommendation #3**:
In order to meet the standard, the team recommends that the College assess all course, including community service courses, program, and institutional level outcomes and use the results to improve student learning.  (II.A.3)

**Recommendation #4**:
In order to meet the Standard, the team recommends that the College develop processes for the systematic, regular and comprehensive evaluation of student support services that are sufficient to evaluate the quality and**,** regardless of location or means of delivery, and that those services support learning and enhance accomplishment of the mission of the institution. (II.C.1)

**Recommendation #5**:
In order to meet the standard, the team recommends that the College must ensure the evaluation of faculty, academic administrators, and other personnel directly responsible for student learning includes, as a component of that evaluation, consideration of how these employees use the results of the assessment of learning outcomes to improve teaching and learning.(III.A.6)

**Recommendation #6:**
In order to meet the Standard, the team recommends the College update/revise the Facilities Master Plan for the District to assure the feasibility and effectiveness of its physical resources in supporting institutional programs and services. (III.B.3)

**Recommendation #7:**
In order to meet the Standard, the team recommends that the College plan and manage its financial resources in a manner that ensures sustainable financial stability. (III.D.1).

**Recommendation #8:**
In order to meet the Standard, the team recommends the Board follow its policy on performing and conducting the bi-annual Board self-evaluation. (IV.C.10)

**Recommendation #9:**
In order to meet the Standard, the team recommends the Board follow its policies regarding delegation of authority related to the Superintendent/President and ensure the Superintendent/President is able to implement and administer Board policies without Board interference in college operations. (IV.B.5, IV.C.7, IV.C.12)

**Recommendations to improve institutional effectiveness**

**Recommendation #10:**
In order to improve institutional effectiveness, the team recommends the College develop and implement a process for the systematic, regular and comprehensive review of board policies and administrative procedures.  (I.C.5).

# Introduction

Merced College was established in 1963 to serve most of the community in Merced County including the Chowchilla Union High School District in Madera County, and the Dos Palos Joint Union Elementary School District. The College is led by a Superintendent/President and a seven member Board of Trustees representing areas within the Merced Community College District. The first classes for Merced College started in September of 1963 at the Merced County Fairgrounds until a permanent location and structure could be established.

The current campus facilities started on 100 acres presented as a gift to the College by C-H-M and the Yosemite Land & Cattle Companies in collaboration with Merced city officials. The campus has since expanded to 269 acres and held its first classes at the current site in the summer of 1966. Expansion of facilities has continued with the addition of Student Union in 1967, Lesher Library and the Theater in 1972, and the Child Development Center in 2002. Additionally, in 2002 the voters approved a $53.5 million bond measure to continue the expansion and renovation of campus facilities. The College has 50 permanent buildings and grounds for athletic activities and instructional agricultural operations.

In September of 1971, Merced opened the Los Banos campus in a temporary facility to serve the communities of Los Banos, Dos Palos, and the surrounding area. The Los Banos campus is located approximately 40 miles west of the Merced campus. In 1979 the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office approved the Los Banos campus as an education center. In 1982, the Merced Community College District secured 10 acres of land in Los Banos and moved into temporary modular buildings that provided educational and culture center for residents on the Westside of Merced County. In 2005, with the donation of 125 acres, the Los Banos campus moved to its current location and opened for service in 2007. The Los Banos campus offers a variety of programs, vocational and academic, to serve the local community. Furthermore, Merced College runs courses in off-site locations for Delhi, Dos Palos, Chowchilla, and Mariposa residents as well as at the Valley State Prison in Atwater. Merced College also operates a Business Resource Center in downtown Merced that provides a variety of classes and services to the community.

Merced College served 14,775 students in the 2014-2015 academic year and offered 2,357 sections. The Merced main campus serves the majority of students. The student body is majority Hispanic and female.

Merced College was first accredited by ACCJC in 1965. The last comprehensive review was conducted in 2011 and resulted in a Warning that was subsequently removed in July 2013. The Commission affirmed the College's accredited status at the July 2014 meeting in response to Merced College's Midterm Report.

## Eligibility Requirements

### 1. Authority
The team confirmed that Merced College is a two-year community college authorized to operate as a postsecondary, degree-granting institution based on continuous accreditation by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) and the Board of Governors of the California Community College system. ACCJC is a regional accrediting body recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and granted authority through the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008.

The College meets the ER.

### 2. Operational Status
The team confirmed that Merced College, which has been in operation for 53 years, provides educational services to 11,496 actively enrolled students in credit courses during the fall 2016 semester and approximately 14,775 students annually. These enrollments include 10,619 students enrolled in credit courses, and 877 students enrolled in noncredit courses in fall 2016. A review of the Schedule of Classes and interviews with students demonstrate that the College is operational and that students are actively pursuing degree and certificate programs.

The College meets the ER.

### 3. Degrees
The team confirmed that the College offers 78 associate degrees and associate degrees for transfer (ADT) programs, as defined by the 2016-2017 Catalog, all of which are two academic years in length and are comprised of 60 degree applicable units. The College also offers 52 credit certificate of achievement programs that vary in length from twelve to sixty units.  In 2015- 2016, the College awarded 1,022 associate degrees and 379 Certificates of Achievement.  The catalog provides a detailed list of all the programs of study, degree and certificates as well as graduation requirements and transfer information where appropriate.

The College meets the ER.

### 4. Chief Executive Officer
The team confirmed that the Merced College Governing Board employs a Superintendent/President as the chief executive officer of the College. The Superintendent/President does not serve as a member of the Board of Trustees nor as the Board president. The team further found that the Superintendent/President's full-time responsibility is to the institution and possesses the requisite authority to administer board

policies.  Since the last full accreditation visit, there have been changes in personnel in the Superintendent/President position, each of which were appropriately reported to the ACCJC.

The College meets the ER.

**5. Financial Accountability**
The team confirmed that the College undergoes annual external financial audits performed by a certified public accountant that uses generally accepted accounting principles.  All audits are certified and all explanations or findings are documented appropriately. Audit reports are made publicly available. Furthermore, the Board of Trustees has an audit subcommittee that meets at least twice annually with the audit team before it is presented at a regularly scheduled Board meeting. The team further confirmed that the College meets all Title IV eligibility requirements and the team confirmed that the three year average USDE official cohort Student Loan Default Rate (FSLD) is 0 percent as reported in the annual ACCJC report.

The College meets the ER.

# Compliance with Commission Policies

## Public Notification of an Evaluation Team Visit and Third Party Comment
**Evaluation Items:**

| | |
|---|---|
| ☐ | The institution has made an appropriate and timely effort to solicit third party comment in advance of a comprehensive evaluation visit. |
| ☐ | The institution cooperates with the evaluation team in any necessary follow-up related to the third party comment. |
| ☐ | The institution demonstrates compliance with the Commission *Policy on Rights and Responsibilities of the Commission and Member Institutions* as to third party comment. |

[Regulation citation: 602.23(b).]

**Conclusion Check-Off (mark one):**

| | |
|---|---|
| ☐ | The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements. |
| **X** | The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements, but that follow-up is recommended. |
| ☐ | The team has reviewed the elements of this component and found the institution does not meet the Commission's requirements. |

**Narrative:**

The team found no evidence that third party comments were solicited in preparation for the comprehensive evaluation visit. The comprehensive site visit was announced at a regular meeting of the Board of Trustees but there was no specific evidence provided that third party comments were solicited. The college needs to make a better effort in the future to notify the public.

## Standards and Performance with Respect to Student Achievement
**Evaluation Items:**

| | |
|---|---|
| **X** | The institution has defined elements of student achievement performance across the institution, and has identified the expected measure of performance within each defined element. Course completion is included as one of these elements of student achievement. Other elements of student achievement performance for measurement have been determined as appropriate to the institution's mission. |
| **X** | The institution has defined elements of student achievement performance within each instructional program, and has identified the expected measure of performance within each defined element. The defined elements include, but are not limited to, job placement rates for program completers, and for |

| | |
|---|---|
| | programs in fields where licensure is required, the licensure examination passage rates for program completers. |
| X | The institution-set standards for programs and across the institution are relevant to guide self-evaluation and institutional improvement; the defined elements and expected performance levels are appropriate within higher education; the results are reported regularly across the campus; and the definition of elements and results are used in program-level and institution-wide planning to evaluate how well the institution fulfills its mission, to determine needed changes, to allocating resources, and to make improvements. |
| ☐ | The institution analyzes its performance as to the institution-set standards and as to student achievement, and takes appropriate measures in areas where its performance is not at the expected level. |

[Regulation citations: 602.16(a) (1) (i); 602.17(f); 602.19 (a-e).]

**Conclusion Check-Off (mark one):**

| | |
|---|---|
| ☐ | The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements. |
| X | The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements, but that follow-up is recommended. |
| ☐ | The team has reviewed the elements of this component and found the institution does not meet the Commission's requirements. |

**Narrative:**

The College has established institution-set standards in consultation with constituent groups. The College also reports the institution-set standards to ACCJC via its annual report. It is recommended that the College assess if they are meeting the institution-set standards in a systematic cycle. Additionally, it is recommended that the College develop appropriate strategies for improvement if the institution-set standards are not met.

**Credits, Program Length, and Tuition**
**Evaluation Items:**

| | |
|---|---|
| X | Credit hour assignments and degree program lengths are within the range of good practice in higher education (in policy and procedure). |
| X | The assignment of credit hours and degree program lengths is verified by the institution, and is reliable and accurate across classroom based courses, laboratory classes, distance education classes, and for courses that involve clinical practice (if applicable to the institution). |
| X | Tuition is consistent across degree programs (or there is a rational basis for any program-specific tuition). |

| | |
|---|---|
| ☐ | Any clock hour conversions to credit hours adhere to the Department of Education's conversion formula, both in policy and procedure, and in practice. |
| **X** | The institution demonstrates compliance with the Commission *Policy on Institutional Degrees and Credits*. |

[Regulation citations: 600.2 (definition of credit hour); 602.16(a) (1)(viii); 602.24(e), (f); 668.2;
668.9.]

**Conclusion Check-Off (mark one):**

| | |
|---|---|
| **X** | The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements. |
| ☐ | The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements, but that follow-up is recommended. |
| ☐ | The team has reviewed the elements of this component and found the institution does not meet the Commission's requirements. |

**Narrative:**

Merced College's policies and procedures assure that degree requirements are of appropriate length, breadth, and rigor. Tuition is consistent across degree programs, which is clearly communicated in the College catalog. Merced College does not offer courses with clock-to-credit-hour conversions. All degrees require the completion of 60 semester units, which include general education units, of which 18 units in major or area of emphasis and electives. This conforms to higher education norms, including those established by the ACCJC.

**Transfer Policies**
**Evaluation Items:**

| | |
|---|---|
| **X** | Transfer policies are appropriately disclosed to students and to the public. |
| **X** | Policies contain information about the criteria the institution uses to accept credits for transfer. |
| **X** | The institution complies with the Commission *Policy on Transfer of Credit*. |

[Regulation citations: 602.16(a)(1)(viii); 602.17(a)(3); 602.24(e); 668.43(a)(ii).]

**Conclusion Check-Off (mark one):**

| | |
|---|---|
| **X** | The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements. |
| ☐ | The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements, but that follow-up is recommended. |

| | |
|---|---|
| ☐ | The team has reviewed the elements of this component and found the institution does not meet the Commission's requirements. |

**Narrative:**

Transfer policies are available in the College's online and print catalog. Policy for granting course transfer credits, including credit through exam, etc., are clearly established in compliance with Commission policy.

## Distance Education and Correspondence Education
**Evaluation Items:**

| | |
|---|---|
| ☐ | The institution has policies and procedures for defining and classifying a course as offered by distance education or correspondence education, in alignment with USDE definitions. |
| ☐ | There is an accurate and consistent application of the policies and procedures for determining if a course is offered by distance education (with regular and substantive interaction with the instructor, initiated by the instructor, and online activities are included as part of a student's grade) or correspondence education (online activities are primarily "paperwork related," including reading posted materials, posting homework and completing examinations, and interaction with the instructor is initiated by the student as needed). |
| X | The institution has appropriate means and consistently applies those means for verifying the identity of a student who participates in a distance education or correspondence education course or program, and for ensuring that student information is protected. |
| X | The technology infrastructure is sufficient to maintain and sustain the distance education and correspondence education offerings. |
| ☐ | The institution demonstrates compliance with the Commission *Policy on Distance Education and Correspondence Education*. |

[Regulation citations: 602.16(a)(1)(iv), (vi); 602.17(g); 668.38.]

**Conclusion Check-Off (mark one):**

| | |
|---|---|
| ☐ | The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements. |
| ☐ | The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements, but that follow-up is recommended. |
| X | The team has reviewed the elements of this component and found the institution does not meet the Commission's requirements. |

**Narrative:**

Though online courses are approved by the Curriculum Committee via the addition of a distance education (DE) addendum, there is no evidence of how the College assures that distance education courses have regular and substantive faculty initiated contact between faculty and students. Faculty members are assigned online sections without a requirement of training on the LMS or online teaching methods to assure faculty members understand the requirements for regular and substantive contact and what constitutes regular and substantive contact.  Further, DE courses are not evaluated for evidence of regular and substantive contact.

**Student Complaints**
**Evaluation Items:**

| | |
|---|---|
| **X** | The institution has clear policies and procedures for handling student complaints, and the current policies and procedures are accessible to students in the College catalog and online. |
| **X** | The student complaint files for the previous six years (since the last comprehensive evaluation) are available; the files demonstrate accurate implementation of the complaint policies and procedures. |
| **X** | The team analysis of the student complaint files identifies any issues that may be indicative of the institution's noncompliance with any Accreditation Standards. |
| **X** | The institution posts on its website the names of associations, agencies and govern mental bodies that accredit, approve, or license the institution and any of its programs, and provides contact information for filing complaints with such entities. |
| **X** | The institution demonstrates compliance with the Commission *Policy on Representation of Accredited Status* and the *Policy on Student and Public Complaints Against Institutions*. |

[Regulation citations: 602.16(a)(1)(ix); 668.43.]

**Conclusion Check-Off (mark one):**

| | |
|---|---|
| **X** | The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements. |
| ☐ | The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements, but that follow-up is recommended. |
| ☐ | The team has reviewed the elements of this component and found the institution does not meet the Commission's requirements. |

**Narrative:**

The institution's board policy on student grievances is published on the College catalog and available online. A review of the complaint and grievance database as well as a review of the

grievance files demonstrate accurate implementation of the grievance and complaint process.  The institution posts information on all accrediting agencies online and on the College catalog, including information on how to submit complaints to the Commission.

## Institutional Disclosure and Advertising and Recruitment Materials
**Evaluation Items:**

| | |
|---|---|
| **X** | The institution provides accurate, timely (current), and appropriately detailed information to students and the public about its programs, locations, and policies. |
| **X** | The institution complies with the Commission *Policy on Institutional Advertising, Student Recruitment, and Representation of Accredited Status*. |
| **X** | The institution provides required information concerning its accredited status as described above in the section on Student Complaints. |

[Regulation citations: 602.16(a)(1)(vii); 668.6]

**Conclusion Check-Off (mark one):**

| | |
|---|---|
| **X** | The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements. |
| ☐ | The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements, but that follow-up is recommended |
| ☐ | The team has reviewed the elements of this component and found the institution does not meet the Commission's requirements. |

**Narrative:**

The institution provides accurate, current, and detailed information on its programs, location and policies to all constituents.  The College accurately represents to the public, students and prospective students its accreditation status, programs, cost of education, gainful employment disclosures, catalog requirements including transferability of courses, and student achievement information.

## Title IV Compliance
**Evaluation Items:**

| | |
|---|---|
| **X** | The institution has presented evidence on the required components of the Title IV Program, including findings from any audits and program or other review activities by the USDE. |
| **X** | The institution has addressed any issues raised by the USDE as to financial responsibility requirements, program record-keeping, etc. If issues were not timely addressed, the institution demonstrates it has the fiscal and administrative capacity to timely address issues in the future and to retain compliance with Title IV program requirements. |
| **X** | The institution's student loan default rates are within the acceptable range defined by the USDE. Remedial efforts have been undertaken when default rates near or meet a level outside the acceptable range. |
| **X** | Contractual relationships of the institution to offer or receive educational, library, and support services meet the Accreditation Standards and have been approved by the Commission through substantive change if required. |
| **X** | The institution demonstrates compliance with the Commission *Policy on Contractual Relationships with Non-Regionally Accredited Organizations* and the *Policy on Institutional Compliance with Title IV*. |

[Regulation citations: 602.16(a)(1)(v); 602.16(a)(1)(x); 602.19(b); 668.5; 668.15; 668.16; 668.71 et seq.]

**Conclusion Check-Off:**

| | |
|---|---|
| **X** | The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements. |
| ☐ | The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements, but that follow-up is recommended. |
| ☐ | The team has reviewed the elements of this component and found the institution does not meet the Commission's requirements. |

**Narrative:**

The College provides effective management over financial aid, grants, and externally funded programs. Internal controls are in place and fiscal affairs are managed with integrity. A review of recent external audit reports demonstrates that the College's fiscal affairs are managed with integrity and sound internal controls. For each of the past ten fiscal years, the College received an unqualified opinion from external auditors.

# Standard I – Mission, Academic Quality and Institutional Effectiveness, and Integrity

**Standard 1.A Mission**

**General Observations**

Merced College's mission describes its broad educational purpose as well as the intended student population it seeks to serve, the types of degrees and credentials it offers, and its commitment to learning and student achievement. The College's mission is integrated into the program review process. The program review process itself is used to allocate resources and evaluate student learning outcomes and student achievement. (I.A.2 and I.A.3) In addition, other planning documents such as the Student Equity Plan, Educational Master Plan and the Strategic Plan include the mission statement. (I.A.2 and I.A.3) The mission statement is widely published. It can be found on the College website, in the college catalog, and schedule of classes.

**Findings and Evidence**

The College mission statement is aligned with the broad mission of the California Community College System to provide basic skills, career technical training and transfer education. The College's broad educational purpose is to serve as a gateway to the future by providing accessible, affordable, and relevant education. The mission statement defines its intent to serve students in its richly diverse region. The College's commitment to learning and student achievement is described as providing education for personal and professional enrichment. (I.A.1)

Achievement of the College's mission is measured though the program review process. Program reviews address how programs contribute to the mission of the College and thus link the programs to the College mission. Program reviews contain aggregated data to assist in the evaluation of student learning and achievement of program goals. The program review process is integrated into the overall planning and resource allocation process through links to Institutional Learning Outcomes and links to the Strategic Plans. All program reviews are available on the College's public website. (I.A.2, I.A.3)

In addition, the mission is also found throughout the College website, integrated in multiple planning documents and included in the College catalog and other College publications. Other College integrated plans, such as the Educational Master Plan, Student Equity Plan and Strategic Plan, contain the mission statement and have data available to measure its achievement. (I.A.2)

The Board of Trustees adopted an updated mission, vision and core values and beliefs in September 2011 and passed a motion for its review every other year. The College conducted a campus forum to review the mission, vision and core values in fall 2013, and the Board of Trustees again reviewed the mission (BP 1200 Mission Statement) in October 2014. The

College is currently engaged in rewriting the mission statement through College Counsel. (I.A.4; ER 6)

**Conclusion**

The College meets the Standard.

The college aligns programs and services to the mission of the institution. The mission, through its integration into planning and goal setting, guides decision making, resource allocation, and informs institutional goals of learning and achievement.

**Standard I.B. Assuring Academic Quality and Institutional Effectiveness**

**General Observations**

The College engages in continuous, broad-based, and inclusive dialog with different constituent groups about student learning outcomes, student equity, achievement gaps, and institutional effectiveness. The institution has also established a process of program review and resource allocation. The process is inclusive and broad based. There is a sincere effort to strengthen the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness; a new dean has been hired and the College is supporting the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness with adequate staffing.

There is an effort to communicate assessment results to the campus community. However, in-depth data analysis is often not distributed widely across the campus and kept in the research office. From the available evidence, it appears that the data used for evaluation of student demand for services is fragmented and based on personal anecdotes. Additionally, data used for analysis is often restricted to simple descriptive statistics. A more robust data analysis would help the College uncover the gaps in teaching and learning and would help develop interventions to reduce/eliminate such gaps.

There are several forums where the College constituents engage in dialog about student outcomes, student equity, academic quality and institutional effectiveness. The College has also established both formal and informal platforms for discussion of student equity. While the number of forums and involvement of employees are clearly demonstrated through the evidence, the outcomes of such dialog or the quality of evidence-based conversation are lacking.

**Findings and Evidence**

The College has an established process for Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) assessment. The process was recently revised and under new leadership. The College states that 95 percent of course SLOs were assessed. The College is working on linking the course SLOs to the program Learning Outcomes. In large programs such as General Education, the College has taken a phased approach and they may not complete all assessments until May of 2018 (I.B.1, I.B.2). The College has developed a comprehensive process of program review that drives the resource allocation process (I.B.5)

The discussions on student equity and achievement gaps, although occurring in several forums, are not grounded in extensive data analysis. In most of the cases, aggregated descriptive statistics are used to drive the discussions. In order to determine institutional processes to support student learning and achievement, anecdotal evidence is used instead of an analysis of assessment data (I.B.4). Identification of performance gaps is overly reliant upon simplistic data analysis rather than a robust disaggregation of data (I.B.6).

The planning process at Merced College is informed by student achievement and demographic data. From the available evidence, it is apparent that each department/program is provided with five-year trend data on a number of parameters. The resource allocation process goes through several committees and involves all constituent groups (I.B.4). There was no evidence provided that indicated the College assesses initiatives funded through the resource allocation process (I.B.9).


**Conclusion**

The College does not meet the Standard.

The institution is actively engaged in assessment of the accomplishment of its mission through the process of program review and evaluation of the College's goals and objectives. While the format exists and lots of data are provided, the evidence on how the data is analyzed to identify gaps is not clear. In the absence of such evidence, it appears that the in-depth analysis of data to identify the areas of improvement of institutional systems and processes is lacking. While data availability is not a problem, analysis of the data and access to the data appears to be missing.


**Recommendation**

In order to meet the Standard, the team recommends that the College engage in robust data analysis including data disaggregation to identify the underlying causes that impede student success, develop interventions to improve student performance, assess the effectiveness of interventions upon implementation, and communicate the results to the campus community. (I.B.3, 8, 9)

**Standard I.C. Institutional Integrity**

**General Observations**

The College provides accurate, clear information to students, prospective students, personnel and the outside public regarding its mission, learning outcomes, educational programs, student achievement, costs, policies and student support services. The College regularly reviews the College catalog, class schedule and website. The College has policies on academic freedom and employee ethics as well as on academic honesty and student conduct.

Information about accreditation of the College and programs is readily available on the College website and included in required publications such as the College catalog. The College responds to Accreditation Commission requests in a timely manner and publishes those communications.

**Findings and Evidence**

Merced College assures the accuracy of information through consistent review of its catalog and schedule and through regular updates to the College website. (I.C.1) The College's Schedule and Catalog Committee meets in fall and spring to review the catalog and assigns relevant campus constituents to review sections of the catalog for accuracy of information. (I.C.1, I.C.2, I.C.3) The catalog contains information about degrees and certificates including description, unit requirements, required and elective courses, suggested course sequence, and program learning outcomes. (I.C.4, ER20) The catalog is available free online and for a small charge in the bookstore. (I.C.2)

Student achievement data can be found on the Student Equity Plan and the MCCD High School Report, both available online. The newly formed Office of Institutional Effectiveness website contains some reports on student achievement. All pages of the College website contain a link to the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office Student Success Scorecard. (1.C.1)

The College collects SLO assessment data at the course, program, and general education level and some of that information is available to current and prospective students through the public facing website, program reviews, and CurricUNET. Student learning outcomes are on the course outline of record and included in every course syllabus. The College evaluates student learning outcomes at the course level on a twice-per-five-years assessment cycle. (I.C.3, I.C.4)

College Council reviews and updates College policies and procedures for approval by the Board of Trustees, although there is no formal review cycle. Policies and procedures are posted online. Total cost of education is available online, in the catalog, and in the schedule of classes. Cost of books can be found on the Merced College Bookstore website. (I.C.5, I.C.6)

The College has a Board of Trustees policy on academic freedom (BP 4030) and posts the policy in the College website, in the Faculty Handbook and College catalog. The policy describes the College's commitment to free discussion and open inquiry for students, faculty,

administration and staff. Likewise the College also has a policy and procedure on ethics (BP/AP 3050) that applies to all employees, including faculty. (I.C.7, I.C.8 and ER 13)

The College has a policy on academic honesty (AP 5540). Academic honesty is also addressed in the College catalog and on the College website. Academic dishonesty is a violation of the Standards of Student Conduct (BP/AP 5500). The conduct policy defines the enforcement process. The conduct standards are also available on the College website and the College catalog. (I.C.8)

The College expects faculty to distinguish between personal conviction and professionally accepted views in a discipline through its academic freedom policy (BP4030) and discussion of academic freedom and code of ethic in the Faculty Handbook. (I.C.9)

Standards I.C.10 (Conformity to Specific Codes of Conduct) and I.C.11 (Foreign Locations) are not applicable to Merced College.

The College consistently responds in a timely manner to requirements established by the Accreditation Commission and publicly discloses such communications on the website. (I.C.12, I.C.13 and ER21) The College complies with regulations and statutes, for example those that apply to Financial Aid, through professional development opportunities and by monitoring communications from regulatory bodies. The College enumerates all relationships with accrediting agencies on program webpages and provides hyperlinks to each agency. Similar information is available on the College catalog. (I.C.13)

The College's mission, strategic plan, and program review process demonstrate that commitment to delivering high quality education is the paramount objective of the institution. (1.C.14)


**Conclusion**

The College meets Standard I.C.




# Standard II: Student Learning Programs and Support Services

**Standard II.A Instructional Programs**

**General Observations**

Merced Community College offers programs and courses including basic skills, pre-collegiate, general education, career technical education (CTE) courses, and community services courses driven by the goals of preparing students for college-level coursework, careers, job skill development, and transfer to four-year colleges or universities.  The College identifies its service area, its student population, and serves the needs of this population through its diverse programs and services.

The College has used the accreditation self-evaluation process as an opportunity to assess the programs it provides for students and to be proactive in addressing areas of improvement. The report addressed each Standard and providing supporting evidence. Areas for improvement are identified in each Standard's Analysis and Evaluation section, and in most cases these appear to logically align with the overview of the Standard. The Action plans identified in the Quality Focus Essay also capture the recommended improvement areas. The team had difficulty locating evidence from the Self-Evaluation Report in the area of student learning assessment at the course and program levels, and how assessment informs improvement.  The team also took issue with the disaggregation of data related to SLOs, particularly by delivery modality. The team visit to the College was useful for clarifying student learning assessment processes and for locating more evidence in assessment areas.

**Findings and Evidence**

The team found courses, certificates and degrees that meet the needs of its service population, including vocational, basic skills, and non-credit programs. (II.A.1, II.A.4, II.A.14)  There was evidence of improvement to the course-level student learning assessment process. (II.A.3, II.A.16)  The College uses established policies to develop and maintain academic programs, and collaborative decision making to ensure the rigor and currency of programs. (II.A.2, II.A.5, II.A.16) The College ensures that instructional programs meet the standards appropriate to higher education by using its established review and approval process to meet the requirements set forth by the ACCJC and the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office. (II.A.5)

The Curriculum Committee, a subcommittee of the Academic Senate, is responsible for ensuring that instructional content and methods of instruction meet appropriate standards and are aligned with the mission. (II.A.1, ER 9, ER11) Course outlines of record (COR) and student learning outcomes are reviewed by the Curriculum Committee and approved by the Academic Senate, and finally the Board of Trustees.  The Curriculum Committee maintains a database of CORs that indicates when updates are due, and communicates deadlines to faculty, which assures regular review of course currency. The curriculum review process

includes new program and course proposals, and how these relate to the general education requirements within the California Community College system.  Program and degree requirements are also reviewed for course sequences, associated general education requirements, course and program-level learning outcomes, and are clearly communicated in the catalog. Merced College does not offer courses with clock-to-credit-hour conversions. (II.A.6, ER 9)

Consistent with requirements set by the California Community College system and those established by the College, degrees and certificate programs are of appropriate length, breadth, rigor, and sequencing. All degrees require the completion of 60 semester units, which include general education units, of which 18 units in major or area of emphasis. This conforms to higher education norms, including those established by the ACCJC.  (II.A.5, II.A.13)

The College has online course offerings, with the Curriculum Committee approving courses for distance education delivery.  A random sample of distance education addendums on CORs do not show consistent detail of how instructors will assure regular and substantive instructor initiated contact with students. Oversight of distance education was not immediately clear in the Self-Evaluation Report or interviews conducted by team members.  The College's expectations and policies around DE course content, teacher training, or evaluation, including how to assure regular and effective contact in an online environment were not evident. (II.A.7, II.A.16)

The institution has developed expected student learning outcomes for credit/non-credit courses, programs, general education, and the institution.  The team is concerned with the lack of identified student learning outcomes for community services courses.  The team found, however, that the College is committed to a structure that supports assessment, as demonstrated by the attention given to the course level student learning assessment and the assessment culture in general.  Changes the College has made to its course assessment reporting processes have resulted in a 96 percent course assessment rate. However, 100 percent of courses have not been assessed; these include some non-credit classes, and courses taught infrequently by adjunct faculty. (II.A.3, II.A.11)

A random sample of Program Reviews shows the assessment of program student learning outcomes via an indirect method of mapping courses SLOs to program SLOs. Course assessment data is then analyzed based on established program benchmarks and disaggregated achievement levels by various student populations.  However, the team found that PLO results are not published on the College's public website. (II.A.2; II.A.3)  The team found evidence showing clear movement towards finalizing a regular and systematic assessment process for the course and program levels. In its review of their current processes, the College has identified certain campus needs such as the creation of an Office of Institutional Effectiveness, changes to the Program Review process, and improvements to the assessment and program review reporting tools.

General education requirements for the completion of degrees are listed in the College catalog. Depending on their educational goals, Merced College students have the option of choosing the locally established General Education pathway or the CSU Breadth or IGETC pattern. The discussion of general education in the Merced College Self-Evaluation Report often refers to the College's continuing work on mapping courses and course activities to General Education categories in order to assess general education student learning outcomes (GELOs). For example, the analysis in the Self-Evaluation Report for Standard II.A.12 is discussed using the course SLO assessment form to identify the course activities that link to the General Education skills standards. This also appears in the planning chart at the end of the Self-Evaluation Report and in discussions in Standard I.A. and Standard I.C. Recent iterations of assessment forms offer a place for faculty to identify how a course qualifies as a General Education course. (II.A.12)

Merced College has established articulation agreements between CSUs, UCs, and a few private colleges according to 2013-2014 data provided to the evaluation team. Forty percent of Merced's students successfully transferred to a four-year college or university. The College communicates policies related to transfer of credit in the College catalog. (II.A.10; ER 10)

The College offers a variety of vocational (CTE) certificates and degrees, all of which follow the College's established curriculum-approval process; new programs are also reviewed by the Central/Mother Lode Regional Consortium. CTE programs rely on faculty expertise, advisory boards, industry partners, and community agencies to ensure that programs are meeting identified needs such as those in emerging growth sectors, and preparing students for employment. The downtown Business Center, operated by Merced College, provides training for students in a number of CTE and community service programs. The Business Center also provides technology training to prepare students for entry into a number of CTE program areas.

Data on licensure pass rates for Allied Health Programs are accessible on the Allied Health webpage. Graduates from the Sonography program, for instance, demonstrate competencies through the program's job placement rate of 66 percent. Data also show high pass rates for programs that require external licensure. (II.A.14)

Dialogue and discussions around learning assessment processes are facilitated by the Cohort Assessment Team (CAT), the Assessment Review Committee and Institutional Program Review Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Committee (IPRSLOAC). (II.A.1, II.A.16) The CAT also dialogues with faculty about student achievement and learning assessment results which led to restructuring English basic skills course sequencing; conversations continue around basic skills math course sequencing. Course assessment results appear to be used to inform updates and revisions in programs, as evidenced in Program Reviews.

The Quality Focus Essay addresses two goals for improvement. The first action project is to continue improving program and course assessment reporting including GELO assessment, and tightening up the program review and resource allocation process. This project is related to previous ACCJC review, which has driven a number of iterations to the assessment reporting process. Given changes made to reporting mechanisms, the College recognizes more time is needed to achieve 100 percent assessment completion, and to finalize the program review inventory tool. This action plan corresponds with many points raised in the analysis and evaluation sections in II.A and other parts of the report.

**Conclusion**

The College does not meet Standard II.A.

Standard II.A.2 requires that systematic review of all programs regardless of modality. Standard II.A.16 requires that the institution evaluate and improve all instructional programs, regardless of delivery mode or location. The ACCJC Policy on Distance Education and Correspondence Education requires that all learning experiences, regardless of delivery mode, be equivalent. The College does not have a mechanism in place to evaluate the quality of online courses, nor is there a process for assuring regular and substantive faculty initiated student contact.

Standard II.A.3 requires that all courses and programs offered through the College have student outcomes and that the outcomes are assessed per established processes. While the College has made progress in the assessment of student outcomes, there are no student learning outcomes for Community Services courses.

**Commendation**

The team commends the Merced College faculty and Student Services on the application of multiple measures and the development of an accelerated pathway to college level English that will serve students in reaching their educational goals in a timely manner.

**Recommendations**

In order to meet the standard, the team recommends that the College assess all courses, including community service courses, program, and institutional level outcomes and use the results to improve student learning.  (II.A.3)

In order to meet the standards, the team recommends that the College engage in processes that ensure the quality, integrity and effectiveness of its distance education program, including:

a. A framework that identifies the rationale for which courses are delivered in the DE format (I.A.1)
b. Mechanisms for determining selection of faculty for teaching in distance education and the training of those faculty (II.A.16)
c. The development and evaluation of DE courses to ensure faculty initiated regular and substantive contact. (Commission Policy on DE)
d. The disaggregation and review of data SLO data by mode of delivery and an evaluation of the implications for the DE program (II.A.3)
e. The development of equitable and accessible student support services and processes for evaluating for quality, demand and sufficiency.(II.C.1)

## Standard II.B Library and Learning Support Services

### General Observations

Merced College has a broad range of appropriate library and learning resources to support student learning and faculty needs regardless of location or delivery modalities. Both campuses have modern Library and Learning Resource facilities that are open and spacious for both individual and group services.

### Findings and Evidence

The Merced main campus library is located in a two-story modernized building with open space and provides comprehensive services to support instructional programs. The Library has over 1,100 print selections, 22,000 e-books and access to 55 databases amongst the two-floors. In addition there are a total of 78 computers for student use, 11 study rooms for students and two large classrooms for instructional services sessions. The Audio-visual Department is housed on the first floor and provides technology support to 143 classrooms on the main campus, 22 classrooms at Los Banos Campus and the off-site Business Resource Center located downtown where the College offers its not-for credit and contract education programs. The AV staff also provides faculty training and support on technology related issues.

The library periodical processing unit is located on the first floor, which is where library materials are processed, cataloged, and tagged for distribution. Security of materials is maintained through a turnstile monitoring system.

The main campus library staffing include three full-time librarians, classified staff, and student workers for a total of 38 employees. Hours of operation are 8:00 am to 8:30 pm, Monday-Thursday and 8:00 am to 2:00 pm on Fridays. In addition, events such as "Cram Night" the Thursday evening prior to finals week, where hours are extended until 11:00 pm.

The College provides a comprehensive array of learning support services to ensure student learning and educational achievement. In addition to the library services, the College

provides tutorial, supplemental instruction, computer lab, distance education and a program recognized in 2014 by the Chancellor's Office, known as Study Central, an academic student success program.

Study Central is located in the main campus Student Union building and provides drop-in services tailored to student needs. It is equipped with computers for student-use, peer mentors to provide 1:1 or group tutoring in English and Math, as well as faculty tutoring on a variety of disciplines. The environment is non-structured, student friendly with accessibility based on student need.

The Distance Education (DE) program consists of approximately ten percent of the College's credit offerings. DE and off-site students, regardless of location and mode of delivery, have 24-hour access via the college portal to the College's library digital database, reference materials, and librarians. Online tutorial services are available through the College's Learning Management System(LMS) Blackboard via the *SmartThinking* tutorial services.

The Supplemental Instruction (SI) Program offers twelve SI courses in Math, English and Science per semester. The courses with high grades of D, F, and W were identified based on data obtained from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. SI leaders (students) are referred by discipline faculty, trained and offer three scheduled sessions per week. Data analysis showed that 70 percent of students receiving SI had a higher median grade than those who did not receive SI.

The Los Banos Campus (LBC) provides a full breadth of general education and transfer programs comprised of 12 degree or certificate programs for students to complete. The LBC moved to its current location in 2007. It has 22 classrooms, a student center, and serves approximately 2,000 students. The library and learning services are housed within the Student Center along with 14 Student Services Programs. The building is well kept, modern and provides a supportive learning environment.

The scope of library and learning services at the LBC consists of: a comprehensive library with print periodicals, digital resources; a research laboratory with 16 computers; a group study room with seating for eight; and provide face-to-face tutorial services as well as online (*SmartThinking*).

The support staff consists of one full-time librarian and in October 2016, the College increased the media technician position from a part-time 19 hour per week position to a full-time 40 hour per week position.  In addition, the library hours were expanded to provide services from 7:45 am to 8:00 pm, Monday through Thursday and 7:45 am to 3:00 pm on Fridays in response to student survey results.

The library and learning support staff, at the main campus as well as at LBC work collaboratively to ensure that student academic learning support needs are achieved regardless of location or means of delivery. (II.B.1), (*ER17*)

Library faculty work in collaboration with instructional faculty to ensure selection of appropriate instructional resources for instructional programs. Faculty Librarians are assigned as liaisons to support specific areas of instruction. Librarians are also very active in shared governance committees and serve on the curriculum committee to review and ensure adequate resources and materials to support new course development.

Also, library and discipline faculty collaborate in the development of the LibGuides. LibGuides are customized web-based guides embedded within course Blackboard shells in 14 subject-matters to provide assistance to students, and collaboratively provide library orientation to the learning resource services and instructional service sessions. (II.B.2)

The institution has in place a Student Success Program, a comprehensive program review process to evaluate the effectiveness of its learning support resources and services. The program has several processes to evaluate services, including faculty and student evaluations, student surveys, and statistical analysis of student success and retention rates. Data are collected on an annual basis and consists of two-parts: an assessment at the beginning of the annual year to set benchmarks and an evaluation at the end of the academic year to discuss survey findings, benchmark achievement, and identify a a plan of action for any necessary improvements. The data are shared with constituent groups and used to provide recommendations for continuous program improvement.

Examples of data-driven decision-making process include:

a. Student surveys revealed the need for more space, hours, staffing of the library services. The library expanded its hours to 9 pm during peak periods on selective Wednesdays. In October 2016 the staff at LBC expanded to include full-time staff support to mirror the services at the main campus. And effective spring 2017 faculty was added to oversee tutors in the LRC.  (II.B.3).
b. Course evaluation results on Study Central conducted December 2016, with 280 responses (II.B.3)

Other than expected contract for databases and serials management, the College does not have third party contracts for library services (II.B.4)

**Conclusion**

The College meets the Standard

**Recommendations**

None.

**Standard II C. Student Support Services**

**General Observations**

Although, the self-evaluation document and associated evidence was incomplete and did not substantiate many of the assertions made relative to this Standard, the team visit and associated interviews provided a clearer picture of the work taking place at Merced College. While some of the concerns noted in the initial review of the Self-Evaluation Report were substantiated during the visit, additional evidence gathered while at the college and interviews conducted provided opportunities for positive observations about the services and programs the College offers that support student success.

The Merced campuses are attractive and well-maintained. Student services at both campuses are allocated in sufficient and attractive spaces for serving students. At the Merced campus, Student Services is largely located in a one stop center in the middle of campus, providing easy, efficient access for students. The Los Banos campus also provides a large one stop environment for services as well. Technology is available in key areas to provide students access to online processes within an assisted environment. Student services faculty and staff clearly reflect a sense of pride and enthusiasm for their work.

In the course of interviews conducted by the visiting team, the staff, faculty and administration were found to be positive and professional. Interviews with students supported a positive and engaged campus climate. Students communicated a clear sense of enthusiasm for and pride in Merced College at both the Merced and Los Banos locations. Though having experienced significant changes in College leadership, based on interviews, a mutual respect and collegiality was apparent between staff, faculty and administration and the perception of a "team" environment within student services at the College was communicated in numerous meetings.

Student Services at the College includes a variety of programs. Oversight is provided by the Vice President of Student Services and a Dean of Student Services and a Dean of Student Success and Equity and various levels of directors and coordinators. Student services programs include: Admissions and Records, Assessment Center, Associated Students, Athletics, CalWorks, Career Center, Counseling and Guidance, DSPS, EOPS/CARE, Financial Aid, International Students, Puente, Relations with Schools, Student Health Services, Transfer Center, and Veterans resources. A Student Services Manager provides coordination and oversight of student support services at the Los Banos campus.

Student service programs are evaluated through an annual program review, as well as reports submitted to fulfill state and federal mandates. Program review is the primary link between student services and College planning and funding. The program reviews include a section for review and reporting on student learning, service area outcomes, and continuous quality improvement. The College is committed to providing services to address student needs.

Students are invited to take advantage of a comprehensive range of student support services, some in multiple modes of delivery.

**Findings and Evidence**

The two largest ethnic populations at Merced College are Hispanic (fifty-one percent) and White, Non-Hispanic (twenty-eight percent). The student population at Merced College is predominantly younger with approximately sixty-eight percent of students in the 19-24 age range and only four percent over the age of 35. Student support service at Merced College demonstrates a commitment to meeting the mission and support needs of its students.

Student support services begin with outreach activities to area high schools and local communities and is followed up with "in-reach" supportive services to the Colleges' students and departments. Student Services employs an array of internal and external strategies to connect students to the College. The strategies include outreach to service area high schools via the Office of Relations with Schools. Some technology solutions, such as WebAdvisor and Zoom have been implemented and continue to be explored to expand services. Coordination of the College's student support services and student success efforts take place through several planning and oversight committees including the Student Services Executive Committee and Student Services Advisory Meeting. As described above, the College offers a full complement of support services and programs consistent with the College population. (II.C.1)

The College offers comprehensive and appropriate student support services on campus. There has been recent and obvious progress in the development of equitable services at the Los Banos campus where most student services are effectively provided, that includes Student Health Services and a small food pantry. The team recognizes the challenges of providing this level of support at a center and applauds the College's progress in meeting the student support needs of this site.

The College has worked to address student needs by making additional services available online and by employing technology to increase efficiency and access, e.g. CCCApply, WebAdvisor, and online orientation. The College provides access to information on all support services and some forms online. Student services has made efforts to offer multiple modes of delivery and to employ technology to improve student access at a distance.

However, there are core services not offered to distance education students and identification, availability, and communication to online students of these services is somewhat haphazard, relying primarily on student initiation and persistence. There is little to no evaluation in place for most of the services offered at a distance and there is not an opportunity for students to provide input on sufficiency of and demand for services at a distance. The overall plan for distance education at the College is unclear. (II.C.1, II.C.2, II.C.3, ER 15)

The College as a whole and Student Services units conduct program review on an annual cycle. The program reviews include outcomes assessments, in the form of Service Area Outcomes or Student Learning Outcomes. The program review includes usage data, appropriate to the unit under review, and some disaggregation of this data leading to an area of gap analysis for equity. This has been an obvious focus for student services that has led to dialog and program improvements. The process includes a Student Services Program Review/SLO Coordinator, who is also the Dean of Student Success and Equity. This position serves as the liaison for the student services units in the broader institutional planning and evaluation cycles. Program Reviews are reviewed, feedback provided, and approved by the Student Services Program Review Oversight Committee. Student services units actively participate in the program review process, though units are at varying levels with the use of data, SLO and SAO development and assessment, and the quality of analysis. Elements of assessment and evaluation leading to program improvement are present in these processes.

Since the last self-evaluation, all student service units have participated in the comprehensive and annual program review process through several cycles. Student service's programs are employing a variety of strategies for assessment and evaluation. Some of the units are reviewing student achievement data relative to the program, such as DSPS and EOPS. At the institution level, the College has administered the CCSSE, though evidence was not provided of how the results are integrated into program evaluation. Program Reviews drive planning and includes resource requests reviewed, coordinated, and approved through the Student Services Master Planning Committee. (II.C, II.C.1, II.C.2, II.C.3)

The College provides co-curricular and athletic programs to help support its mission by introducing students to the experience of higher education through their direct interests and talents. In the area of athletics, the College operates men's programs in football, basketball, baseball, swimming and diving, track and field, and water polo. Women's competitive sports include basketball, softball, track and field, swimming and diving, volleyball, and water polo. The College complies with the Commission on Athletics (COA) policies and procedures. The program focuses on the full matriculation, proactive intervention and intrusive learning supports for student athletes to contribute to student achievement and transfer. Fundraising efforts to support athletics complies with the College's accounting procedures and College policies. Student conduct policies and other associated Board Policies are well coordinated with athletics and contribute to the integrity and accountability of the program. The College adheres to Title IX standards for these programs. (II.C.4)

The Associated Students of Merced College (ASMC) is active and effective. Students have opportunities to participate in leadership roles and to engage and affect the work of the institution. The College supports an active and diverse number of clubs ranging from M.E.Ch.A., on both the Merced and Los Banos campuses, and the CEO club. Between the

two campuses, the College has over 40 active clubs.  Through the ASMC, Student Equity, athletics and active clubs, the College hosts a range of co-curricular activities that contribute to the mission of the institution. (II.C.4)

At both campuses, counseling is available by appointment and via drop-in.  Evening hours are provided on Wednesdays via peak periods.  Counseling online is now available via Zoom Meeting on an appointment basis for use with a webcam and high speed internet connection. Usage data is included in the program review for counseling ranging from education planning to probation/dismissal counseling, though this data is presented in numbers, not percentages so sufficiency and degree of usage for the student population is difficult to evaluate.  The department has focused on educational planning, both the AEP (Abbreviated Education Plan) and the Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP).  The CEP has been a focused initiative and the counseling program review provides evident of significant progress in this effort.  Education planning is provided within counseling, through education planning workshops and through Web Advisor, both a student and counselor tool.  Students have ongoing access to semester by semester plans that map out completion of their identified educational goal, along with registration for appropriate classes.

The counseling program review provides limited focus, primarily through usage data, on the Los Banos campus and online services. Counseling participates in bi-monthly meetings and trainings, as well as 24 hours of pre-approved staff development per year to maintain currency and accuracy.  There is a high degree of collaboration and dialog between counseling and related units.  (II.C, II.C.2, II.C.5, II.C.6, ER 16)

The College uses Accuplacer as the approved instrument for assessment testing.  The College last conducted disproportionate impact studies and consequential validity studies for math in 2014 and in English in 2011 and has consistently applied multiple measures to inform adjustments to course placement using the professional judgement of counselors.  Data has supported that placements adjusted via this process are more accurate than those by Accuplacer placement alone.  The College has recently adopted additional multiple measures for English based on the recent state and national recommendations for improving placement effectiveness. Through collaboration with the English department, counseling and assessment have developed a process for self-reported measures, such as high school GPA, to be applied via algorithm within Accuplacer to affect placement levels.  The Office of Student Success and Equity is currently tracking data on each process for placement to assess the effectiveness. New math multiple measures is expected to be implemented soon. (II.C.7)

The College provides FERPA training to its faculty and student services staff.  Each student services office responsible for student records has clear, documented processes for security, confidentiality, and back-up that complies with FERPA standards.  Where appropriate, records are scanned into a password protected database and backed up nightly to a district server.   The College retains electronic images of all paper documents and stores them in on imaging database.  After imaging, records are stored securely until they are destroyed in

compliance with Title 5 and Board Policy.  The College publishes its policy for Privacy of Records and standards for release of directory information in the College catalog.  (II.C.8)

**Conclusion**

The College does not meet Standard II.C,

The team recognizes the efforts of student services at assessment and evaluation, however evidence did not support that these efforts are regular, systematic and sufficient for evaluation and improvement of all student services programs and services.  While all student services units have developed Student Learning or Service Area Outcomes and there are varying levels of evaluation taking place, evidence did not show these efforts of evaluation alone to be sufficiently systematic, comprehensive and regular for evaluating the quality of student support services and demonstrating support for student learning.  As with the College's overall approach to Distance Education, student services needs to develop equitable and accessible student support services and processes for evaluating for quality, demand and sufficiency.

**Recommendation**

In order to meet the standard, the team recommends that the College develop processes for the systematic, regular and comprehensive evaluation of student support services that are sufficient to evaluate the quality and, regardless of location or means of delivery, that those services support learning and enhance accomplishment of the mission of the institution. (II.C.1)

# Standard III: Resources

**Standard III A. Human Resources**

**General Observations**

The College has established board policies, administrative procedures, and collective bargaining agreements which ensure that it employs qualified personnel regardless of their job responsibilities or classification to support student learning programs and services.  These policies, procedures, and agreements have been developed through participatory governance processes.  The College employs sufficient numbers of administrators, faculty, and staff to support the mission and effective educational, technological, physical, and administrative operations of the institution.  All personnel are scheduled for evaluation and most are evaluated in a timely manner.  The College offers opportunities for professional growth and development consistent with the College's mission and in response to the identified needs of its employees. The College makes provision for the security and confidentiality of personnel records.  Each employee has access to his or her personnel records in accordance with law. All Human Resource functions are compliant with regards to distance education (DE).

The team reviewed all documents provided in the evidence portion for Standard III.A and requested additional documents upon arrival at the College. Additionally, the team conducted interviews with faculty, administration, and staff.

**Findings and Evidence**

The team noted that the College has established Board policies that outline hiring processes which ensure that all personnel hired are qualified by appropriate education, training, and experience to provide and support effective programs and services.  More specifically, Board Policy and Administrative Procedure 7120 (Recruitment and Selection) detail the processes used to create job announcements, facilitate the recruitment process, and develop hiring committees.  Additionally, staff from Human Resources provide training to hiring committees to clarify the selection process and review applicable laws and requirements, and those materials were reviewed by the team (III.A.1).

Applicants for faculty positions are required to conform to the minimum qualifications established through the California statewide Academic Senate and the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office.  Student learning outcomes, curriculum development, and college-level committee requirements are included in the responsibility expectations on full-time job announcements.  The College's Human Resources Department verifies that all candidates meet the established minimum qualifications.  The involvement of faculty on hiring committees ensures that candidates demonstrate expertise in their discipline and excellent teaching skills.  The College has an established process for determining equivalencies for faculty applicants who may not possess the established minimum

requirements, and this process includes the involvement of faculty members approved by the Merced Academic Senate and the area dean (III.A.2, ER 14).

Administrative and classified candidates must also meet specific minimum qualifications which are communicated through detailed job announcements. Hiring Committees develop appropriate questions and conduct interviews for staff and administrators. Activities in the interview include demonstration, skill, or other simulated job duties relevant to the position to assess the applicant's qualifications and academic quality. Through the hiring process, copies of official transcripts are submitted and reviewed to ensure they are from accredited institutions (III.A.3, III.A.4).

The College has established a system of performance evaluation for faculty, staff, and administrative personnel. The evaluation processes are dictated by individual collective bargaining agreements. Employee groups are evaluated at the following intervals:

- Regular faculty (every three years)
- Contract and temporary faculty (first year of employment and once a year for four years)
- Adjunct faculty (first year of employment, once every six semesters thereafter)
- Classified employees (second and fifth months of first year, once a year for the first four years, then once every two years thereafter).
- Administrators (once a year during probation, once every two years thereafter).

In the self-evaluation, the College reported that 98 percent of faculty evaluations, 79 percent of classified evaluations, and 78 percent of administrator evaluations were current. In order to verify this, the team requested reports by employee group/area. The team confirmed that evaluations for managers, faculty, and classified staff were completed on time. With respect to part-time faculty members the reports showed that many part-time faculty evaluations were outdated, some as far back as 2008-2009.

The team learned that the additional reports provided included a number of part-time faculty who were no longer employed by the College. Those interviewed explained that the personnel in the Office of the Vice President of Instruction regularly tracked the evaluation due dates for part-time faculty and kept the appropriate managers apprised of those due dates. The team confirmed that the College was following its evaluation cycle with respect to part-time faculty members (III.A.5).

While the College has established evaluation processes for all groups, the consideration of how employees use the results of the assessment of learning outcomes to improve teaching and learning is not currently a required component of the evaluation process for any employee group. The self-evaluation states that, for faculty, this activity occurs as part of the assessment processes for departments' student learning outcomes (SLOs) and service area outcomes (SAOs), noting that the SLOs for each course are evaluated twice in five years. The self-evaluation also asserts that the "fulfillment of professional responsibilities"

component of the faculty evaluation includes participation in SLO assessment and program review.  The self-evaluation also acknowledges that faculty and College negotiators are working on this issue.

Through a review of evidence and interviews with multiple individuals, the team was not able to confirm that the College meets this standard.  The faculty evaluation forms do not contain any questions pertaining to SLOs, and the only mention of SLOs in the faculty contract is a statement in Article X (workload) which states "Full-time faculty are required to develop and assess learning outcomes and contribute to program review."  Those interviewed agreed that faculty evaluations do not include discussions of SLOs as part of the process. As noted earlier, the College is in negotiations, and this issue is part of those discussions.  A subcommittee of the negotiating teams had met to review the faculty evaluation forms and make recommendations to both teams.  Additionally, neither managers nor classified staff evaluations had any evaluation connected to SLOs (III.A.6).

The College maintains sufficient numbers of qualified full- and part-time faculty. The need for additional faculty is documented in the program review and prioritized by a robust hiring prioritization process under the purview of the Academic Senate. The prioritization process involves the analysis and review of data, and departments are required to make presentations to articulate the need for faculty positions.  The results are advanced through shared governance groups to the Superintendent/President. The College is also compliant with the Full-Time Faculty Obligation Number (FON) established by the Chancellor's Office.

With respect to part-time faculty, the team found that the College did have sufficient numbers to provide quality education for students. However, those interviewed noted that it was difficult to recruit faculty in both high demand (e.g., math) and CTE areas due to location and competition with UC Merced.  The availability of part-time faculty sometimes affects when classes are scheduled (III.A.7, ER 14).

Every semester, part-time faculty are invited to attend an orientation.  Topics for these sessions vary but have recently included classroom discipline, SLO assessments, student success, and counseling and student support.  Part-time faculty with current teaching assignments are compensated to participate in FLEX activities each semester and receive additional training by cohort leads and discipline faculty.  Part-time faculty also have voting members on the Academic Senate and the faculty association (III.A.8).

The College employs a sufficient number of classified employees and part-time or temporary workers.  The team found that the College ensures that staff who are hired possess the necessary qualifications to perform their duties.  The College uses program review information to evaluate the need for classified employees and has used outside consultants to evaluate the efficacy of some departments (e.g. Technology Services Department). However, those interviewed noted that there is not a prioritization process for classified positions as there is with faculty positions. The College is also in the midst of a benchmarking and classification study for classified and manager positions. At the time of the visit, this study had not been completed. The College employs a sufficient number of

administrators who meet the minimum qualifications established by the Chancellor's Office. (III.A.9, III.A.10, ER 8).

Written personnel policies and procedures are available online for information and review. Established processes ensure that constituent groups participate in this review. The Human Resources staff also provides training to employees on core policies and maintains records of each employee's training history.  The team found that there is not a regular, systemic cycle of evaluation for board policies and administrative procedures, and those documents are reviewed on an as needed basis (III.A.11).

The College follows Equal Employment Opportunity practices in its hiring procedures, including a commitment that successful candidates demonstrate sensitivity to and ability to work with diverse colleagues and students.  The self-evaluation states that according to the Chancellor's Office, 26 percent of educational administrators, 40 percent of classified administrators, 29 percent of tenured/tenure track faculty, and 57 percent of classified employees derive from racial/ethnic groups.

The team found that although data was collected as to the diversity of the College's hiring processes, the data was not consistent nor trusted for accuracy because of manual processing. At the time of the visit, the College had acquired the Neo Gov system which provides the ability to track applicants during the recruitment and hiring processes and gives the College the ability to run analytical reports that can be the basis for the evaluation of diversity in the hiring processes (III.A.12).

Board Policy and Administrative Procedure 3050 documents that the College has an institutional code of ethics.  Additionally, the Academic Senate passed an ethics statement in 2009.  Neither of those documents articulates the consequences for violating either the board policy or the administrative procedure.  The exception is Board Policy 2715 (Code of Ethics/Standards of Practice) for the Governing Board which includes the option for censure. During interviews, the team learned that although not listed in the policy or procedure, the College did address violations of the ethics code by following processes documented in the collective bargaining agreements (III.A.13).

Faculty and staff participate in professional development programs to enhance teaching strategies, technology, and the needs of students.  Professional development also focuses on training to improve institutional effectiveness by providing training on administrative procedures, personal development, and workplace issues.  Three groups which provide the main oversight of these activities include the Staff Development Committee, the Flex Committee, and the Classified Staff Development Committee who work to ensure that professional development opportunities are appropriate and consistent with the College mission.

The College provides a volunteer Teaching and Learning Academy for new tenure-track faculty members during the first fall semester of their employment.  Additionally, all new employees participate in Merced College Traditions, an onboarding program developed locally. The College also runs a Business Resource Center that serves the local community and the College's employees by providing instruction in an Emerging Leaders Program and a

Customer Service Academy. Participants can earn College credit by completing either of these programs.

The College also sends members of all employee groups to conferences and training which are at the forefront of student success, such as the acceleration of basic skills courses, the reading apprenticeship conferences, and the Center for Organizational Responsibility and Advancement (CORA) online course, and the Habits of Mind Community of Practice. Classified staff receive one day's credit during spring break when they participate in planned professional development activities, and they are invited to attend FLEX activities. Managers attend professionally relevant conferences and have access to an online library for required training and professional development (III.A.14).

The team found that opportunities for professional development exist and address the needs of staff, faculty, and managers. The College has gone to great lengths to ensure that these opportunities meet the needs of both its employees as well as the local business community. For example, the team learned that the College is in the process of having all managers attend the Emerging Leaders Institute. The College provided examples of improvements to professional development made as a result of evaluation. One example was the Classified Professionals Day; rather than focusing on personal improvement and games, the programming was changed to emphasize leadership development and diversity training. Additionally, this event is now held off campus so classified professionals have the opportunity to focus on the training exclusively.

Some individuals interviewed believed that these services (e.g., Customer Service Academy) could be publicized more to employees. Of particular note, through a basic skills grant, the College is supporting innovative and forward thinking practices such as participation in efforts such as CORA, the Habits of Mind training, and exploration with acceleration in math (III.A.14).

The College provides security and access safeguards in the confidentiality of personnel and employment records. Access to confidential electronic personnel data is monitored and limited to authorized employees. Collective bargaining agreement language is in place to provide an employee access to his or her personnel records. The team noted that the Human Resources area is secured by a keypad system. While open during regular business hours, this system allows Human Resources Staff to secure the area while they are away. The system automatically secures the area at the end of the business day (III.A.15).


**Conclusion:**

The College does not meet Standard.

The College has robust hiring practices in place and follows consistent processes with respect to the recruitment, selection, and hiring of all employee groups, and the College has sufficient numbers of faculty, staff, and administrators to assure quality teaching and

learning.  Part-time faculty are an integral part of the College.  The College has a code of ethics policy, and violations of that policy are addressed through the appropriate collective bargaining agreements.  The College has several robust avenues of professional development that support the needs of faculty, staff, and managers.

**Commendation:**

The team commends the College for its robust suite of professional development opportunities that support all employee groups and, for faculty in particular, focuses on innovative practices that support the learning needs of diverse students.

**Recommendation:**

In order to meet the standard, the team recommends that the College must ensure the evaluation of faculty, academic administrators, and other personnel directly responsible for student learning includes, as a component of that evaluation, consideration of how these employees use the results of the assessment of learning outcomes to improve teaching and learning.(III.A.6)

**Standard III.B. Physical Resources**

**General Observation**

Merced College has a main campus, an established Center in Los Banos, and offers classes at other locations. The College owns a building in downtown Merced where it offers non-credit programs and training for industry. The College has a Facilities Master Plan, a Five-Year Construction Plan, Injury and Illness Prevention Plan and an ADA Transition Plan coordinated with appropriate areas of the Educational Master Plan.  The College also uses the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office Assessment and the Space Inventory Report. The College created a Facilities Master Plan in 1995. It employed a consultant to produce a Campus Master Plan in 2001 showing a buildout of the main campus to 2040.  The College also has a facilities master plan for the Los Banos campus

The College has an active Facilities Master Plan Committee (FMPC) that is part of the governance structure.  The FMPC meets monthly during the academic year and discusses, reviews and receives updates on such items as Educational Master Plan/Facilities Master Plan, Water Conservation Plan, Proposition 39 Clean Energy Projects, Wayfinding Project and landscaping plan.  It also approves the priorities for the Five-Year Construction Plan submitted to the State.  The FMPC also coordinates the program review requests for facilities and equipment needs which are then incorporated into the college-wide planning and resource request process.

The College established a new position, Director of Risk Management, Environmental Health & Safety (DRMEHS) who oversees the Risk Management Office. The College also upgraded a position, Capital Planning and Events Manager, to bring management level supervision and authority to the Capital Planning and Development Office who reports to the Director of Facilities. There is also a Maintenance and Construction Planning Coordinating Team.

**Findings and Evidence**

The College's plans, processes, reports, and policies support the standard. The College has established participatory plans, processes, reports and Board policies to assure safe and sufficient physical resources. The College maintains and updates its physical resources to effectively deliver services to its community.

The self-evaluation for this standard does not discuss the decision-making process to determine the facilities needs and resource allocation between the main campus, and the Los Banos Campus. The site visit interviews and discussions indicate a planning process that is evolving to account for both locations' integration into a District Facilities Master Plan. Currently, the College is guided by cap load formulas, enrollment data and projections and the age of existing facilities as would likely be used in an updated FMP. In addition, the College construction plans require approval from the FMPC.

The Annual Program Review for Administrative Services Capital Planning and Development Department is comprehensive and thorough. The process and documentation for ongoing maintenance of facilities is comprehensive as well. The Facilities Master Plan for the main campus was created in 2001. The Education Code of California requires a plan to be no more than ten years old. Although the standards of the Commission are independent of state law, the College is required to comply with the law. The current FMP extends to the year 2040, and Administrative Services program review indicates that a taskforce has been formed with follow-up date of August 2015 to review and update the FMP. Other documents such as the Citizens Oversight Committee 2014-2015 Annual Report showing the use of local bond funds for facilities, Capital Outlay Budget Proposal 2014-2015, and 2015 Space Inventory report submitted to the State also indicated the FMP was to be updated in 2015.

The transition from CEO to interim CEO to new CEO and other management positions has likely delayed the update. The College plans to reflect the total cost of ownership as submitted to the State in the Capital Outlay Budget Change Proposal (COBCP). The creation of the Director of Risk Management, Environmental Health & Safety (DRMEHS) and Capital Planning and Events Manager provides a high level of institutional focus on those specific areas and indicates the College provides strong support to these areas.

**Conclusion**
The College does not meet the standard.

**Recommendation**

In order to meet the Standard, the team recommends the College update/revise the Facilities Master Plan for the District to assure the feasibility and effectiveness of its physical resources in supporting institutional programs and services. (III.B.3)

**Standard III.C. Technology Resources**

**General Observation**

Merced College provides hardware, software and technical services to support the functions of the College. The College has an Information Technology Services (ITS) department lead by the newly created (June 2016) position of Chief Technology Officer who reports directly to the Superintendent/President.

The College uses contractors to supports some of its technology functions on a one time only or short term basis such as Strata Information Group, Brannen Consulting, Innovative Solutions Tech Training and Consulting. The College currently uses Blackboard as its Learning Management System (LMS). The College created a taskforce of faculty, staff and administrators to evaluate the LMS system. As a result the College will be migrating to Canvas over the next two years.

The Ellucian Maintenance Advantage Program is the Enterprise Resource Planning and Student Information System. The College re-established its Technology Committee in 2016 and it is currently meeting on a regular basis. This committee is charged with creating the Technology Master Plan. The last plan covered the 2013-2015 period.

The College is building a business analytics system for data to integrate with the existing system. The Distance Education (DE) Committee is a subcommittee of the Curriculum Committee which is a subcommittee of the Academic Senate. The DE Committee advises the Curriculum Committee on appropriate pedagogy for the Course Outline of Record for approval in DE mode. Faculty can opt for @one training paid for by the College to teach in a DE mode. The DE faculty Coordinator had 60 percent reassign-time from the College. That position is currently vacant. The College has yet to determine if and when the position is to be filled.

**Findings and Evidence**

The College provides appropriate professional support, facilities, hardware and software to support its mission at all locations to assure reliable access, safety and security (III.C.1 and 3) However there is a stated lack of uniformity for evaluating the effectiveness of technology services. Overall the College's plans for updating and replacing technology are adequate to support the College functions. It should be noted that the current allocation of life-cycle

funding is insufficient to permit replacement of computer technology in all areas. (III.C.2) The needs have been met by employing other funds including one-time-only funds. The College is about to enter into discussions to provide supplemental funding through its budget process.

The College provides a variety of training opportunities for different technology functions, including training for the new phone system, use of Blackboard, and content management system (CMS) for its webpages. However there is no orientation guide for new employees that could provide technology self-help resources. (III.C.4)

The College has policies and procedures for the use of technology. The College is currently in the process of updating Board Policies and Administrative Procedures with regard to technology. (III.C.5) The College has an Administrative Procedure 4105 that states all faculty teaching in DE mode state one or more of eight methods delineated in the procedure or other methods of interaction with students on their course syllabi to establish regular and substantive contact with students.  However in the self-evaluation, and in meetings and interviews it was clear there are no mechanisms to verify that regular and substantive or effective contact occurs in DE courses.  Of the three faculty teaching on-line interviewed, some teaching in DE mode for over seven years, none had ever had any on-line classes evaluated by their peers.

## Conclusion

The College meets the Standard.

The College provides support, facilities, hardware, and software are appropriate and adequate for the functions of the College.  It plans, updates, and replaces technology as needed.  It provides appropriate technology resources at its locations and for its programs and services.  It provides training and support for employees and has policies and procedure for the appropriate use of technology.

## Standard III.D. Financial Resources

## General Observations

General observations were identified relative to the financial resources of the College: the sustainability of financial stability is questionable, internal controls are in place, fiscal affairs are managed with integrity, processes related to resource allocation are clear and followed, and an irrevocable trust has been established for Other Post-Employment Benefits.

The sustainability of the College's financial stability is questionable. It was noted that while the College uses financial resources to support student learning programs and services and to improve institutional effectiveness, the sufficiency of on-going financial resources to sustain these programs and services is questionable. This observation is grounded on the College's reliance on reserves and one-time funding sources coupled with its failure to institute material on-going cost reductions and potential funding reductions if the College is unable to meet its base FTES. Based on evidence described in the Findings and Evidence section, planning and oversite of financial affairs that ensures long-term financial stability is lacking

Internal controls are in place and fiscal affairs are managed with integrity. The College employs a Budget Development Calendar that outlines stages of the budgeting cycle. The calendar and budget information is communicated throughout the College. Processes related to resource allocation are clear and followed. The College provides effective management over financial aid, grants, and externally funded programs. The College plans for liabilities and has established an irrevocable trust for its liability related to Other Post-Employment Benefits.

**Findings and Evidence**

The sustainability of financial stability is questionable. Since fiscal year 2011-12, the College has relied heavily on reserves and one-time funding sources and has been unable to institute material on-going cost reductions. (III.D.1)  In addition, the College is faced with potential on-going revenue reductions if unable to generate its base FTES. Specifically, the College engaged in deficit spending from 2011-12 through 2014-15 and although fiscal year 2015-16 resulted in a surplus, the surplus was primarily the result of one-time funding rather than a focus on increased efficiencies and cost containment.

As reported by the College to the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, deficit spending has resulted in the College's general fund reserve declining from 20.6% in fiscal year 2010-11 to 8.1% at the end of fiscal year 2014-15. Although the reserve increased to 17.5% in fiscal year 2015-16, the increase was primarily the result of one-time funding. The College is projecting a $2.2 million deficit for fiscal year 2016-17 with a reduction in the reserve to 13.1%. (III.D.1, 9, 11)

Furthermore, the College has been unable to meet its base FTES, adding to its financial instability. While efforts are underway to increase FTES, the College will be faced with a permanent reduction in base FTES and corresponding funding if unable to restore its base FTES by FY 2018-19. When asked if the College had a contingency plan if funding is reduced, the Vice President of Administrative Services (VPAS) and members of the Educational Master Planning Committee (EMPC) stated that the College was hopeful that it

would meet its base FTES and had not had conversations about a contingency plan in the event of a revenue reduction for failing to meet the base FTES. (III.D.2)

While the College is hopeful it will meet its base FTES, the most recent FTES projection submitted by the College to the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office indicated the College will not meet its base FTES. Given the amount of deficit spending over recent years and the potential reduction in funding if FTES are not increased at a sufficient level to restore its base FTES, financial planning, including the development of contingency plans, is needed to inform decisions related to ensuring financial stability. (III.D.2) Evidence obtained from interviews with the President, VPAS, Director of Business and Fiscal Services, members of the Budget Committee, and members of the EMPC revealed the College has not developed contingency plans nor had conversations on actions needed to address potential funding reductions as of the time of the visit. (III.D.4)

A review of recent external audit reports demonstrates that the College's fiscal affairs are managed with integrity and sound internal controls. For each of the past ten fiscal years, the College received an unqualified opinion from external auditors. (III.D.7) In addition, recent audits revealed either no findings or, if findings were noted, they were corrected in a timely manner. The most recent external audit report for fiscal year 2015-16 revealed no financial statement, federal compliance, or state compliance audit findings. While the external audit report for fiscal year 2014-15 identified internal control weakness, the weaknesses were corrected in a timely manner.

The College's planning and budgeting processes are clearly defined and consistent with established Board Policies over budget preparation, budget management, and internal controls. (III.D.3, 10) The College considers liabilities and obligations, including its OPEB liability, when making resource allocations. An irrevocable trust has been established for the College's Other Post-Employment Benefits. (III.D.12)

**Conclusion**

The College does not meet the Standard.

During recent years, the College has relied heavily on deficit spending, reserves, and one-time funding rather than institute material improvements in efficiencies and cost containment. In addition, the College has been unable to meet its base FTES resulting in potential ongoing funding reductions, further impacting the College's financial position and ability to sustain its programs and services. The trend is threatening the sustainability of the College's programs and services and financial stability.  Financial planning and management to ensure financial stability and the sustainability of programs and services is needed to ensure fiscal sustainability

**Recommendations**

In order to meet the Standard, the team recommends that the College plan and manage its financial resources in a manner that ensures sustainable financial stability. (III.D.1, 9, 11).

# Standard IV: Leadership and Governance

**Standard IV.A. Decision-Making Roles and Processes**

**General Observations**

The College has a well-developed, interconnecting set of governance committees whose membership and procedures create an environment of participatory governance from all categories of stakeholders, including administrators, faculty, staff and students.  The Strategic Plan and planning guidelines are developed and updated through these governance committees. Systematic participative processes are used to assure planning and implementation through the Shared Governance committee structure and processes.  College council, Chaired by the Superintendent/President, functions as the central shared governance body with representatives from all constituency groups. The College has developed and distributed an Integrated Planning handbook, Program Review Handbook and a Shared Governance Handbook.  Each provides guidance on committee membership, duties and place in the College's governance and decision-making process.

**Findings and Evidence**

In fall 2013, the Superintendent/President charged a task force comprised of administration, staff, faculty, students, managers, and trustees to review and update the 2010-2013 Strategic Plan. The recommendations from this task force where forwarded to the Educational Master Planning Committee. The Board of Trustees reviewed the changes and approved the final Strategic Plan in October 7, 2014.  The Strategic Plan can be viewed on the College website. Various shared governance master planning committees monitor the Strategic Planning Goals of the College.

 The College's analysis and evaluation of the shared governance is reliant on planned updates to the Board Policy 3700. The updated policy, dated May 10, 2016, states that "Procedures will be written by the administration in consultation with all constituencies mentioned above to provide for the implementation of shared governance policy and procedures in the Merced Community College District." This Policy is reflected in the structure of the shared governance committees. (IV.A.1)

The team confirmed through an interview with the Superintendent/President that data generated through the program review process will be used to identify achievement gaps and inform the development of the next Strategic Plan, possibly a 7-year plan, which will utilize

the existing integrated planning structure to engage all constituent groups in the process. (IV.A.1)

The College has developed handbooks (Integrated Planning, Program Review and Shared Governance (all dated Oct., 2016)) to outline the governance process and structure. The Shared Governance Handbook is well written and outlines the philosophy of shared governance as well as the logistical aspects to guide the campus on membership, duties, and interactions between organizations.

Student representatives also serve on all shared-governance committees. All student appointments to College governance bodies are made by the Associated Students of Merced College (ASMC). The student representative on the Curriculum Committee is a non-voting member, but serves as a voting member on all Program Establishment, Discontinuance, and Modification committees. (IV.A.3)

Academic Senate Bylaws establishes policies for representation of cohorts and areas, senators' duties, and procedures for conducting senate business and committee membership and scope. The standing committees include Elections, Curriculum, Student-of-the-Month, Constitution and Bylaws, Student Success, Equivalency, Academic Exception, Flex Peer Review, Distance Education, Instructional Program Review and SLO Assessment. (IV.A.3)

The Budget Committee is a shared governance committee which recommends budget prioritizations to the Vice President for Administrative Service. These prioritizations come to the committee through other planning and departmental committees as a result of program review. This committee includes representatives all of the governance groups including students. (IV.A.3)

The Curriculum Committee is a standing committee of the Academic Senate. This committee is composed of faculty, the Vice President of Instruction, two area Deans, and a student. This committee oversees the development, review, and renewal of all College instruction program and courses. The curriculum process was recently updated to be more streamlined to allow for quicker approvals. (IV.A.4)

The Merced College Associated Student Council is the student voice in shared governance. Students have representation on the Academic Senate, Curriculum, Budget, College Council, as well as other master planning and advisory committees. The team confirmed in interviews with members of the Associated Students council that participation on the governance committees is sincere and that the members often seek the students' specific feedback on issues. (IV.A.2)

The Classified Senate is represented on all master planning committees and participates in program evaluation and resource allocation discussions. The Classified Senate maintains its Merced College (MC) Portal site with up-to-date minutes, which include committee reports from classified employees who attend the various shared governance committees. (IV.A.2)

The MC Portal is the password protected intranet where all campus committees maintain sites for housing agendas, minutes and other documents. Some of these committee sites are incomplete. (IV.A.6.)

The Shared Governance Handbook indicates that each organization will conduct an annual evaluation. This requirement is accomplished with the annual distribution of the Shared Governance Survey at the end of every academic year. Respondents are members that serve on the shared governance committees. While the committees do seem to use the results as a basis of improvement, it's not clear to what extent the results are shared beyond the committees' membership. According to interviews with the Academic Senate, there is a plan to form a taskforce including the representatives from Academic Senate, Classified Senate and Superintendent/President to review the process. (IV.A.7)

### Conclusion

The College meets the standard.

The College demonstrated that it has in place a well-defined, shared governance process that informs campus-wide decision-making. There is a culture of systematic participation in shared governance is pervasive at the College. Additionally, there are systematic and ongoing evaluation of these process that lead to continuous improvement.

### Commendations:

The team commends the College for its Shared Governance Handbook, Integrated Planning Handbook, and Program Review Handbook which are thoughtful and comprehensive guiding documents.

### Standard IV.B. Chief Executive Officer

### General Observations

Merced College has a chief executive officer appointed by the Board of Trustees and holds the necessary authority to administer board policies and administrative procedures. The Superintendent/President chairs the Executive Cabinet and College Council and co-chairs the Educational Master Planning Committee. The Superintendent/President is responsible for providing effective leadership in planning, budgeting, and assessing institutional effectiveness. The new Superintendent/President was confirmed in January 2017.

### Findings and Evidence

The chief executive officer, Superintendent/President, is not a voting member of the Board of Trustees. The team confirmed that the name, address, and educational information about the

chief executive officer can be found in the College catalog, on the College website, and in the schedule of classes. The Superintendent/President's contract with the College provides evidence that it is a full-time position. The current Superintendent/President's background is posted on the Superintendent/President's Profile page of the leadership area of the College website. (ER 4)  The Superintendent/President is currently in discussions with the Board of Trustees to establish agreed upon goals, an evaluation instrument, and a systematic cycle of evaluation.

The Superintendent/President is responsible for providing effective leadership in planning by leading the development of the Strategic Plan, budgeting with guidance from the Vice President of Administrative Services who is in turn advised by the Budget Committee. The Superintendent/President is responsible for the overall process of selecting and developing personnel, and assessing institutional effectiveness.  (IV.B.1)

The Superintendent/President oversees an administrative structure that includes the following who report directly to the President:  Director of Institutional Advancement, Director of Human Resources, Chief Technology Officer, Executive Assistant to President, Vice President of Instruction, Vice President of Administrative Service, and Vice President of Student Services.  (IV.B.2)

The past Superintendent/President established the task force that developed the Integrated Planning Handbook and the Program Review Handbook, and Shared Governance Handbook, all of which underwent revisions in fall 2016.  These handbooks guide the integrated planning process. Interviews with several members of the master planning committees confirmed that the processes laid out in the Handbooks are being followed.  (IV.B.3)

Under the direction of the Superintendent/President, the College is in the process of developing its next strategic plan.  In interviews, the team confirmed that the Superintendent/President intends to develop a process that will include collaboration with all College constituency groups and the Board of Trustees. The process will use the established integrated planning structure which will ask each master planning committee to begin developing two or three major goals which will move through to the Educational Master Planning Committee. The ultimate goal is to engage the campus in the mission statement and use of data to identify achievement gaps that will inform the Strategic Plan.  (IV.B.5)

The current resource allocation process which is described in the Integrated Planning Handbook and Program Review Handbook lays out how resource needs can be identified through assessment data. The use of high-quality robust assessment data to identify gaps in student achievement occurs, but is not widespread, and there is little evidence of assessing the impact of resource allocations on student achievement. (IV.B.3)

In fall 2015, the Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO) under the previous Superintendent/ President, in collaboration with the Merced College Office of Grants and Institutional Research (OGIR), conducted an online survey of all Merced College employees. This survey,

entitled the Merced College Accreditation Survey Fall 2015, covered aspects of the accreditation process, knowledge of mission statement and the shared governance and Superintendent/President. It is not clear whether the Superintendent/President at the time used the results of this survey as impetus for improvement. The team was able to confirm through the public forums and interviews that many people from different categories of employment had provided feedback during the writing of the self-evaluation document, including some units where required by their supervisors to review the sections pertinent to their area. (IV.B.4)

The team confirmed through the review of minutes from College Council meetings, that the discussion of board policies and administrative procedures took place, but the primary task of reviewing them tended to fall solely to the past Superintendent/President. According to an interview with Board of Trustee members, one member stated that the reviewing of Board Policies is happening at monthly meetings during closed session but not necessarily in open sessions. However, this review seems to be sporadic, given that many policies haven't been reviewed in over ten years. (IV.C.7, 12)

It was reported by several stakeholders in interviews that there were numerous instances where members of some constituent groups have been in touch with Board members directly, circumventing the Superintendent/President. This type of inappropriate access and contact undermines the Superintendent/President's ability to implement statutes, regulations, and governing board policies effectively. Additionally, such contact is a violation of board policy on delegation of authority to the Superintendent/President and can affect the Superintendent/President's ability to conduct his work on campus. (IV.B.5)


**Conclusion**

The College does not meet the Standard

The College has been through some difficult changes in leadership at the Superintendent/ President's level. The conditions that led to these changes seem to have affected the culture of trust on the campus. The new Superintendent/President is attempting to reset the campus culture and begin the rebuilding process. His focus on a culture of evidence, if fully embraced and implemented, will help restore trust and transparency in decision-making at the upper levels of administration and have a positive effect on student learning and achievement. But the separation of responsibilities delegated to the Superintendent/President and those entrusted to the Board of Trustees through their electorate must be respected and adhered to in order to fully implement a transparent governing process.

**Recommendations**

In order to meet the Standard, the team recommends the Board follow its policies regarding delegation of authority related to the Superintendent/President and ensure the

Superintendent/President is able to implement and administer Board policies without Board interference in College operations. (IV.B.5, IV.C.7, IV.C.12)

## Standard IV.C. Governing Board

### General Observations

Merced College has a seven-member Board of Trustees elected by Trustee area by the citizens of Merced, encompassing the area of the Chowchilla Union High School District in Madera County and the Dos Palos Joint Elementary School District. There is a complete set of Board Policies included in the Board Policy Manual, but some policies have not been reviewed since 2001. Contained within Board Policy 2715 – Code of Ethics/Standards of Practice, the Board does identify a censure policy to be used when dealing with behavior that violates these codes.

The Board has a clearly defined policies for selecting (BP 2431) and evaluating (BP 2435) the CEO of the College, and they have employed it recently to hire the new Superintendent/President. Board minutes indicate that there are presentations regarding student success that fosters review of key indicators and plans for improving academic quality. Examples include institutional set standards, student success scorecard, and the 2016 educational master plan.

### Findings and Evidence

Board policies found in the Board Policy Manual confirm that the institution has a governing board that has authority over and responsibility for policies to ensure the academic quality, integrity, and effectiveness of the student learning programs and services and the financial stability of the institution. (ER 7) This is specifically outlined in Board Policy 2200, Board Duties and Responsibilities, that defines the Board's Powers and Responsibilities.

Based on the Board's approval and periodic review of the College's vision, mission, and strategic plan, which serve as the foundation of all institutional planning and decision making, and the 2014-16 Board Goals, the Board consistently reaffirms its commitment to Quality, Integrity, Effectiveness, and Financial Stability. (IV.C.1)

Board Policies 2710 – Conflict of Interest and 2715 – Code of Ethic/Standards of Practice, establish expectations for how the Board will act, individually and collectively. Through Board Policy 2715 the Board has established that it understands its obligation to act and

speak as one unified voice.  The team reviewed minutes from several regular Board meetings and found few instances of split votes or dissention of individual Board members. There was no evidence to indicate that the Board was not conducting themselves in a manner consistent with Board Policies nor their stated commitment to working and acting as a whole. In interviews, individual trustees stated that they were careful not to make promises to community members or statements representing Board views. They also described how they only provide information and redirect inquiries to the appropriate deans and up to the College Superintendent/President. (IV.C.2)

BP 2431 provides the Board with the authority and responsibility to hire the Superintendent/President, while BP 2435 provides the mechanism to annually evaluate the Superintendent/President. Administrative Procedure 2431 outlines the Superintendent/President search process, including the composition of the search committee.

Administrative Procedure 2435 outlines the process for the annual evaluation of the Superintendent/President. Evidence was reviewed to demonstrate that BP 2431 and AP 2431 were used in the recent hiring of the new Superintendent/President. (IV.C.3) As of the date of the visit, the new Superintendent/President had been employed for approximately nine weeks.  To review evidence that the Board was following BP 2435 and AP 2435, the team requested to review the evaluation materials for the annual evaluation of the previous Superintendent/President. The team was provided documents from fiscal year 2014.  The previous Superintendent/President left in spring 2015 and an acting president was hired until a permanent Superintendent/President could be confirmed.  The Board did not believe it would be useful or productive to evaluate the acting Superintendent/President. (IV.C.3) The new Superintendent/President and the Board are working together to create a process and timeline for reviewing and revising all district policies.

Based on review of Board Policies 2200 – Board Duties and Responsibilities and 2710 - Conflict of Interest, the Board understands and acknowledges it is an independent, policy-making body that reflects the public interest in the institution's educational quality. Furthermore, in reviewing the evidence, the team found no indication that the Board acts in a manner inconsistent with its commitment to advocate for and defend the institution and protect it from undue influence or political pressure. (IV.C.4)

The Board has policies and administrative procedures for shared governance, hiring procedures for all categories of personnel, and for institutional effectiveness to ensure the quality, integrity of the learning programs and services at the institution. The Board has policies for budget preparation and fiscal accountability through which it ensures that the annual budget supports the district's Education Master Plan. The Board exercises ultimate responsibility for educational quality through a number of policies including:

- BP 4100 on Award of Degrees and Certificates
- BP 4020 for Course and Program Development and Approval Processes

- BP section 5000 for Planning and Development of Student Services
- BPs 5100 & 4070 for Promulgation of Procedures for Student Attendance, Auditing, Grading, and other Matters related to Student Achievement.

Board Policy 2430 delegates authority to the Superintendent/President to operate the College in a manner consistent with the vision, mission, strategic plans, and Institutional Learning Outcomes of the College. Board Policy Section 6000, Business Services and Facilities, supports the effective fiscal administration of the District.

The team was able to ascertain that the Board understands its role to be heavily involved in the institution in a manner  that may bring the Board members well into the operations of the College and in many ways circumvent the Superintendent/President's role and responsibilities. This can  lead to actions and behaviors that contradict Board Policy and therein established roles. (IV.C.5)

Board Policies are available on the College website. Section 1000 of the Board Policy Manual contain the Board policies related to purpose and mission of the College and Board Policy 2010 – Board Membership specify the board's size, duties, responsibilities, structure, and operating procedures are all accessible on the College's website (through Board Docs). (IV.C.6)  Though the Board has approved recent revisions to some policies, the Board Policy Manual indicates that many of the current policies were last reviewed in 2001.  Board Policy 2410 and Administrative Procedure 2410 outline the process for the creation and updating policies and procedures.  Upon reviewing various policies and procedures the team did note that many had been reviewed and updated recently (last two years).  Further, Board Policy 2410 states that "The Superintendent/President shall provide for a biennial review of procedures (administrative procedures) and provide each member of the Board with a copy of the administrative procedures or any revisions since the last time they were provided to the Board.  The Board reserves the right to direct revisions of the administrative procedures should they, in the Board's judgment, be inconsistent with the Board's own policies." (IV.C.7)

In interviews with individual trustees and review of Board agendas and minutes, the Board does review key indicators of student success and learning including: institutional set standards, student success scorecard, educational master plan, student success plan, and student equity plan. Board goals are based on College issues and are organized in alignment with the relevant accreditation standards. (IV.C.8)

The Board has policies showing its commitment to ongoing training and development as well as a detailed orientation for new board members. There is evidence that the new Board of Trustees have undergone training on numerous subjects including the Brown Act, Board Superintendent/President Relations, College Governance, Accreditation, Trustee Roles and Responsibilities, Board Goals and Evaluation, Mission Statement, and District Goals. (IV.C.9)

Board Policy and Administrative Procedure 2745, Board Self Evaluation, establishes the bi-annual self-evaluation process of the Board of Trustees. The evaluation is conducted during September and October.  Per Administrative Procedure 2745, a summary of the evaluations will be presented and discussed at a board session scheduled for that purpose. The results will be used to identify accomplishments in and goals for the following two-year cycle.  This procedure also specifies that evaluation instrument and criteria will be based on "criteria contained in these board policies regarding board operations, as well as criteria defining board effectiveness promulgated by recognized practitioners in the field." (IV.C.10)

Board Policies 2710 & 2715 provides a Code of Ethics for the behavior of the Board. This policy requires that the Board assures the opportunity for high-quality education for every student within the fiscal limitations, represent all segments of the community in advocating for the best interest of the community, functions as a team seeking to stay well-informed and to act objectively, recognizes that the Board exercises power only through decisions it makes as a group, maintains confidentiality in privileged information, treats staff and employees with courtesy, respect, and civility, ensures an atmosphere in which controversial issues can be presented fairly and in which the dignity of each individual is maintained. It also ensures public input into Board deliberations and adherence to the letter and spirit of open meeting laws and regulations and prevents conflicts of interest and perceptions of conflicts of interest.

Board Policy 2710 explicitly prohibits and defines conflicts of interest to assure that Board member interests are disclosed and that they do not interfere with the impartiality of governing body members to secure and ensure the academic and fiscal integrity of the institution. Trustees confirmed that there is a written policy (censure policy) within Board Policy 2715 for dealing with behavior that violates its code.  Trustees rely on Form 700 and self-recusal when indicated. (IV.C.11)

Through Board Policy 2430, the board delegates full responsibility and authority for running the operations of the College to the Superintendent/President and to implement and administer policies. (IV.C.12)

Based on the evidence reviewed including Board Policy 3200, Accreditation, Accreditation Reports to the Board, and the Board's self-evaluation, the governing board is informed about the Eligibility Requirements, the Accreditation Standards, Commission policies, accreditation processes, and the College's accredited status, and supports the College's efforts to improve and excel. Trustees have attended conference sessions on accreditation and confirmed their involvement in the preparation of the self-evaluation report.  All reported being well informed about accreditation and the College's efforts toward reaffirmation of its accredited status. (IV.C.13)

**Conclusion**

The College does not meet the Standard IV.C

Insufficient evidence was provided that could confirm that the College has in place a structure or process for consistently reviewing and updating Board Policies. Based on a review of the Board Policy Manual, many of the policies appear to have an origination date of 2001 with no evidence of review or updating. The Board Policy manual clearly shows that the College is lacking a functional process for the consistent and periodic review of their policies. Further, based on evidence reviewed and interviews the Board did not perform their bi-annual self-evaluation in 2016.  This is in contradiction of Board Policy 2745. Furthermore, as mentioned previously, the separation of responsibilities delegated to the Superintendent/President and those entrusted to the Board of Trustees through their electorate must be respected and adhered to in order to fully implement a transparent governing process.

**Recommendations**

In order to meet the Standard, the team recommends the Board follow its policy on performing and conducting the bi-annual Board self-evaluation. (IV.C.10)

In order to meet the Standard, the team recommends the Board follow its policies regarding delegation of authority related to the Superintendent/President and ensure the Superintendent/President is able to implement and administer Board policies without Board interference in College operations. (IV.B.5, IV.C.7, IV.C.12)

## D. Multi-College Districts or Systems

Merced College is a single college district.  This Standard does not apply.

# Quality Focused Essay

The College provided a Quality Focus Essay (QFE) that is consistent with the issues brought forth in College's Self-Evaluation Report. The College identified two action projects in the QFE:

- Outcomes Assessment and Resource Allocation
- Student Equity

## Outcomes Assessment and Resource Allocation

The first action project, Outcomes Assessment and Resource Allocation, is designed to continue improving program and course leaning outcomes assessment reporting including General Education Learning Outcomes (GELO)assessment and tightening up the program review and resource allocation process. The College notes in the essay that Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) assessment at all levels at the College has been "rife with starts and stops" and is in need of a long term solution to provide sustainability and integrity to the process. This action plan corresponds with many points raised by the external site evaluation team in their analysis and evaluation of Standard II.A and other parts of the report. The College recognizes more time is needed to achieve 100 percent SLO assessment completion, and to finalize the program review inventory tool that will effectively incorporate SLO assessment at all levels into the process.

The College established timelines and responsible departments/personnel for the this project. They identified the barriers they have faced thus fair with full implementation and integration of SLO assessment with resource allocation and provided strategies and solutions for addressing these barriers.


## Student Equity

With regards to the Student Equity project, the College has developed a plan with broad goals that identify relatively narrow activities that are appropriate and have an important impact on addressing issues of student equity in closing the achievement gap.  However, as a Hispanic serving institution that has a current Hispanic student population above 50 percent, he team encourages the College to be broader in its approach to student equity achievement and consider additional, more comprehensive strategies. As mentioned in the Self-Evaluation Report and confirmed by external site team, the implementation of a more robust multiple measures strategy in student remediation placement could be a broader strategy for addressing the achievement gap.

The College does address in the Student Equity project the need to disaggregate data for analysis and provide professional development activities aimed at eliminating equity gaps. Timelines provided by the College indicate the development of English and Math acceleration sequences and the disaggregation of data to be accessible campus wide.