

# **EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT**

**College of the Canyons  
26455 Rockwell Canyon Road  
Santa Clarita, California 91355**

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

This report represents the findings of the External Evaluation Team that visited the  
College of the Canyons on September 29, 2014 through October 2, 2014.

Ron Taylor, Chair

## VISITING TEAM

Dr. Ronald Taylor (Chair)  
Superintendent/President  
Merced College

Dr. Marie Bruley (Team Assistant)  
Professor of Mathematics  
Merced College

Dr. Charles Braden  
Professor of Theater  
Cosumnes River College

Mr. Michael Graves  
Faculty: Computer Science & Business  
College of the Siskiyous

Ms. Vivian Varela  
Asst. Professor of Sociology/  
DE Coordinator  
Mendocino College

Dr. Celine Pinet  
Former Vice President, Academic Affairs  
Monterey Peninsula College

Mr. Tim Karas  
Vice President of Instruction/ALO  
College of Alameda

Dr. Sandra Caldwell  
President  
Reedley College

Mr. Ronald Little  
Vice President of Administrative Services  
Ohlone College

Dr. Audrey Yamagata-Noji  
Vice President of Student Services  
Mt. San Antonio College

Dr. Lorraine Prinsky  
Trustee  
Coast Community College District

Ms. MaryBeth Benvenuti  
Director of Business & Administrative Services  
College of Alameda

Mr. Aaron McVean  
Dean, Planning, Research & Institutional Effectiveness  
Skyline College

## Summary of the Report

INSTITUTION: College of the Canyons  
DATE OF VISIT: September 29, 2014 through October 2, 2014  
TEAM CHAIR: Ron Taylor  
Superintendent/President, Merced College

A team of twelve professional educators visited College of the Canyons on Monday, September 29, 2014 through Thursday, October 2, 2014, for the purpose of reaffirmation of accreditation through evaluation of the College's performance relative to the Accreditation Standards of the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (the Commission) and its compliance with Eligibility Requirements and Commission policies, to make recommendations for quality assurance and increasing institutional effectiveness, and to submit recommendations to the Commission regarding the College's accredited status. The team members prepared for the visit in advance by reviewing the College's Comprehensive Institutional Self Evaluation Report, as well as supporting evidence provided by the College, and historical accreditation documents provided by the Commission. In the days leading up to the visit, the College provided additional evidence requested by team members and a Supplemental Report about changes that had occurred since the Institutional Self Evaluation Report had been prepared.

The visiting team found the College to be very well prepared for the visit. There was widespread awareness and understanding of the accreditation process among faculty, staff and students at the College. The College identified excellent accommodations for the visiting team, with a conference room provided at the hotel for team meetings, equipped with a computer, printer, Internet access and a computer projector and screen that the team found very helpful during its deliberations. The College also provided a secure team meeting room in the library at the College's Valencia campus, fully equipped with a computer and printer as well as other accessories to assist the team in its work. Documentation to support the Institutional Self Evaluation Report was well organized in the team room at the College, and team members were given secure Internet access, as well as user ID and passcodes to employee portals in the College's intranet system. The College provided transportation between the Valencia campus and other sites (Canyon Country as well as the Center for Applied Competitive Technologies), and cart transport within each campus. College guides helped team members find interview locations as needed, and the College dedicated multiple conference rooms in the library and elsewhere for meetings and team member work. The College also provided the team with a break room and on-site lunches, which assisted the team's efficiency.

Leading up to the visit, College staff worked with the team chair and assistant to develop a schedule for the site visit that was most helpful in organizing the team's on-site work. All staff at the College were welcoming, helpful and service-oriented toward the process, and the visiting team had no difficulty meeting with anyone integral to the process.

The Institutional Self Evaluation Report was well organized, well written and comprehensive, addressing all Commission Standards, Eligibility Requirements, previous recommendations and previous planning agendas. Evidence provided with the report and in the days leading up to, as well as during and after the visit, assisted the team in verifying statements in the report. The team found the report an excellent basis for evaluation.

The team conducted its work from the afternoon of Monday, September 29, through noon on Thursday, October 2. The visit began with a tour of the Valencia campus for the whole team, followed by a reception in the College's University Center with College leadership and lead authors of the Institutional Self Evaluation Report. Then the team engaged in two days of interviews and meetings with individuals and groups, and the visit concluded with an oral exit report in the Performing Arts Center on Thursday, October 2.

The visiting team held individual and group interviews with approximately 140 individuals, including administrators, staff, faculty, student leaders, community leaders, and members of the Board of Trustees. The team held two open forums, one on Tuesday, September 30 in the early evening and one on Wednesday, Oct. 1 at 1:30 p.m. Both were held in The Learning Center on the Valencia campus, and both were well attended. As follow-up to the latter forum, members of the team met with two additional individuals. Following the conclusion of the on-site visit, the team received additional pieces of evidence from the College, addressing areas of the team's tentative recommendations.

Major findings, commendations and recommendations from the team's review are included below and in the body of the team report. The team was able to verify the general self-evaluation in the Institutional Self Evaluation Report—that the College has created a culture of genuine self-reflection, dialog and continual improvement. Through the use of program review, student learning outcomes, administrative unit outcomes and other performance indicators, the College community engages regularly in reflective discussions to identify opportunities for improvement in student learning and institutional processes. Individual departments set performance goals that support institutional objectives, and they work to achieve them. The College Planning Team reviews departmental accomplishments across all of the College's goals to identify performance or outcome shortcomings. Additional objectives are then developed to mitigate these gaps and to improve the College. Program review is highly emphasized and cited throughout all the Standards in the Institutional Self Evaluation Report, indicating that it is an established, College-wide process.

In addition to an institution that has developed a culture of self-reflection and dialog, the team discovered an institution that is very service-oriented in relation to its surrounding area and local partners, and that is energetic and unstinting in its pursuit of productive partnerships with local businesses and organizations. The College is to be commended for the entrepreneurial spirit that can be observed throughout. The College community is not only encouraged to think about and explore innovative opportunities; it is also led to achieve results in practical ways. This comes through various grant initiatives, partnerships, curricular directions, lab and hands-on experiences provided that are novel

and enriching for the students and the College community. The College has distinguished itself through this brand of educational entrepreneurship.

The team also found an institution that is genuinely and thoroughly welcoming to students and visitors who come to its campuses. The team was impressed with the profusion of student art in various locations, and the richness of student engagement in the arts, technical fields and civic activity. Student leadership at the College is especially to be commended for engagement in the life of the College, to the benefit of fellow students. The College is a thoroughly student-focused institution, built over the course of many years on fostering productive relationships.

## **Introduction**

The team's visit to College of the Canyons coincided with the College's 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary of service to the Santa Clarita Valley. The Santa Clarita Community College District was formed in 1968.

The College's service area encompasses the 367-square-mile Santa Clarita Valley in the northwest portion of Los Angeles County. Once agricultural, the area is now dominated by a combination of residential housing and commercial development. Many residents commute from the local area to the San Fernando Valley or into the Los Angeles basin for work. The area has developed large industrial and commercial centers, and the College is a key partner with many of these employers and service providers.

The College currently serves more than 18,000 students in a geographic area with nearly 300,000 residents. It is estimated that by 2020 the population will grow to 416,000. The College has experienced tremendous growth, moving from 5,214 FTES to 14,537 FTES between 1997 and 2007. The College has a number of construction activities that have already been completed as well as others that are currently underway. Modular or leased facilities are being replaced with new, permanent facilities, increasing square footage on campus by 23%. The College offers on-campus classes between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m., Monday through Saturday. Like other community colleges, it offers distance learning offerings, allowing students 24-hour access to education. The College's primary transfer institution is California State University Northridge. There are two full-service campuses: Valencia and Canyon Country.

In the twelve years between 2000 and 2012, the College experienced an increase in faculty and staff of 58%—comparable to the population growth and economic growth in its service area—but in the five years leading up to the site visit, there was a decrease in classified administrators, full-time faculty and educational administrators as a result of statewide budget cuts that reduced course offerings.

The College offers a rich array of instructional programs, ranging from administration of justice and automotive technology to cutting-edge career training in animation, graphic arts, culinary skills, nanotechnology, and theater costume shop skills. The College offers associate in arts and science degrees in a total of 76 academic programs, along with 70 certificate programs. Traditional transfer majors as well as career technical education are well represented in its curriculum, and offerings include both face-to-face instruction and online delivery. The College provides contract education for employers and community services offerings for residents. The College supports its students with a full set of services, both on-site and online. Data indicate that completion rates, transfer rates and persistence rates meet or exceed the average for comparable institutions, and that the College has set aspirational goals in each of these as well as other academic areas.

Decisions are made in myriad ways at the College. Decision-making involves the College administrators, numerous committees, the College community, unions, the District-level governance structures, and the Board of Trustees. Forums are conducted regularly in

face-to-face formats. Constituents are notified via postings on the website and in all-campus emails. It appears that the College uses its website as the primary vehicle for communicating with the community. The website is appealing to the eye, easy to use, and provides a great deal of useful information. Members of the College community serve on the boards of numerous community organizations and task forces, and the Chancellor constantly communicates with the community in person. Also, in an attempt to appeal to a broader spectrum of students through social media, the College now has an official Facebook presence as well. Email is the primary methodology used for campus communication. The College encourages student participation at all levels by inviting students to participate on decision-making committees. The College makes good use of surveys, providing a broader point of view on issues that need to be addressed.

College of the Canyons is distinguished by many things, chief among them its rapid and consistent growth, culminating in the establishment of the Canyon Country Campus and the robust building program on the Valencia Campus, just now drawing to a close. Along with this phenomenal growth in buildings has been a steady increase in the array of instructional offerings and services provided by the College. The College has an award-winning professional development program, which in addition to providing necessary training for faculty and staff, develops leaders for community colleges across the region and the state. The College has spawned many educational innovations and has served as an economic development hub and leader for its region. Its Center for Applied Competitive Technologies, a long-standing partnership with Aerospace Dynamics International and numerous other private and public partners, provides fast-track technical training for employers in the area. The newer University Center is host to several universities offering transfer opportunities to Santa Clarita residents who are ready to move on in their education, and it also hosts the regional economic development corporation, among other key partners in regional development, and a middle college high school called Academy of the Canyons. The College continues to develop new partnerships with the Wm. S. Hart Union High School District. And shortly before the site visit the College formed a steering committee for yet another innovative program: a Center for Civic Engagement.

Contemporaneous with the College's remarkable growth and range of activity in its region, has been the stability of its leadership. The College is unusual in the longevity of its chief executive officer, who has now served the College for 26 years. The Board of Trustees also maintains long-term continuity of leadership, with its current President having served on the Board since 1984, and one of its current members having served on the original Board. Other members have served since 1993, 2009 and 2013. This continuity of leadership has served the College and the local service area very well.

The College had its most recent comprehensive evaluation and site visit in 2008. Since that visit, it has submitted a Midterm Report (2011) addressing the recommendations from the 2008 visit, a status report on student learning outcomes implementation (2012), three Substantive Change Proposals in 2014 and one Substantive Change Proposal in 2008, as well as Annual Reports for each of the years between 2008 and the present.

## Commendations and Recommendations

### Commendations

The College is commended for developing a welcoming, student-centered learning environment characterized by a genuine concern for student success. (Standards I.A.1; II.A.1.a; II.B.1; II.C)

The College is commended for recognizing and highlighting the talents of its students through the aesthetic display of student artwork throughout the College campuses. (Standards I.A.1; II.A.1.a; II.B.3.b; II.C)

The College is commended for its successful fiscal management, the breadth and scope of its bond construction program, and its leverage of taxpayer dollars with State matching funds and donations. (Standard III.D)

The College is commended for its student leadership. Student leaders are commended for their tireless efforts on behalf of all students on both campuses. Their energy and enthusiasm are infectious. They work very hard every day to ensure that the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few, or the one. These student leaders are engaging faculty, staff, administrators, and community members daily. (Standards IV.A; IV.A.3)

The College is commended for the stability of its leadership and the community partnerships that have developed as a result of this institutional leadership. (Standards I.A.1; II.A.1.a; IV.B.2.a,b)

### Recommendations

**Recommendation 1.** In order to increase institutional effectiveness, and to be able to assess the degree to which the College's articulated goals are achieved, in a systematic cycle of evaluation, integrated planning, resource allocation, implementation, and re-evaluation, the College is encouraged to align its program review and strategic plan with its performance indicators (i.e., institution-set standards). (Standards I.B.1, I.B.2, I.B.3, IIA.2.e, II.A.2.f)

**Recommendation 2.** In order to increase institutional effectiveness, the team recommends that the College develop a systematic, on-going evaluation of its Distance Education courses and programs. The team further recommends that the data from the evaluations be integrated into the assessment and planning cycle of the College at the course, program, and institutional levels to ensure quality. (Standards I.B.5; II.A.2.a,c,d)

**Recommendation 3.** In order to increase institutional effectiveness, the team recommends that the College develop formal, written policies and procedures to ensure that governance and decision-making structures and processes are regularly evaluated to

ensure integrity and effectiveness, and that the College widely communicate the results of these evaluations and use them as the basis for improvement. (Standard IV.A.5)

Recommendation 4. In order to increase institutional effectiveness, the team recommends that the Board formalize and adhere to a regular cycle of review for Board policies. (Standards II.A.6.c; IV.B.1.b,e)

## Evaluation of Institutional Responses to Previous Recommendations

### Recommendation 1

*In order to increase effectiveness, the team recommends that COC continue to build its foundation for Student Learning Outcomes while developing a detailed plan for how to achieve proficiency by the year 2012, as well as find ways to include more adjunct faculty in the process. (IIA.1.c, IIA.2.f, IIA.2.1)*

A plan for addressing this recommendation was submitted in the midterm report, and in the years leading up to the site visit, the College has made significant progress. The section in the Institutional Self Evaluation Report dealing with this recommendation provides evidence of the resources devoted to the effort, in faculty reassigned time, training opportunities, and so forth.

The College has made substantial progress towards addressing the recommendation. The linkage of general education to institutional learning outcomes presents a good example of the thinking that has taken place. The College has set up an effective program review process, which provides an excellent vehicle for dialog on unit goals and outcomes assessment, leading to improvement. There remain some challenges to address in order to provide clearer evidence of continuous improvement. (Standards II.A.2.f, II.A.3)

The College is on the verge of the level of ‘sustainability’ as defined by the Commission. The College has started beta-testing systematic methodology to track SLOs and assessment. Evidence is lacking of cross-College dialog on SLOs. At the program level, however, planning takes SLOs into account and faculty are identifying resources that their programs need through the SLO assessment process; and these needs are being communicated to the deans. Action implications for programs have been identified and implemented. At higher levels in the College, however, it is not yet clear that assessment results have an impact on decision-making, or how they do. (Standard II.A.2)

That said, the team finds that the College meets the Standard. Further improvements may be made to increase student success and institutional effectiveness.

The College has made significant progress in relation to SLOs, SLO assessment, and faculty engagement in these activities. However, at the time of the visit, the engagement of adjunct faculty in assessment of SLOs remained uneven. In order to increase institutional effectiveness, the team encourages the College to continue working to include more adjunct faculty in the SLO assessment process. The Institutional Self Evaluation Report contained five anecdotes as evidence that more adjuncts are being included in the SLO assessment process. In both 2009 and 2014 the College has updated its Adjunct Faculty Handbook, which mentions that SLO assessment is required for accreditation purposes, and which includes a requirement for SLOs to be on syllabi, but which is light on the specific role that adjunct faculty should play in assessing the SLOs of the courses they are teaching. The College reports participation of faculty in the

assessment process without disaggregating between full-time and part time faculty so it is difficult to see the participation rates.

There is not yet documented evidence that there has been an increase in the engagement of adjunct faculty in SLO assessment, College-wide. However, in the days leading up to the visit, the team learned that the District had recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the collective bargaining representative of the adjunct faculty, incorporating SLO assessment into the adjunct faculty's duties and evaluation. Moreover, by the time of the visit the College had instituted Assessment Day activities, inviting adjunct faculty, and documenting some faculty participation. The College has thus provided incentives for adjunct faculty to participate in activities designed to increase engagement in SLO development and assessment. Progress has thus been made on this point. Following the visit, the team learned that the full-time faculty had ratified their new union contract, which contains a provision that SLOs be addressed in self-evaluation. (Standards II.A.2; III.A.1.c)

### **Recommendation 2**

*In order to ensure that the institution maintains student records permanently, securely, and confidentially, with provision for secure backup of all files regardless of the form in which those files are maintained, the team recommends that COC accelerate the timeline for the document imaging of all files and transcripts. The team specifically recommends the document imaging of those records between 1969 and 1990, which are stored in a warehouse and potentially face threats of damage. (IIB.3.f)*

The College has met previous team recommendation 2. Admissions and Records has completed imaging all records from 1969 to 2012. Physical records are stored in a clean, secure warehouse.

### **Recommendation 3**

*The team recommends that COC undertake a program review of library services. Without a current library program review, library services cannot be systematically assessed using student learning outcomes and other appropriate measures in order to improve the effectiveness of the libraries at the Valencia and Canyon Country campuses. (IIC.1, IIC.1.a, IIC.2)*

The College has met previous team recommendation 3. The library completed a program review in 2009 and subsequent annual updates. The library has identified two administrative unit outcomes (AUO) and student survey results to inform planning.

## **Eligibility Requirements**

### **1. Authority**

The College is authorized by California Education Code to operate within the Santa Clarita Community College District as an educational institution and to offer lower division undergraduate education. The visiting team confirmed that the College receives state approval of its programs and services.

### **2. Mission**

The team confirmed that the College's mission statement is approved by the District governing board, published, and clearly defined. The College has a history of regularly evaluating and revising its mission on a three-year cycle. The mission was revised by the College Planning Team and approved by the Board of Trustees in 2008, 2010, and 2013. The mission statement is included in the catalog and various other documents such as the Fact Book as well as on the College's website. The mission is appropriate to an associate-degree-granting institution of higher education and reflects the focus of the State of California as well as the needs of the College's southern California constituency.

### **3. Governing Board**

The team confirmed that the College operates under the Santa Clarita Community College District, which is overseen by a governing board of five members duly elected, with specified terms of office, according to California Education Code. The District governing board, called a Board of Trustees, also includes a student member elected by the students of the College, as provided for in California law. The student trustee serves in an advisory capacity.

### **4. Chief Executive Officer**

The team confirmed that the College has a chief executive officer, duly appointed by the Board with the title of Chancellor, who has full-time responsibility for oversight of College operations. According to its policies and based on interviews conducted during the visit, the Board delegates to the Chancellor full authority and responsibility for operation of the College.

### **5. Administrative Capacity**

The team confirmed that the College has the administrative capacity to fulfill its mission. The College has 29 full-time educational administrators and at least fifty classified managers; some of these managers administer short-term grant activities, but many have permanent positions. The College's administrative structure and capacity is well suited to the breadth of activities in which the College is engaged.

### **6. Operational Status**

The team confirmed that the College is operational and actively serves students seeking certificates, degrees and other education or training offered by the College.

## **7. Degrees**

The team confirmed that the College offers Associate in Arts and Associate in Science degrees, some of which are Associate degrees “in Transfer.” The College currently offers 76 associate degrees.

## **8. Educational Programs**

The team reviewed the College’s educational programs and confirmed that they all align with the College’s mission. They are based on recognized fields of study, are of sufficient content and length, and maintain appropriate levels of quality and rigor for the degrees and certificates offered, according to generally accepted practices of degree-granting institutions of higher education. The College’s programs are modified from time to time to address the needs of the population served, and the mission.

## **9. Academic Credit**

The team confirmed that the College awards academic credit in a manner consistent with generally accepted higher education practices. Academic credit at College of the Canyons is based on Title 5, Section §55002.5 of the California Code of Regulations. All curricula are reviewed by a Curriculum Committee, which makes recommendations to the Vice President of Instruction, and through the Academic Senate to the Board of Trustees. The College uses the Carnegie unit to define the credit hour.

## **10. Student Learning and Achievement**

The team confirmed that the College ensures student learning occurs for the population served, and that large numbers of students complete degrees, certificates and educational goals that constitute student achievement. The College defines course, program, and institutional learning outcomes, and assesses these learning outcomes (SLOs) to confirm that learning occurs. Faculty, staff and administration at the College are engaged in assessing expected SLOs and student achievement, and making improvements for each course and program and for institution-level (general education) SLOs. The College assesses SLOs through various methods, and there is dialog about assessment results. The College is demonstrating regular assessment and that students achieve these outcomes.

## **11. General Education**

The team confirmed that the College incorporates general education into its degree programs, thus addressing the major areas of knowledge; these areas ensure breadth of outlook and contribute to a balanced education. The catalog details the College’s philosophy of general education along with information about the general education

competency requirements in mathematics/quantitative reasoning, information competency, and English.

## **12. Academic Freedom**

The team confirmed that the College is dedicated to maintaining a climate of academic freedom and encouraging the sharing of a wide variety of viewpoints. The catalog includes principles on academic freedom as well as a statement on “Academic Freedom and the Faculty.” The team confirmed that these statements had been reviewed and updated by the Academic Senate in 2013. The College thus expresses its belief in inquiry, informed debate, and the search for truth; the College believes academic freedom is necessary in order to provide students with a variety of ideas, to encourage them to engage in critical thinking, and to help them understand conflicting opinions.

## **13. Faculty**

The team confirmed that the College has enough qualified faculty with full-time responsibility to the institution, along with a large number of part-time faculty, to meet current needs. The College employs 181 full-time faculty and 578 adjunct instructors. The qualifications of full-time faculty are listed in the catalog, and the team confirmed that these qualifications meet the standards for faculty preparation generally accepted in higher education, pertaining to their particular assignments.

## **14. Student Services**

The team confirmed that the College provides an array of student support services appropriate for its student body, its community and its mission. The College provides services in the following areas: Admissions and Records, Counseling and Academic Advising, CalWORKS, Disabled Student Programs and Services and Learning Skills, Service Learning, Extended Opportunity Programs and Services, Financial Aid and Scholarships, International Student program, Student Development, Student Employment, Student Health Services, Transfer Center, Career Services, Veterans/Adult Re-entry Center, Inter-Collegiate Athletics, Student Success and Support Program, Student Business Office, and MESA Program.

## **15. Admissions**

The team confirmed that the College has open admission policies and procedures that are consistent with its mission and with California regulations governing public community colleges. The policies and procedures for admission are published in the catalog, in the schedule of classes and on the website. To enroll, a student must satisfy the published requirements.

## **16. Information and Learning Resources**

The team confirmed that the College provides library and learning support services to enhance student learning. In 2012, a new library opened at the Valencia campus, with a

large collection. The library provides access to a range of databases and subscribes to eBook collections that feature full text for many more titles. A smaller, satellite library supports the Canyon Country Campus. In 2012, The Learning Center (TLC) moved to its new and larger Valencia Campus facility, providing enclosed study rooms, each of which is equipped with a flat-screen computer/television monitor, a web camera for presentation practice, an electrical outlet pod, an HDMI cable hookup for personal laptops, and a portable whiteboard. TLC is equipped with numerous computers for student use. The learning center at Canyon Country Campus offers an open area with tables for tutoring and computers. The College provides information and learning resources sufficient to fulfill its mission.

## **17. Financial Resources**

Through a review of financial documents, audits and other supporting evidence, the team verified that the College has an adequate funding base, financial resources, reserves and integrated planning sufficient to support the College's mission and programs.

## **18. Financial Accountability**

A review of independent audit reports and statements confirmed that the College consistently demonstrates fiscal prudence and financial accountability. Further, external audits indicate that funds provided for state, federal and bond construction programs are used with integrity and in a manner consistent with the intended purpose.

## **19. Institutional Planning and Evaluation**

The team confirmed that the College engages in institutional planning and evaluation, and uses data on student learning and achievement in its planning and resource allocation processes. The College maintains an Educational and Facilities Master Plan, and documents its strategic planning progress through two major documents—Strategic Plan Highlighted Goals and Strategic Plan Highlighted Accomplishments. The results of goals, strategies and outcomes of the Educational and Facilities Master Plan are reviewed on an annual basis through program review. The College's ongoing planning and evaluation processes are also evidenced by budget development documents, a Technology Master Plan, and annual departmental plans, all of which are updated on regular cycles. All planning and evaluation documents are posted on the College's website.

## **20. Integrity in Communication with the Public**

The team confirmed that the College publishes a catalog which includes accurate, current information about the institution itself (name, addresses, telephone, website and other contact information); its mission; course, program and degree offerings; academic calendar and program length; academic freedom principles; financial aid available to students; learning resources; names and degrees of administrators and faculty; names of governing board members; requirements for admission; student fees and other financial obligations of students; requirements for degrees, certificates, graduation and transfer;

major policies affecting students such as academic honesty, sexual harassment and nondiscrimination, acceptance of transfer credits, grievance and complaint procedures, fee refunds; and locations where other policies may be found. The catalog is available both in printed form and online. The College also posts on its website other information required by state and federal authorities, such as Clery Act Disclosure and Student Success Scorecard information.

## **21. Integrity in Relations with the Accrediting Commission**

Based on its review of historical documents, the team confirmed that the College has been responsive to the Commission, meeting all reporting requirements and deadlines. The College posts information about accreditation on its website in a readily accessible way, making clear to constituents and members of the public that they may provide comments about the institution directly to the Commission. The College also posts information about other accrediting agencies.

## **Compliance with Commission Policies**

### **Policy on Distance Education and on Correspondence Education**

The College adheres to state and federal regulations regarding distance learning as well as applicable Commission Standards and policies. The College ensures that equal rigor, breadth, and quality apply to all course offerings, regardless of delivery mode. SLOs are the same, for example, regardless of whether the course is offered solely online or in a face-to-face mode. Instructional methodologies, pedagogies, and technologies are appropriate and the same course objectives are achieved as in a face-to-face mode. Furthermore, the Commission has approved two Substantive Change Proposals for Mode of Delivery with Distance Education submitted by the College (in 2008 and 2014).

The College's distance learning courses and programs are offered via online, web-based interface. The College does not offer courses or programs via correspondence. The team verified that all online offerings are appropriate to the College mission, and that the College maintains control of curriculum, quality, implementation and evaluation. The team also verified that the College has devoted adequate resources to accomplish the stated learning outcomes, and assesses for achievement of outcomes. The College has established appropriate means of authenticating student identity within its online courses and programs, and assuring the privacy of student records. The College follows the best practices recommended in the Commission policy.

In so far as the Commission accepted the latest Substantive Change Proposal submitted, the College is in compliance with the Commission Policy on Distance Education and Correspondence Education. The visiting team confirmed that distance learning courses and programs offered by distance learning have continued to be offered in the manner that they were when these proposals were approved.

It is to be noted that the visiting team is making a recommendation for improvement of online course offerings and related planning and institutional improvement, as described below under Standard IIA.

### **Policy on Institutional Compliance with Title IV**

The team confirmed that the College is in compliance with Title IV. The team found no evidence of fraud or abuse. The team found evidence of the College policy for compliance with Title IV. Examination of financial aid documents and interviews with financial aid personnel indicate that the default rate for the College approximates 12.3% (2011-2013), reflecting the College's ability to manage default rates.

### **Policy on Institutional Advertising, Student Recruitment, and Representation of Accredited Status**

The College complies with all legal and regulatory practices relating to recruitment and admissions. The College uses its catalog and schedule of classes as the primary media to convey information about its educational programs and services. The College uses iterative processes to ensure that content, style, and format of the catalog are developed and reviewed by staff in various units and at various levels throughout the College in order to ensure accuracy, clarity, and currency. The catalog, schedule of classes, and other official publications are available in both print and electronic format. The catalog is the publication containing the most comprehensive information about the College, including the information detailed in the Commission Policy (see also statements above under Eligibility Requirement 20); information on institutional and program SLOs; and gainful employment information.

The team confirmed that those who recruit students on the College's behalf honor the prohibitions listed in section B of the Commission policy. Through interviews, the team reviewed the College's practice in recruiting and enrolling high school students. General student recruitment is under the direction of the Dean of Enrollment Services. Career Technical Education programs, such as welding, visit high schools to share information about their occupational educational programs. The team did not discover any exchange of money or other inducements for enrollment. Recruitment is conducted by trained staff. Scholarships are awarded on the basis of merit and/or financial need.

The team also confirmed that the College represents its accredited status according to the Commission policy (see statements above under Eligibility Requirement 21), and that its specialized accreditations (such as its statement about its nursing accreditation) do not conflict with or extend to the accredited status of the institution as a whole.

The College is in compliance with ACCJC's Policy on Institutional Advertising, Student Recruitment, and Representation of Accredited Status.

### **Policy on Institutional Degrees and Credits**

The College's catalog specifically states that "course units of credit shall be based on a pre-specified relationship between the number of units and hours, the type of instruction, and performance criteria (Title 5, Section 55002.5)." The College uses the Carnegie unit to define the credit hour.

The College's catalog states the requirements for Associate in Arts (AA), Associate in Science (AS), Associate in Arts—Transfer, and Associate in Science—Transfer degrees, and indicates that graduation from College of the Canyons with an associate degree is based upon the completion of 60 units of lower-division, college-level work. The AA and AS degrees must demonstrate content and breadth in the following areas: American History & Institutions, California State & Local Government; Language and Rationality; Physical Education Activity Classes; and additional General Education requirements in the areas of Natural Science, Social Science, Humanities, and Career Exploration and Self-Development.

The team confirmed that academic study leading to credit is of sufficient content, breadth and length, and that levels of rigor are appropriate to the specific programs and degrees offered. Statements of expected learning outcomes are appropriate to the academic disciplines of the offerings. Assessment results provide sufficient evidence to conclude that program and institutional/degree outcomes are achieved.

The team did not discover any instructional offerings where clock hours are used to award credit; therefore the clock-to-credit-hour conversion formula does not apply for College of the Canyons. Nor did the team discover any 'direct assessment' programs at the College.

The College is in compliance with the Commission's Policy on Institutional Degrees and Credits.

### **Policy on Integrity and Ethics**

As noted above under Eligibility Requirements 20 and 21, the team found that the College represents itself consistently and honestly to the public and to the Commission. Its policies, programs and status have been accurately presented through its public statements and postings, and to the team's knowledge, individuals representing the College have represented it with integrity.

The College has policies to ensure academic honesty (see E.R. 20 above), and to ensure integrity in its hiring processes (as detailed under Standard IIIA below). The team verified that the College's governing board has established standards for ethical behavior and that faculty are made aware of the College's policy on professional ethics. The team also verified that the College's contracting policies and processes prevent conflicts of interest, fulfilling the values inherent in the Board of Trustees' policy on Conflict of Interest and its Code of Ethics/Standards of Practice. The College's policies on integrity and ethics are widely available via the College website.

The team confirmed that the College demonstrates integrity and honesty in its interactions with students. The student complaints reviewed establish a record of fair dealing.

The College has established complaint and grievance policies and procedures regarding questionable accounting practices, operations that may be in violation of law or regulation, and fraud, waste or abuse.

As noted above under Eligibility Requirement 21, the College has demonstrated integrity in its relations with the Commission. To the team's knowledge, the College has complied with all Commission requests, directives, decisions and policies. The College acknowledges the Commission's role in assuring quality.

The team confirms that the College prepared thoroughly and cooperatively for the site visit reported here, and received the team in a spirit of collegiality. The College maintains

an openness and commitment to external evaluation, assisting peer evaluators in performing their duties.

**Policy on Contractual Relationships with Non-Regionally Accredited Organizations**

The team confirmed that the College has no contractual relationships with non-regionally accredited organizations; therefore, this policy does not apply to College of the Canyons.

**Policy on Student and Public Complaints against Institutions**

The team confirmed that the College has duly responded to student complaints submitted to the Commission about College of the Canyons. The College has clear policies and procedures for handling student complaints. Policies and procedures are available to students and the public in the College catalog and the College website. Student complaint files are located in the Vice President of Student Services Office. The team reviewed all complaints filed in the office of the Vice President of Student Services to affirm the institution's compliance with Commission Standards and federal regulations.

**Policy on Overseas/International Education Programs for Non-U.S. Nationals**

The team did not discover any programs offered by the College to which this policy would apply.

**Policy for Evaluation of Institutions in Multi-College/Multi-Unit Districts or Systems**

College of the Canyons is a single-college district, so this policy does not apply.

**Policy on Transfer of Credit**

As noted above under Eligibility Requirement 20, the College publishes policies concerning transfer of credit in its catalog and through its website. The team confirmed that the College's policies are consistent with the Commission policy, and that the College has administered its policies consistently and with integrity.

## **Standard I — Institutional Mission and Effectiveness**

### **Standard IA — Mission**

#### **General Observations**

The College has a three-year cycle in which it reviews its mission statement. The current mission statement clearly identifies a focus on “essential academic skills” and preparation of students for “transfer education, workforce-skills development, and the attainment of learning outcomes.” Additionally, the mission statement clearly articulates access as an important element, with the topic clearly identified in the first sentence. Further, the College’s vision statement articulates that it is a two-year college focused on student learning and success, and its philosophy statement clearly articulates institutional beliefs: Teaching and Learning, Respect for All People, Partnership with the Community, Excellence, and Creativity and Innovation. The College Planning Team, which includes key internal stakeholders, oversees a periodic and systematic review. The Board of Trustees formally adopted the recent revisions in 2010 and 2013.

#### **Findings and Evidence**

The College has a mission statement, as well as a vision statement and a philosophy statement. These guiding documents are posted on the College website and published in its catalog and elsewhere on campus. (Standard I.A)

The mission statement states that the institution’s educational purpose is to develop academic skills and prepare students for transfer education, workforce-skill development, and attainment of learning outcomes corresponding to their educational goals. The mission clearly articulates a commitment to student learning. These purposes are appropriate for a community college. (Standard I.A)

The College’s intended students come from the region surrounding the Santa Clarita area. To determine its intended population, the institution reviews the demographic make-up of the region and compares its student population. As such, the student population of College of the Canyons is a reasonable match for the institution’s location, resources, and role in higher education. (Standards I.A, I.A.1)

The College’s mission clearly states that it “provides students with essential academic skills and prepares students for transfer education, workforce-skill development, and the attainment of learning outcomes,” and further states that it engages students in “scholarly inquiry, creative partnerships, and the application of knowledge.” Further, the College’s vision statement and philosophy statement together with its mission explicitly state the purposes of the institution. (Standard I.A)

The team inspected the College’s Center for Applied Competitive Technologies, a partnership venture of long-standing that provides fast-track, cohort training in cutting-edge manufacturing skills applicable to industry operating in the area. Numerous private and public partners were involved in establishing this facility and the programs that

operate through it. In tours of the two campuses, the team also learned of the numerous partnerships that provide for specialized training opportunities; examples include welding technology, nanotechnology, and biotechnology. Similarly, the team observed the College's collaborations related to small business development, noting that the University Center (itself a partnership venture providing university curriculum on site, expanding educational access to local residents) provides a home for the regional economic development corporation, alongside the College's Small Business Development Center. (Standards I.A.1; II.A.1.a)

The College consistently uses its mission statement as a basis for planning. Improvement can be made in the extent to which the College engages faculty and staff in dialog regarding important indicators relevant to planning, such as institution-set standards, an issue further addressed under Standard IB, below. The College conducts a variety of assessments related to institutional effectiveness. Although the College identifies institution-set standards for student achievement, it is unclear how the information is combined and analyzed in order to inform the College of its overall effectiveness. (Standards I.A.4)

The College Planning Team (CPT), which includes representatives from the Academic Senate, Associated Student Government, Student Services and other administrative areas, led the process for updating the mission, which was done in 2010 and 2013. The effort included a subcommittee for the revision. Specifically, the recent revision to the mission statement moved away from "lifelong learning" to "essential academic skills" in alignment with the direction of the priorities set forth for California Community Colleges from the State Chancellor's Office (CCCCO). However, there is little evidence that discussions were held beyond the CPT in 2010 or when the revised mission was adopted by the Board in 2010 and 2013. (Standards I.A.2,3)

As identified in the Institutional Self Evaluation Report, student educational goals are reflective of the mission statement. Further, the College conducts numerous data studies and data analysis related to students and programs including annual student surveys to assess student need. Further, students are involved in the planning and governance committees and the Board of Trustees holds periodic joint meetings with the Associated Student Government. (Standards I.A.1; I.B)

The institution has a history of periodic review of its mission statement since 1970. During the time since then, the institution has gone long periods of time with no revision—such as from 1970 to 1981—then to multiple years of annual revision. As a result, the institution has identified a three-year cycle to ensure periodic review and to ensure that the mission statement evolves over time. Currently, the effort is led by a subcommittee of the CPT, which has internal constituency representation. Changes to the mission may occur as student needs change—such as the addition of international education in order to meet a growing interest in infusing internationalization—as well as better reflecting the priorities of the CCCC, such as a decreased focus on lifelong learning and a greater focus on career-technical education. The CPT moves the recommendation on to the Board of Trustees for formal adoption. It is unclear how

external or other key stakeholders are involved in the mission revision process. (Standard I.A.3)

### **Conclusions**

The College meets all the requirements set out in Standard I.A. The College has a clearly articulated mission statement focused on student learning. Further, the College vision statement exemplifies its commitment to students, learning services, and cultural integration. The CPT oversees a periodic and systematic review and evaluation of the mission on a three-year cycle. The Board of Trustees approved the recent revisions to mission statement in 2013, which is prominent throughout the institution including its website. The College's courses and programs are appropriate to its mission, including the many partnership ventures that have enriched educational opportunities for local residents and assisted the economic development of the area.

### **Recommendations**

None.

## **Standard I — Institutional Mission and Effectiveness**

### **Standard IB — Institutional Effectiveness**

#### **General Observations**

The Institutional Self Evaluation Report for this Standard thoroughly describes the regular processes at the College for the support, assessment, and improvement of student learning. It provides evidence for both the achievement of SLOs and of institutional and program performance. The College utilizes an online program review system to track and integrate department objectives with its stated strategic goals, and to determine the extent to which those objectives are funded and accomplished, and the impact they have on improving institutional effectiveness. (Standard I.B)

The College provides evidence of ongoing, collegial, self-reflective dialog about the improvement of student learning and institutional processes, particularly through the program review process. The College has articulated twelve strategic goals and aligns program review objectives with those goals, and regularly assesses the achievement of those objectives. The process for assessing progress toward achieving these stated goals and objectives is ongoing and systematic, and integrated with resource allocation. Both quantitative and qualitative evidence of these processes was provided. (Standards I.B.1,2,3)

The College has structured its dialog through an integrated set of processes centered primarily on program review. The institution annually and cyclically updates and shares its information both internally and externally. (Standards I.B.4,5,6)

#### **Findings and Evidence**

The College has recently updated its Educational and Facilities Master Plan 2012-2108 (EFMP), outlining the future expansion of the College, its facilities and its programs, including the Canyon Country Campus. Each program's needs, derived from program review, were considered in developing the plan. Comprehensive environmental scanning was used to support the direction outlined in the EFMP. The development of the EFMP has been broad-based, with opportunities for input from the campus and community. (Standard I.B.4)

The College provides evidence that it engages in ongoing and systematic evaluation and planning to refine its key processes and improve student learning. The program review process is well documented and includes consideration of student learning, in the form of program learning outcomes (PLOs), as well as data on student achievement and program performance. Stated objectives are aligned to the strategic plan, which is updated on an ongoing and systematic cycle. Both program review and the strategic plan are updated on a three-year cycle. Program reviews are further updated annually for progress toward objectives. (Standards I.B.1,2,3)

The College Planning Team (CPT), which includes representatives from the Academic Senate, Associated Student Government, Student Services and other administrative areas, is the primary governance group that oversees institutional effectiveness and engages in dialog about College progress toward its strategic goals. As such, the College shows evidence of an institutional commitment to achieve its goals. Resources are allocated based on objectives specified in the program review process, supported by quantitative and qualitative data. Funded objectives are implemented and evaluated. Objectives that are not funded are deleted or held over until funding is available. There is evidence that objectives are regularly reviewed and amended as they are completed or determined to be no longer needed. As new objectives are identified, they are added, both annually and through the three-year cycle of program review. (Standard I.B.3)

Further, the College is working to gather information across the institution as a means of evaluating overall institutional performance. Specifically, the CPT recently established a Performance Indicator subcommittee to develop institution-set standards, in the form of performance indicators in order to provide quantitative metrics to evaluate institutional effectiveness. Initial discussions have taken place about aligning program review objectives with the institutional standards developed by the Performance Indicator subcommittee. (Standards I.B.5, 6,7)

The College has structured its dialog through both institution-level and program-level committees and activities. It also uses both instructional and administrative departments to align strategic objectives to department objectives, SLOs and administrative unit outcomes (AUOs). Additionally, the College uses consultation groups such as the CPT, President's Advisory Committee-Budget (PAC-B), and Skills4Success as primary mechanisms to encourage faculty and staff participation. The College links these efforts broadly to the Educational and Facilities Master Plans. This provides the basis for discussions regarding long-term educational objectives and strategic goals at institutional level. Integration and dialog between this institution-level planning and the planning and assessment at the program level, however, is not strong. (Standards I.B.1,3)

The College uses documented assessment results to communicate matters of institutional effectiveness. Targeted research reports are used to assess specific projects, programs, and services, as well as to demonstrate need for new programs and services, such as supplemental instruction. (In the past five years, 165 institutional effectiveness studies have been completed to serve such purposes.) SLOs are assessed and discussed within departments, and PLOs are included as part of the program review process. The College incorporates a large amount of data, such as labor market studies, satisfaction surveys, and SLOs for the purposes of identifying and evaluating implementations from the department level to the institution level. Specifically, the College engages every department and program in self-reflection on SLOs within the program review process. The College also has a standing SLO committee that facilitates dialog regarding assessment results including the strengths and weaknesses within the SLO data set at the program level. This process requires programs to make measurable progress on departmental goals and ensures alignment with College-wide goals and links to the budget planning process. Special focus has been given to basic skills with oversight

through Skills4Success committee, which has implemented various strategies across programs to impact student learning. (Standard I.B.5)

Currently, the College is working to strengthen program-level assessment and its ability to assess across academic programs with the recent implementation of the CurricUNET Assessment Module. The intention behind this conversion is to foster greater participation by faculty in the SLO assessment process and to foster dialog that would then be synthesized in the program review documents. The team hopes that the transition to using the CurricUNET Assessment Module will allow for a greater connection between SLO assessment, resource planning, and process improvements at both the program and institutional levels. Established program review and planning processes already provide for assessments at the program level to influence resource allocations; the CurricUNET implementation should strengthen this loop and assist the College in building broader dialog. (Standards I.B.6; II.A.2.e)

The availability of quantitative and qualitative information notwithstanding, the College would benefit from improved systematic disaggregation of data related to student learning, success, and achievement specifically with regard to Distance Education at the course and program level. Such disaggregation would assist with the improvement of distance learning offerings and services. (Standards I.B.5; II.A)

The College has utilized regular feedback surveys to determine the effectiveness of its ongoing planning and resource allocation process. Results from these efforts are reviewed and used as the basis for improvement. Based on improvements to College programs and services, the College believes in the effectiveness of its evaluation mechanisms. Aside from the program review process and planning process in general, there has not been a formal assessment of the governance and decision-making structures and processes of the College. (Standards I.B.6,7; IV.A.5)

The College has multiple venues that provide opportunity for dialog about institutional effectiveness, including the strategic planning and program review processes, the Program Review Committee, the CPT, the Performance Indicator subcommittee, Enrollment Management, and the SLO Committee. These discussions are not integrated and aligned as well as they could be, however, particularly in terms of communicating information about the assessment of student learning between the institutional level and the program level. Strategic plan linkages are evident in the program review action implementations and program review SLO data, which is then incorporated into the SLO Committee efforts; it is not clear how this information influences CPT discussions on institutional goals, however. Institutional dialog and understanding is promoted through committee membership, which includes faculty and staff. Broader dialog about learning assessment, however, is not strong at this point. The College conducts professional development based on these activities, including program review workshops, department chair retreats focused on the Student Success Scorecard and performance indicators, and reports on Scorecard data and performance indicators to the Board of Trustees. Broader dialog on student learning has begun to be strengthened through the recent Assessment Day activity. (Standards I.B.1,4)

It should be particularly noted that while institutional dialog about institution-set standards has begun within the CPT and its subcommittee on Performance Indicators, broader discussion of these indicators is to be expected, as they are relevant to institutional planning. Broader institutional dialog would strengthen strategic planning at the College. (Standard I.B.4)

The College uses the “SMART” reporting process to clearly track and present the status and progress of the strategic plan and performance indicators. “SMART” stands for “specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely.” To ensure that department goals are stated so the accomplishment can be accurately assessed, the College integrates training on SMART goals in all discussions of department planning. The outcomes are shared broadly across the College and with the Board. In addition, the College produces a Fact Book, an Annual Report, Academy of the Canyons briefs, and other documentation that is shared with external audiences and is widely available through the College website and advisory committee activities. (Standard I.B.5)

## **Conclusions**

The College meets Standard I.B and each of its sub-Standards, based on the description provided in the Institutional Self Evaluation Report and the evidence cited and provided to support the claims made therein. The College has integrated its planning and resource allocation processes and engages in the regular and systematic evaluation of offerings and services. Further, it has documented regular and systematic dialog about the improvement of programs and services in order to increase student learning and success.

Currently, the College is working to strengthen program-level assessment and its ability to assess across academic programs with the recent implementation of the CurricUNET Assessment Module. The progress of this work should be monitored and reported on in later reports. (Standard I.B.6)

As of yet the integration of performance indicators with program review and the strategic plan is in process but not yet completed. Steps should be taken to ensure this effort moves forward and evolves in order to evaluate institutional effectiveness in an ongoing and systematic manner. Given their recent development, this is understandable. However, in order for the College to determine the degree to which strategic goals are being achieved and for the College to assess progress toward achieving its stated goals and make decisions regarding the improvement of institutional effectiveness in an ongoing and systematic cycle of evaluation, integrated planning, resource allocation, implementation, and re-evaluation, alignment of its performance indicators with its strategic planning and program review processes is encouraged. (Standards I.B.5, 6,7)

The availability of quantitative and qualitative information notwithstanding, the College would benefit from improved systematic disaggregation of data related to student learning, success, and achievement specifically with regard to Distance Education at the

course and program level. Such disaggregation would assist with the improvement of distance learning offerings and services. (Standards I.B.5; II.A)

### **Compliance with United States Department of Education (USDE) Regulations**

#### **602.16(a)(1)(i)**

The College has set standards, in the form of performance indicators, for satisfactory performance of student success, achievement, and learning.

#### **602.17(f)**

The College provides standards for satisfactory performance for student achievement at the programmatic and institutional levels, and evaluates itself against those standards. The College's set standards are reasonable, based on quantitative and qualitative analyses.

### **Recommendations**

Recommendation 1. In order to increase institutional effectiveness, and to be able to assess the degree to which the College's articulated goals are achieved, in a systematic cycle of evaluation, integrated planning, resource allocation, implementation, and re-evaluation, the College is encouraged to align its program review and strategic plan with its performance indicators (i.e., institution-set standards). (Standards I.B.1, I.B.2, I.B.3, IIA.2.e, II.A.2.f)

See also recommendation 2 under Standard II.A.

## **Standard II — Student Learning Programs and Services**

### **Standard IIA — Instructional Programs**

#### **General Observations**

In reviewing the Institutional Self Evaluation Report and upon arrival for the site visit, the team found an institution that had made significant progress in addressing the 2008 recommendation concerning student learning outcomes (SLOs) and related activities.

Moreover, in recent years, the College has added significantly to its educational partnerships, developing new learning opportunities for students through its University Center and enhancing performing arts support in its new Performing Arts Center. It has maintained a Middle College High School partnership with the Wm. S. Hart Union High School District (Academy of the Canyons), and also maintained its Center for Applied Competitive Technologies. The College has been opening up many other new avenues for enhancement of student learning, only a few of which are recognized herein. One recent example is strengthening its outreach to local schools by developing a K-12 Arts Education program and hiring an arts education outreach specialist. The College has also secured approval of Substantive Change Proposals related to the expansion of its Distance Education (DE) offerings. (Standards I.A.1; II.A.1.a)

#### **Findings and Evidence**

Through a review of the catalog and class schedules, and through interviews, the team found that all instructional programs meet the mission of the institution and uphold its integrity. The Valencia Campus has an impressive array of support services, resources, and staffing to support its instructional programs. The team was concerned about the resources available to the students at the Canyon Country Campus (CCC); for example, the team was concerned about the physical allocation of space allowed for The Learning Center (TLC) and the library at CCC as well as the resources provided in support of these support services. (Standards II.A.1; II.B; II.C)

Interviews with Distance Education (DE) managers and staff as well as a review of professional development offerings for the past two years establish that there has been a wide range of professional development programming to train faculty in effective DE methodology. The team encourages the College to continue integrating the development of DE professional development with needs identified by faculty in the SLO assessment and program review processes. (Standards II.A.1.a,b; II.A.2)

The Curriculum Committee, as documented by the Curriculum Handbook (2014), ensures that curriculum is regularly reviewed and kept current. The mission of the College is particularly evident in many partnerships in the community, active seeking of grants, and a spirit of innovation and entrepreneurial activity, particularly in economic development. (Standard II.A.1; I.A.1)

The College conducts multiple student surveys, including Instructional, Student Services, and DE, and uses this data to stay informed on the changing needs of students. Survey results are available to staff on the College's intranet website. The Office of Institutional Research collects data through a variety of research methods which it develops into briefs to inform the College of student learning needs. In order to assess students' educational preparedness, the College provides a placement process prior to registration to identify the appropriate level of English, ESL, math, and chemistry courses. (Standard II.A.1.a)

A review of the College's program review form showed institution-wide use of data trends over multiple years with data-points including the number of degrees awarded, number of certificates awarded, success rates, retention rates, among others. Faculty are encouraged to analyze this data in order to facilitate program-level planning. A review of program review documents, interviews with members of the Program Review and SLO committees, and interviews with a selection of department chairs, confirmed that departments incorporate SLO assessment and other forms of data into program planning to determine that students are achieving stated learning outcomes. (Standard II.A.1.a)

Through interviews and review of documents, the team found that the College ensures that delivery of instruction supports the objectives and content of its courses. Based on a review of the full-time faculty and adjunct faculty union contracts and on interviews with faculty and division deans, the team established that regular and thorough faculty review procedures ensure high-quality face-to-face instruction. While Appendix G-1 of the full-time faculty contract, Checklist for Online Instructor Evaluation, contains recommendations for the review of online sections, discussions with Human Resources personnel indicated that the checklist had not been negotiated into the faculty evaluation form. Further, a review of the peer review documents of a randomly selected sample of 23% of the faculty teaching online sections in the fall of 2014, the team could not find evidence that the College uses a systematic, on-going faculty review process specific to DE sections to ensure the quality of DE instruction for its programs and courses. The team encourages the College to continue integrating the development of DE professional development offerings so as to meet needs identified by faculty in the SLO assessment, program review, and faculty evaluation processes. (Standard II.A.1.b)

Through interviews and review of documentary evidence, the team confirmed that all courses and programs have identified SLOs and that faculty regularly engage in assessment dialog and processes at both the course and program levels. Through multiple interviews and a review of program review reports, faculty and administrators were able to share multiple examples of how assessment of course and program level SLOs had led to improvements in the College's offerings. (Standard II.A.1.c)

The team found that the College ensures the quality and improvement of all instructional courses and programs offered through the curriculum review, program review, and planning processes. The College offers collegiate, developmental, and pre-collegiate courses and programs, continuing and community education, study abroad, short-term training courses and programs, programs for international students, and contract or other

special programs. All courses, regardless of type of credit awarded or location that they are being taught, undergo evaluation by the Curriculum Committee. (Standard II.A.2)

The team found that while faculty regularly engage in assessment dialog and processes at both the course and program levels, the College does not consistently link these assessments and program improvements to institutional learning outcomes. Such a linkage would tend to improve College dialog about student learning, and would tend to better inform College planning processes. (Standards II.A.1.c, II.A.2.f, II.A.3; I.B.2,3)

Through interviews with the Curriculum co-chairs and a review of the Curriculum Handbook (2014), the team found that the College has established faculty-led procedures to approve, deliver and evaluate courses and programs. The process is led by the Curriculum Committee and described in the Curriculum Handbook (2014). The College has established faculty-led procedures to identify and approve SLOs at the course and program levels. The Curriculum Committee validates that the SLOs represent the goals of the course and program. The SLO Committee, a subcommittee of the Academic Senate, and SLO Coordinators assist in the assessment of program- and course-level SLOs. Faculty members identify SLOs at the course level and incorporate them and their assessment into program review and the course outlines of record. Evaluation of courses and programs is reflected in the program review process, which begins at the faculty level. The team was able to identify that in the Curriculum Handbook: Distance Learning Addendum (2014, pages 62-66) there is specific information about the development and approval procedures for DE courses. (Standard II.A.2.a)

As noted above, the College relies on faculty expertise to identify competency levels and measurable SLOs for courses, certificates, and programs. The College relies on advisory committees to assist faculty in identifying the competences and standards required by business and industry for their career-oriented and technical education (CTE) courses, certificates, and programs. This was confirmed by review of sample CTE advisory board minutes. A review of other documents as well as interviews confirmed that departments are proficient in developing rubrics, common exams, or other multi-dimensional measurement tools for SLO assessments which measure the effectiveness of learning at each level of a program. (Standard II.A.2.b)

The catalog demonstrates that College degrees and certificates are characterized by appropriate breadth, depth, rigor, sequencing, and time to completion. The Curriculum Committee ensures that College courses have appropriate depth and rigor and that College programs are placed at the appropriate level (collegiate or pre-collegiate). (Standard II.A.2.c)

The College uses delivery modes and teaching methodologies that reflect the diverse needs and learning styles of its students. A review of a sample set of course outlines of record in the CurricUNET inventory demonstrated a variety of different delivery modalities, teaching methodologies, and types of assignments. The class schedule provides evidence that courses are scheduled to meet the needs of students. (II.A.2.d)

The team found that the College evaluates all courses and programs through a required cycle of curriculum review and program review. The team found that there is an institutionalized, systematic and ongoing link between the review and assessment of SLOs and identifying the future needs and plans. The College is transitioning to a new system to track assessment of SLOs (CurricUNET Assessment Module was being fully implemented during the fall term of the team's visit). In interviews, the team found that the intention behind this conversion was to foster greater participation by faculty in the SLO assessment process and to foster dialog that would then be synthesized in the program review documents. The team hopes that the transition to using the CurricUNET Assessment Module will allow for a greater connection between SLO assessment and resource planning. (Standards I.B.6; II.A.2.e)

The team found that the College engages in ongoing, systematic evaluation of courses and programs through an annual cycle of program review. The SLO Committee coordinates the assessment of course- and program-level SLOs and aggregates the program-level SLO assessments into a master document. As noted above, the College is in the middle of a transition to a new SLO assessment system and there is hope that the transition will allow for greater connection between SLO assessment and planning for program improvement. The team noted that the level of activity and engagement in SLO assessment seemed to be variable among programs. Some programs have robust SLOs, assessment activities, and plans while others do not seem as fully engaged in the process. (Standard II.A.2.f)

The team noted, through review of information in CurricUNET and through interviews, that engagement of adjunct faculty in assessment of SLOs remains uneven. Since this had been a concern noted in the 2008 visiting team's report and it figured into previous recommendation 1, the College provided a thorough update on its SLO and SLO assessment activities in recent years in the Institutional Self Evaluation Report. This update documents the devotion of considerable resources and effort to increasing faculty engagement with SLOs and SLO assessment—from training activities to the amounts of faculty reassigned time for coordination. Moreover, in a Supplemental Report (September 26, 2014), the College reported on its Day of Assessment held in August 2014. Onsite interviews with the SLO coordinators confirmed the value of this activity in increasing faculty and staff engagement with SLOs and SLO assessment. Finally, in the days following the team's visit, the College confirmed that the full-time faculty union members had voted to ratify their contract, which contains a provision concerning the use of SLOs in the self-evaluation process (the vote had been in process during the team's visit). The leadership of the adjunct faculty union had agreed to a similar provision in the months leading up to the site visit. (Standards II.A.2; III.A.1.c)

The Institutional Self Evaluation Report revealed that course exit exams are not used by the College, except in English and math. English has discontinued this practice in favor of portfolio assessment. The math department continues to use a common final exam in several courses, and departmental faculty meet to assess the fairness and validity of these exams. In addition, certain occupational disciplines have external certification or

licensing exams. (Standard II.A.2.g)

The Curriculum Committee ensures that units of credit awarded are consistent with institutional policies that reflect generally accepted norms or equivalencies in higher education. The Curriculum Committee also ensures that all course outlines of record contain SLOs and that the credits and grades awarded are based upon student attainment of the SLOs and other objectives. (Standard II.A.2.h)

Review of documents as well as interviews indicates that the institution awards degrees and certificates based on achievement of SLOs. (Standard II.A.2.i)

The College has made substantial progress towards addressing the previous team's recommendation on student learning and resulting outcomes. The linkage of general education to institutional learning outcomes presents a good example of the thinking that has taken place. The College has set up an effective program review process, which provides an excellent vehicle for dialog on unit goals and outcomes assessment, leading to improvement. (Standards II.A.2.f, II.A.3)

The College is on the verge of the level of 'sustainability' as described by the Commission. The College has started beta-testing systematic methodology to track SLOs and assessment. Evidence is lacking of cross-College dialog on SLOs. At the program level, however, planning takes SLOs into account and faculty are identifying resources that their programs need through the SLO assessment process; and these needs are being communicated to the deans. Moreover, action implications for programs have been identified and implemented. At higher levels in the College, however, it is not yet clear that assessment results have an impact on decision-making, or how they do. The team found the discussions of performance indicators in CPT encouraging, as noted. A broader discussion of these data, as well as ISLOs, and a clear linkage to the strategic plan would close an important loop for the College as a whole. (Standard II.A.2)

In parallel, there is extensive evidence of presentation and availability of information about institutional effectiveness data, and performance outcomes in relation to student achievement data and the Student Success Scorecard data. The College is to be commended for its efforts at disseminating such information. Some evidence is provided about how this information has been used to improve institutional effectiveness. There is, for example, an effective feedback loop of institutional effectiveness through the annual faculty and staff survey, supporting sustainability. Most recently, the Day of Assessment provided an opportunity for all faculty and staff to engage with these issues. (Standard II.A.2.e,f)

The College requires of all academic and vocational degree programs a component of general education based on a carefully considered philosophy that is clearly stated in its catalog. The institution, relying on the expertise of its faculty, determines the appropriateness of each course for inclusion in the general education curriculum by examining the stated learning outcomes for the course. (Standard II.A.3)

The catalog contains a description of general education requirements that encompasses the major areas of knowledge specified in the Standard. These requirements are part of each degree program, characterized by appropriate breadth, depth, rigor, sequencing, and time to completion; and the general education programs identify courses that meet the requirements for associate and transfer degrees to four-year institutions. The Curriculum Handbook includes a description of the process used to assess whether general education requirements are appropriate in curriculum submissions. The definitions are followed by the Curriculum Committee when curriculum submissions are reviewed that require approval of general education categories based on these criteria. Many general education courses also meet Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum (IGETC) and California State University breadth requirements. Institutional SLOs were developed and assessed, and the results indicate students meet the learning outcomes and develop knowledge of basic content in a broad range of disciplines. (Standard II.A.3.a)

General education outcomes have been established and include required skills in written and oral communication as well as scientific and quantitative skills. Many courses embed computer literacy skills in the means of instruction. There is no distinct computer literacy requirement, though students develop skills in computer literacy through exercises that are embedded in multiple assignments throughout curriculum, such as research projects, shepherding student learning through a variety of means. The Library offers LMTEC 100, "Introduction to Research," to support students in enhancing their information competency skills. Critical thinking skills (i.e., critical analysis/logical thinking and the ability to acquire knowledge through a variety of means) are built into the Language and Rationality general education area as well as other general education areas. (Standard II.A.3.b)

Expectations about ethical behavior and effective citizenship are part of the College's mission statement and are supported in a variety of ways across the College and the curriculum. The College has a Diversity general education requirement that all general education and associate degree graduates must complete. An American Institutions general education requirement encourages civic, political, and social responsibility that is supported by extracurricular activities that encourage student engagement. Moreover, it is to be noted that the College is currently exploring the establishment of a Center for Civic Engagement, which would presumably strengthen learning in this area beyond the Standard. (Standard II.A.3.c)

Through a review of the Curriculum Handbook (2014) and interviews with the Curriculum Committee co-chairs, the team found that all degree programs include focused study in at least one area of inquiry, or in an established interdisciplinary core. (Standard II.A.4)

The team found that the College ensures that vocational and occupational students meet employment standards and are prepared for external licensure/certification through the annual program review process and regular meetings with advisory committees, by conforming to external regulations, and by reviewing the pass rates of external examinations. (Standard II.A.5)

The team found that information provided by the College to students and prospective students is clear and accurate with regard to courses, programs, and transfer policies. For each major and certificate in the catalog, the purpose, content, and course requirements are clearly listed. Program SLOs are not yet published in a way visible to students. The Institutional Self Evaluation Report reflects that these documents are reviewed every year. Sample course outlines confirmed that all included objectives and that most also included student learning outcomes. The regular student survey revealed that 85% of students are aware of SLOs in their course syllabi. (Standard II.A.6)

The team found that the College makes available to students clearly stated transfer-of-credit policies. A transcript evaluation process is described on the Admissions and Records web page. It provides basic information about transcript evaluation with contact information if a student has further questions. The College maintains articulation agreements that are visible on the ASSIST.org website or in printed copies. The catalog clearly denotes which courses are transferable to the California State University or the University of California. It would be difficult for any community college district in the Western region to utilize SLOs for the purposes of transcript evaluation until such time as most other institutions reflect those in their course outlines of record or other publicly accessible documents; however the College's transcript evaluation process could accommodate this requirement in the future. (Standard IIA.6.a)

The team found that the College has a policy that addresses elimination of programs or significant changes to program requirements (BP/AP 4021). AP 4021 assures that provision will be made for students who are currently enrolled in a program that is to be discontinued to complete their education in a timely manner. (Standard II.A.6.b)

As noted above, the team found that the College represents itself clearly, accurately and consistently to prospective as well as current students. Public information is attractively formatted and informative. Class schedules and the catalog are reviewed regularly to ensure accuracy. (Standard II.A.6.c)

The team found that the College follows a detailed, Board-approved policy on academic freedom. The current policy was adopted in January 2007 on the recommendation of the Academic Senate and covers both faculty and student responsibilities regarding academic freedom, as well as clearly defining how faculty should distinguish between personal opinion and professionally accepted views. It was discussed by the Academic Senate again in 2013. In addition, the Board revised policies on academic freedom and academic honesty in 2014. These policies can be found in the schedule of classes and catalog. (Standard II.A.7)

The Institutional Self Evaluation Report provided evidence that the College has clearly defined the difference between a faculty member speaking or acting as a private citizen and presenting information in an academic discipline. The Board policy on academic freedom also clearly requires that faculty present information fairly and objectively by stating, "professional decorum requires the presentation of differing perspectives and

interpretations with balanced intellectual rigor.” However, in the future, it would be helpful to ask students in the annual student survey whether or not they perceive this fairness and balanced intellectual rigor. (Standard II.A.7.a)

The team found that the College has clearly established and published policies on student academic honesty and the consequences that ensue if dishonesty is found to have occurred. The College also maintains a clearly stated code of conduct for staff, faculty, administrators and students that emerges from the mission, vision and philosophy statements. (Standards II.A.7.b,c)

The College does not offer curricula in foreign locations. (Standard II.A.8)

## **Conclusions**

The College meets the Standard. Further improvements may be necessary, however, to increase student success and institutional effectiveness. There is also much to commend in the College’s activities related to this Standard.

The College has enhanced mission-related learning opportunities through its many partnerships in the community, through active seeking of grants, and a spirit of innovation and entrepreneurial activity, particularly in economic development. The College is commended for the stability of its leadership and the community partnerships that have developed as a result of this institutional leadership. (Standards I.A.1; II.A.1.a; IV.B.2.a,b)

The team encourages the College to continue integrating the development of DE professional development with needs identified by faculty in the SLO assessment and program review processes. The College does not use a systematic, on-going course review process for DE sections to ensure the quality of DE instruction. The team encourages the College to continue integrating the development of DE professional development offerings so as to meet needs identified by faculty in the SLO assessment, program review, and course evaluation processes. (Standards II.A.1.a,b; II.A.2)

The College has made significant progress in relation to SLOs, SLO assessment, and faculty engagement in these activities. However, at the time of the visit, the engagement of adjunct faculty in assessment of SLOs remained uneven. In order to increase institutional effectiveness and as was noted as part of the visiting team’s recommendation in 2008, the team recommends that College of the Canyons include more adjunct faculty in the SLO assessment process. (Standards II.A.2; III.A.1.c)

While faculty regularly engage in assessment dialog and processes at both the course and program levels, the College does not consistently link these assessments and program improvements to institutional learning outcomes. Such a linkage would tend to improve College dialog about student learning, and would tend to better inform College planning processes. (Standards II.A.1.c, II.A.2.f, II.A.3; I.B.2,3)

While the College’s policy on academic freedom clearly indicates that “professional decorum requires the presentation of differing perspectives and interpretations with balanced intellectual rigor,” the College’s performance in relation to this policy would be enhanced if the College were to ask students, in the annual student survey, whether or not they perceive this fairness and balanced intellectual rigor. (Standard II.A.7.a)

### **Recommendations**

See Recommendation 1 under Standard I.B.

**Recommendation 2.** In order to increase institutional effectiveness, the team recommends that the College develop a systematic, on-going evaluation of its Distance Education courses and programs. The team further recommends that the data from the evaluations be integrated into the assessment and planning cycle of the College at the course, program, and institutional levels to ensure quality. (Standards I.B.5; II.A.2.a,c,d)

## **Standard II — Student Learning Programs and Services**

### **Standard IIB — Student Support Services**

#### **General Observations**

The College provides extensive programs and services to address the educational needs, health, and well-being of a diverse population of students. These programs and services range from the traditional assessment, admissions and registration, financial aid, counseling, and other matriculation-related areas to categorical programs such as Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS/CARE), CalWORKS, and Disabled Students Programs and Services (DSPS).

All student support services are provided at all principal locations and many services have online components. In-person services are provided at both the Valencia and Canyon Country campuses.

The Institutional Self Evaluation Report notes that there has been a steady increase in the number of under-represented students enrolled at the College: White students reduced from 79% in 1990 to 41% in 2012, and Latino students increased from 11% in 1990 to 40% in 2012. The number of transfers in the Transfer Velocity Report shows that African Americans and Latinos, along with Whites, out-performed their statewide referent groups. The College is planning to increase their outreach efforts, especially to local high schools, in order to provide greater access to a college education for students in their local communities. The welding department has a demonstration unit that goes out to various high schools to interest those students in attending the College.

The program review process documents the level of participation of College employees in Student Services departments, which is an excellent indicator of participation in the process. The Institutional Self Evaluation Report lists several improvements that are planned, completed, or being developed based on specific needs identified through the program review process. The list included the distribution of financial aid funds to students, hiring of staff, enhanced assistive technology, and direct peer assistance to students regarding use of their student portal, My Canyons.

#### **Findings and Evidence**

In accordance with its mission, the College recruits and admits diverse students who are able to benefit from its programs. This includes traditional high school graduates, concurrently enrolled high school students, and any person age 18 or over who can benefit from its programs. (Standard II.B)

A comprehensive array of services is provided to students at the Valencia Campus, which includes: Admissions and Records, Counseling/Advising, Financial Aid, Career and Transfer Services, International Students, Assessment/Placement, Health Services, Veterans, Reentry, EOPS/CARE, CalWORKs, DSPS, Upward Bound, Student Development and Associated Student Government, Health and Wellness Centers, Service

Learning and Athletics. Additional learning support services provided to students include library support, tutoring services, study spaces, a Mathematics Engineering Science Achievement (MESA) program for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) students, test proctoring and accommodations for disabled students. (Standards II.B, II.C)

The Canyon Country Campus has principal services fully provided four days per week, including Admission and Records, Cashier (Student Business Office), Financial Aid, Counseling, and Veterans/Adult Re-entry. Other services, such as DSPS, Health Services, Career Center, and EOPS, rotate on a two-day-per-week cycle to the campus. Staff work on a case-by-case basis to assist or refer students on days some services are not available. The campus has dedicated space for student government, a student lounge, and food services. The Fall 2013 Annual Student Survey indicated satisfaction rates comparable to the Valencia Campus. The programs and services levels are addressed in individual department program reviews and two specific Canyon Country Campus program reviews. The specific Canyon Country Campus program reviews flow to the Vice President of Instruction and the Vice President of Student Services. Multiple interviews reinforced the philosophy that one department serves two sites. The Dean of Canyon Country Campus regularly attends appropriate decision-making committees, including the Executive Cabinet. Programs and services are viewed as an integrated whole between the two campuses. (Standard II.B.1)

The Institutional Self Evaluation Report details success data comparing prepared and underprepared students, showing a significant disparity. In interviews, Student Services administrators described a new initiative through the statewide Student Equity initiative to learn more about how to address the needs of their diverse, under-performing, and under-prepared students. (Standard II.B)

The team met with individuals associated with the University Center. The College partners with educational institutions (Brandman University, California State University [CSU] Bakersfield, CSU Northridge, Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education [TEACH], National University, University of La Verne) through a tenant relationship to offer certificates, credentials, bachelor's degrees, and/or master's degree programs. Programs offer upper division and graduate-level coursework. Most programs are offered in the evening and on weekends, which allows the College to utilize Center classrooms during the day. (Standards II.B; I.A.1; II.A.1.a)

Planning efforts seek to minimize overlap in programs offered by university partners to ensure that programs serve mutually exclusive target populations. College of the Canyons degree information and graduation rates inform the selection of programs offered by university partners. Operating the programs, including hiring of faculty, counseling students, overseeing curricula and registering students, is the responsibility of each university partner exclusively. Each institution is required to have an onsite advisor to assist students. The College maintains articulation agreements with several of the programs to insure the transferability of lower division coursework. Students who have completed pre-requisite course requirements for upper division coursework may

concurrently enroll in partner programs. Detailed program information is available on the University Center website. (Standard II.B)

The Student Services division meets regularly to share information, provide feedback, and review program effectiveness. Items related to student success, specifically the implementation of California's Student Success Act components, have been discussed at multiple forums, including CPT, Management Advisory Counsel, College Policy Council, the President's Advisory Committee on Budget, Executive Cabinet, Academic Senate, the CCC Advisory Committee, department and division meetings, as well as all-college meetings. (Standard II.B.1)

The quality of services appears to be well documented. Annual student surveys, compiled by campus, provide excellent information about students' satisfaction, concerns, and opinions. Students appear to be very satisfied with the safety of each campus, services such as The Learning Center, counseling and advising services, and the helpfulness of staff. Of particular concern were students' lack of knowledge of, or dissatisfaction with, the benefits of the Student Support Fee, the student governance process, the amount and type of student activities, and sufficient parking. (Standard II.B.1)

Student Services has listed actionable improvement to address specific space needs, created by domino moves related to the impending completion of the new Student Services/Administration building which is due to open in Fall 2014. These needs have been articulated through secondary effects discussions between Student Services and Facilities. The Veterans program has expanded to 1,200 students and DSPS has grown to almost 700 students. Sufficient space for private office counseling is critically important in enabling the College to meet the needs of students, and the team understood that this is addressed in the plan for the new facility as well as secondary effects moves. (Standard II.B.1)

The College catalog is current, complete, easy to use, and well structured. The New Student Checklist clearly outlines the specific matriculation steps that prospective students should take, from applying for admission through follow-up. There is also specific information for international, returning, and continuing students. The catalog is available online; a limited number of catalogs are printed every year. The catalog contains the required general information: official name, address, telephone number, website, and address of the institution; educational mission; course, program, and degree offerings; academic calendar and program length; academic freedom statement; available student financial aid; available learning resources; names and degrees of administrators and faculty; and names of Board members. The catalog also includes requirements related to admissions, fees, requirements for degrees, certificates, graduation and transfer. Major policies affecting students, academic regulations, academic honesty, nondiscrimination, acceptance of transfer credits, grievance and complaint procedures, sexual harassment, and refund of fees are also included in the catalog. The catalog states that there are other policies and regulations that students must follow and provides information as to where students may find this information. (Standards II.B.2, II.B.2.a,b,c,d)

Examination of financial aid documents and interviews with financial aid personnel indicate that the default rate for the College approximates 12.3% (2011-13), reflecting the College's ability to manage default rates. The Annual Financial Aid Report for 2013 (an external audit) had no findings regarding federal or state awards. The team found evidence of the College policy for compliance with federal Title IV requirements. (Standards II.B.2.a,b; Commission Policy on Title IV)

The College has clear policies and procedures for handling student complaints. Student complaints and grievance policies are found in BP 532 regarding student grievances that do not include grades, but which involve sexual harassment, discrimination, and appeals related to financial aid. A separate grade review policy is included in the College's policy manual. Policies and procedures are available to students and the public in the catalog and on the website and are being followed. Student complaint files are located in the Vice President of Student Services' office. The team reviewed all formal complaints filed since the last visit in 2008 and found each case to have been fully investigated and closed. The institution's compliance with USDE regulations was affirmed. There was no obvious pattern of complaints that needs to be addressed. However, the catalog does not provide any specific detail about filing a complaint with the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (the Commission). This oversight is in need of correcting. During the site visit, the College posted this information on its website, under the Accreditation tab. (Standard II.B.2.c; USDE Policies)

The online My Canyons portal allows students to access their individual College information, including class schedule, grades, financial aid, and educational plan. Since it is online, it is accessible to DE students as well as students at both campuses. Annual surveys of online students pose questions to gauge student awareness and satisfaction with online student support services, and in response to this data, changes are made. For example, a webpage was added to assist students in the process of accessing their My Canyons portal. (Standard II.B.3.a)

Several other online services are either under development or close to roll-out. A new online orientation that is interactive and engages students for about one hour is due to be unveiled. Through the acquisition of a federal Title V grant, the College will research and implement an online educational planning tool. (Standard II.B.3.a)

The College provides an environment that encourages personal and civic responsibility, as well as intellectual, aesthetic, and personal development for its students, pursuant to its mission statement. College programs, such as Service Learning and Honors, foster civic and personal responsibility through imbedded activities. In addition, the College is to be commended for exploring the establishment of a Center for Civic Engagement, which is likely to expand student learning opportunities. (Standard II.B.3.b)

The College offers counseling and academic advising for its students at the Valencia and Canyon Country Campuses. In addition to the General Counseling department, counselors also serve in the EOPS, DSPS, International Students Program, Financial Aid,

and Veterans programs. Counselors are presently developing a more interactive, online orientation for new students and will be expanding online counseling services beyond that which is provided to DE students. The department website provides tools to students, such as online tutorials and educational planning information. In addition to counseling appointments, counselors also offer online counseling, workshops, and collaborate with other offices for “just in time” counseling during peak registration cycles. Several new initiatives have been recently developed: Online New Student Advisor, Academic CPR and Academic Intensive workshops. (Standard II.B.3.c)

In the 2013 Annual Student Survey, students have rated counseling services highly (69% for Valencia and 67% for Canyon Country), except for fluctuation with satisfaction in accessing useful information on the website (58% for Valencia and 54% for Canyon Country) and low satisfaction at Canyon Country regarding individual appointments and drop-in counseling. The Fall 2013 Annual Student Survey indicated a significant increase in student satisfaction related to adequate academic advisement for courses and programs and transfer to universities. For the Valencia Campus satisfaction rose from 58% in Fall 2012 to 70% in Fall 2013 and for Canyon Country from 62% to 71% in the same time period. The Counseling Department holds weekly training meetings with all counselors across the College, program advisors, and the educational advisors. These meetings enable the counselors and advising staff to remain current on counseling-related issues and requirements. (Standard II.B.3.c)

During its visit to the CCC site, the team became concerned about the equity of learning support services for students at CCC, compared to the Valencia Campus’ level of learning support. (Standard II.B.3.a) This concern is explained in more detail under Standard II.C, below.

Through the Student Development Office, the College provides an extensive array of student clubs, sponsored events and Welcome Week activities. The Student Development Office provides a Student Development Transcript that provides students with an official record delineating their involvement on campus. The activities described in the Institutional Self Evaluation Report indicate that the College has a number of diverse campus clubs ranging from Bible Talk to Gay-Straight Alliance Club, to the Muslim Student Association and IDEAS (Improving Dreams, Equality Access, and Success at College of the Canyons). Based on the recommendation of the Academic Senate, a decision to infuse a diversity requirement throughout the curriculum was established. (Standard II.B.3.d)

The College offers a variety of programs and services to support student appreciation of diversity. Student leaders meet with other campus leaders, including the Cultural Heritage Committee, to plan diversity activities. The Heritage Committee, mostly comprised of faculty, develops cultural programs and works to promote understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity. An extensive series of diversity in-service trainings open to faculty and staff are offered to integrate multicultural and international perspectives into the fabric of the College. (Standards II.B.3.b,d)

The College evaluates its placement processes to ensure their consistency and effectiveness. Accuplacer is used to assess students in writing, math, and English as a Second Language (ESL). The Institutional Self Evaluation Report cites the 2010 Office of Institutional Research validity and cut-score analysis in ESL, mathematics, and English. Subsequently, a content review of the English Placement Test was completed. Due to the initiation of a new English course, new English placement cut scores will be developed once sufficient numbers of students have completed the course. Mathematics cut scores were validated two years ago. The research office produces briefs on topics such as high school grades and college placement. The Fall 2013 Annual Student Survey has questions related to student satisfaction with assessment services and website. (Standard II.B.3.e)

The College maintains student records both electronically and on paper. All paper documents are stored in locked, fireproof cabinets. The electronic documents system is password-protected with set security levels and data backup. A backup of student records is processed each night and tapes of images are stored at a remote storage facility. These protections ensure the integrity of student records information. (Standard II.B.3.f)

Students have access to their records through the secure, password-protected My Canyons system. Federal and District policies regarding privacy and confidentiality of student information are communicated to departments in meetings. All staff sign confidentiality statements prior to accessing student information for the first time. The College's practices regarding Directory Information are contained in the catalog. (Standard II.B.3.f)

Student Services conducts program reviews on a three-year cycle, with annual updates. The annual student survey results inform programs and services with critical information by which to evaluate their effectiveness and to learn of students' levels of satisfaction. The program reviews are very extensive and the content, overall, demonstrates the integrity of the process. Several departments are using this process to make critical changes to processes, to develop new strategies, and to stay focused on improvement. The Admissions and Records program review, for example, noted the use of student survey information that was used to amend their registration priority process and to create greater efficiencies and support for students as they register for classes. Also identified was cultural and generational sensitivity training to assist in their customer service improvement goals. Departments discuss assessment information at department meetings. (Standard II.B.4)

Administrative Unit Outcomes (AUOs) and SLOs are included in departmental program reviews. Student Services departments have developed program-level AUOs for services and assess outcomes through annual surveys and questionnaires. The program review process incorporates reporting AUO progress, assessments, and results; objectives; internal/external connections; and resource allocation. Results from annual student surveys and data disseminated through the Institutional Research Office are used in decision-making processes. SLOs are completed for courses provided by Counseling and DSPS. One of the Counseling Department's AUOs is noteworthy in that the department

determined that the diversity profile of the students they counsel parallels their demographic percentage, with African Americans being seen at a slightly higher rate than their percentage in the student population. To provide for the dialog of continuous improvement, department managers report results of SLOs and/or AUOs at monthly division and weekly manager meetings. (Standards II.B.3,4)

## **Conclusions**

The Student Services division has worked diligently to address the prior recommendation regarding the maintenance and security of student records. All programs have completed program reviews, which include learning outcomes and/or AUOs. The outcomes are regularly assessed through the program planning process using student surveys, faculty/staff surveys, or other department benchmarks. Verified service improvements have been made as a result of this process.

Student Services faculty, staff, and administrators demonstrated a commitment to serving students and enhancing College lift. A welcoming and service-first attitude was pervasive. The campus has vibrant and active student clubs, events, and programs. Student engagement in campus life is woven into the fabric of the institution at both the Valencia and Canyon Country campuses.

The College is commended for developing a welcoming, student-centered learning environment characterized by a genuine concern for student success. (Standards I.A.1; II.A.1.a; II.B.1; II.C)

The College is also to be commended for the expansion of educational opportunity that has been made available to local residents as a result of the University Center partnerships. (Standards I.A.1; II.A.1.a; II.B.1)

The team encourages the College, within the statewide Student Equity initiative, to learn more about how to address the needs of their diverse, under-performing, and under-prepared students. (Standard II.B)

As noted below under Standard IIC, the team encourages the College to work to provide equitable support services, resources, and staffing to support students at CCC. (Standards II.A.1; II.B.3.a; II.C; III.B.2.a,b; III.D.1.c)

The catalog does not provide specific information about filing a complaint with the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (the Commission). While this oversight is in need of correcting, the team notes that during the site visit, the College made adjustments to its website to provide this information. The team encourages the College to make a similar change in its next catalog. (Standard II.B.2.c; USDE Policies)

## **Recommendations**

None.

## **Standard II — Student Learning Programs and Services**

### **Standard IIC — Library and Learning Support Services**

#### **General Observations**

The College provides library and learning support services at the Valencia and Canyon County campuses. The main library based at the Valencia Campus is rated highly in a student satisfaction survey. An array of print and digital resources are available to students including continuous remote access to eBook, electronic periodical databases and research guides. Both campus facilities are staffed to ensure students receive services and access to resources.

The Learning Center (TLC) provides tutoring services, both one-on-one and group, in a variety of subject areas; online tutoring via Blackboard; group study rooms; an open computer area; and supplemental instruction opportunities. Tutoring services are available at both Valencia and Canyon Country campuses.

On the Valencia Campus the library and learning center are in newly renovated and expanded facilities. These facilities are modern with a variety of student spaces available for individual quiet reflection, open study tables, and group study rooms equipped with whiteboards, flat screen monitors, web camera, and laptop connections.

The Library and The Learning Center participate in the program review process, which includes program-level AUOs. The continued assessment of these learning outcomes will be important to the maintenance and improvement of library services in view of the increasing use of technology and the needs of DE students. Results from annual student surveys are used to inform the planning process and assess outcomes.

#### **Findings and Evidence**

The Library's mission reads as follows:

*The mission of the Library is to support student learning and excellence in teaching, provide access to learning resources in all formats, assist students in locating and evaluating information, and encourage lifelong learning.*

To achieve its mission the Library offers comprehensive services and resources including reference, bibliographic instruction, circulation/reserves, print materials, audiovisual materials, electronic resources, internet access, and individual and group study areas. The Library has subscriptions to 34 online databases and over 125,000 eBooks, which can be accessed 24/7 regardless of location. (Standard II.C.1)

The Library operates in two locations. In 2012, a new 32,000-square-foot library opened at the Valencia Campus. A smaller satellite library supports the Canyon Country Campus. Since 2009 there has been a reduction in the number of librarians from 3 to 2 with classified staffing rising from 3 to 3.75. To meet the needs of growing student enrollment

and support multiple locations, two faculty positions have been placed on the academic staffing priority list. (Standard II.C.1)

The Learning Center (TLC) has facilities on both campuses also. The Valencia campus's new 41,000-square-foot facility opened in 2012. The Learning Center offers an array of services to support student learning. These services include comprehensive tutorial services, guided learning activities in English and mathematics, supplemental learning workshops, proctoring/testing center, a large open computer lab, group study rooms, classrooms for accelerated learning, and many unique partnerships with academic departments. The Canyon Country Campus (CCC) has a smaller dedicated facility designed to meet the tutorial needs of students. Beyond writing and mathematics, the mix of tutoring opportunities at CCC mirrors the evolving course offerings. (Standard II.C.1)

The Library's collection development policy defines the scope of material and equipment selection. There is a mechanism for faculty to request purchases for the collection. The Library utilizes reports generated through the integrated library system to access the collection for usage, depth, currency and variety. Librarians rely on professional journals, which publish reviews, to inform the selection process. (Standard II.C.1.a)

TLC provides instructional software supporting programs such as English, nursing, and chemistry. The center also provides textbooks, lab manuals and solution manuals from a variety of disciplines. Selection requests primarily come directly from discipline faculty. The learning support services faculty and staff meet regularly to review software, instructional materials, and equipment to support student learning. (Standard II.C.1.a)

The Library provides orientations to students to develop skills in information competency through instructional sessions, one-on-one reference interactions, tours and a Library/Media Technology course. The primary tool for assessing the attainment of information competency skills in instructional sessions is the use of a pre/post test methodology. This has been inconsistently used, which has affected longitudinal multiyear analysis. Consistent use of identified assessment tools would improve the library's capability to measure student attainment of information competency skills, and is a goal for improvement. (Standard II.C.1.b)

TLC provides training on elements related to information competency through workshops on topics such as plagiarism and evaluating online sources. Tutoring incorporates principles of information competency skills in learning objectives and supervised tutoring course outcomes. No specific metrics are in place to gauge the student's development of skills in information competency. (Standard II.C.1.b)

The Library and TLC complete program reviews linking to their student learning outcomes. Program reviews are authored in an environment of open dialog within the Library and TLC. Division meetings provide a forum for dialog concerning assessment of student learning. Furthermore, surveys administered to students and faculty are used as reference points for decision-making and assessment. (Standard II.C.1.b)

Information competency components are included in the English course sequence. The course outlines for ENGL 91, 94, 96, 101, 102 and 103 list information competency elements as course objectives. The student's ability to attain information competency skills is not explicitly assessed in the two identified student learning outcomes for the courses. In these courses students are introduced to academic research practices, citation standards, evaluation of information sources, and the writing of research papers. (Standard II.C.1.b)

Student surveys indicate positive levels of satisfaction with learning resources at both campuses. The 2013 Annual Student Survey indicated 80% 'very satisfied' at Valencia Campus and 74% at Canyon Country Campus 'very satisfied' with library services and collections. Results from the 2012 Annual Student Survey illustrating a gap of 10% in satisfaction between the Valencia and Canyon Country campuses led to increased service hours at CCC. (Standard II.C.1.c)

Many library resources, including catalog, subscription databases and E-books, are available to all students continuously regardless of location. In Fall 2014 the library enhanced services to students regardless of location through the implementation of a virtual reference service. Physical materials can be requested and sent between the Valencia and Canyon Country campuses, thus enabling the library to expand service beyond a single physical location. (Standard II.C.1.c)

The 2013 Annual Student Survey rated TLC as among the top-rated services. The survey indicated 84% 'very satisfied' at Valencia Campus and 77% Canyon Country Campus 'very satisfied' with the learning center. TLC offers online tutoring for writing, mathematics, and science. Computers, supplemental learning workshops and tutoring services are available to students at the Valencia and Canyon Country campuses. CCC conducts limited workshops. (Standard II.C.1.c)

Upon visiting CCC, the team found the library and learning center spaces there small and under-resourced, especially when compared to the robust support provided at the Valencia Campus. While the provisions for learning resources and instructional support at CCC may satisfy students' needs (according to survey results), the team saw a disparity. The College's facilities plans for permanent facilities are expected to address this disparity. (Standards II.A.1; II.B.3.a; II.C; III.B.2.a,b)

The Library and TLC rely upon District maintenance services and technology services for general maintenance, cleaning, security, and repair of the building and equipment. Service contracts are kept for most office equipment and for the integrated library system. Suitable security measures are taken to ensure the integrity of data, systems, and equipment. (Standard II.C.1.d)

To support operations and purchase resources, the Library uses regular contracts. The Library evaluates these services as part of its student survey, and the 2012 survey indicated satisfaction with them. The Library participates in a unique partnership, Santa Clarita Inter-Library Network (SCILnet), which allows students to have access to

materials at the California Institute of the Arts and within the Santa Clarita Library system. (Standard II.C.1.e)

The Library and TLC have completed multiple program review cycles as part of the College's resource allocation and planning processes. They have developed program-level AUOs for services and they assess outcomes through annual surveys and questionnaires. The program review process incorporates reporting AUO progress, assessments, and results; objectives; internal/external connections; and resource allocation. Identified resources needs and outcomes are channeled through the College planning process for prioritization. Dialog on outcomes, objectives, and resource requests occurs at several levels, from department and division to College. Results from annual student surveys and surveys of faculty and staff are used in planning, assessment and decision making processes. There is evidence through documentation and interviews that outcomes are assessed and improvements made based on the assessments or survey results. The Library and TLC are adaptive and continuously improve to provide quality programs and services. (Standard II.C.2)

## **Conclusions**

The College meets this Standard. Improvements should be considered, however.

Review of library and learning support services indicates a high level of student satisfaction and success supporting student learning throughout the College's service area. Both the Library and TLC are hubs of student activity and innovative programming. Staff is dedicated to providing services to support student achievement and creating a welcoming environment. To continue to adequately support library and learning support services at multiple locations experiencing significant student growth, staffing level objectives identified in program reviews should be examined. The Library continues to focus on improving ongoing assessment tools and outcomes to gauge student development of information competency skills, and the team encourages a continued focus on this work.

The renovated and expanded facilities at the Valencia campus provide modern, open and supportive spaces enriching teaching, learning and discovery. Student artwork and topical displays are throughout the buildings, enhancing the aesthetic and intellectual development of students. Student surveys have indicated that library and learning support services have a high level of student satisfaction over multiple years.

The College is commended for developing a welcoming, student-centered learning environment characterized by a genuine concern for student success. (Standards I.A.1; II.A.1.a; II.B.1; II.C) The College is also commended for recognizing and highlighting the talents of its students through the aesthetic display of student artwork throughout both College campuses. (Standards I.A.1; II.A.1.a; II.B.3.b; II.C)

CCC has dedicated satellite facilities for the Library and TLC. These facilities adequately address the current needs of students at Canyon Country; however, given the disparity

found between space, equipment and materials at the two campuses, the team encourages the College to work to provide equitable support services and resources to support its instructional programs at CCC. As part of the phase-one build-out of CCC, facility plans have the library and learning center moving from modular units into a new, permanent building. Deliberative, iterative and integrated dialog and planning among stakeholders regarding library and learning support services should continue to ensure sufficient quality, depth, and variety of services at this rapidly growing campus. (Standards II.A.1; II.B.3.a; II.C; III.B.2.a,b)

### **Recommendations**

None.

## **Standard III — Resources**

### **Standard IIIA — Human Resources**

#### **General Observations**

The College has presented evidence to document its policies and procedures and compliance with the Standard. Hiring and evaluation procedures have been developed, although there is some inconsistency in application of some of the established processes. The College is working to further analyze ways in which it can increase diversity in hiring. Integration of human resources planning with institutional planning is embedded in both individual department program reviews and the Educational Facilities Master Plan. Although there is no established process that links staffing needs and plans with the budget allocation process, a Classified Staffing Committee was reestablished in 2013 after a three-year hiatus due to the economic downturn and the lack of resources for new positions. A longstanding Academic Staffing Committee is presently revising its criteria and process for recommending positions to the Chancellor. The College has a well-developed and recognized professional development program that has a high level of participation.

#### **Findings and Evidence**

Human Resources, like all other departments, participates in program review. Additionally, Human Resources leads and collaborates on other College-wide planning efforts. Through the utilization of surveys and analysis of data, Human Resources works to integrate diversity planning and professional development programming to assist the College in institutional planning. (Standards III.A.1.a; III.A.4.a,b; III.A.6)

Academic qualifications for full-time faculty and educational administrators are published in the catalog. The team confirmed from a review of this information that faculty and administrators are qualified for their roles in the College. (Standard III.A.1.a)

The College's Administrative Procedure (AP) 7120 specifies the hiring procedures for educational administrators, classified management, full-time faculty, adjunct faculty, and classified staff. The language of this AP is also contained in Decision Making at College of the Canyons (July 2014) Appendix F, which states that the Chancellor determines whether there is a vacancy to be filled or whether a new position is warranted. The Chancellor seeks Board approval for opening of all positions. (Standards III.A.1, III.A.1.a, III.A.3.a)

There are three different processes followed in order to approve a new position. Requests for management positions are brought forward by the executive-level vice president and reviewed by the Chancellor. For faculty positions, the Chief Instructional Officer works with the Academic Staffing Committee, the campus budget and planning process to recommend the number of new faculty positions to be hired.

The current process provides for the Academic Staffing Committee, comprised of the Chief Instructional Officer, the Dean of Student Services, and twelve faculty, to rank faculty requests into four categories ('urgent,' 'strongly recommended,' 'recommended' or 'unranked') and forward their recommendations to the Chancellor without knowing a pre-determined number of positions to be filled. During the visit, it was clarified that the process to hire new faculty positions and to fill vacant positions is under discussion and development. The faculty are working directly with the Chancellor on the details of the role of the Academic Staffing Committee in developing and submitting the list of "New Full-Time Recommended Faculty Positions." Statewide budget impacts and other calculations based on statewide policies have impacted the College's ability to pre-determine the number of faculty positions to be filled. The current process allows for positions to remain on the recommended list for a period of three years. (Standards III.A.1, III.A.1.a, III.A.2, III.A.3)

The current process for requesting new classified positions was written in September 2013, reconvening the long-standing Classified Staffing Committee, which had experienced a hiatus during the economic downturn, when there were not sufficient resources to authorize positions. The process provides for management to request new positions which are prioritized by the Executive Cabinet. This prioritized list is then provided to the Classified Staffing Committee to provide input to the Chancellor, who finalizes the list. The Chancellor subsequently seeks approval from the Board of Trustees to approve the hiring of the prioritized positions. Generally, vacant positions that are already funded are filled without an additional review process. (Standards III.A.1, III.A.2, III.A.3)

Management works through their departments to develop requests for new positions and to develop position descriptions, establish duties and qualifications and define minimum hiring criteria for new positions. Faculty play a significant role in the hiring of faculty. The College's equivalency procedure has been recently revised by the Academic Senate's Equivalency Committee, working with District representatives. An applicant's minimum qualifications are evaluated by Human Resources in consultation with the Academic Senate's equivalency committee and department chairs, referencing the state's Minimum Qualifications Disciplines List. The Institutional Self Evaluation Report suggests that a measurement of the quality of the College's faculty and staff can be found in their student transfer rates, which are higher than the state average. (Standards III.A.1, III.A.1.a, III.A.2, III.A.3)

State and federally defined hiring and non-discrimination guidelines are followed in the hiring of all employees. Classified and management job descriptions are retained in the Office of Human Resources. Discussions between the classified employees union (CSEA) and the District administration are ongoing regarding conversion of temporary, part-time staff into permanent, part-time positions. (Standards III.A.3, III.A.3.a)

After 2000, commensurate with the growth of the College and its student body, staff hires had increased, but the economic recession and resulting state budget cuts (2009-2012) resulted in a decline in full-time faculty and full-time classified staff. This reduction of

funding and course sections confronted almost all community colleges in California. (Standards III.A.1.a, III.A.2)

Historically, the College has either met or exceeded the state Chancellor's Office Full-Time Faculty Obligation Number (FON). Faculty interviews indicated that recently there was a loss of 10 to 12 faculty positions due to retirement incentives. Due to budget constraints, these positions were not replaced, yet the number of course sections increased. The faculty expressed concern about the ability to fill vacant replacement and new positions to address growth. This was especially true for Counseling, which had lost four positions and which is charged with the implementation of the state's Student Success and Support Program (SSSP). Student Services counselors have taken the lead in implementing the core services and various mandates of the SSSP. The Institutional Self Evaluation Report detailed that "some high-demand programs can use additional full-time" faculty. This was reaffirmed during the site visit with respect to the need for more counselors in implementing the SSSP. (Standards II.B.3, II.B.4, III.A.2)

From 2000 to 2012, the College added 68 full-time classified staff, 40 full-time faculty, 32 classified administrators and seven educational administrators. An analysis shows that while there was a 53.5% increase in full-time classified staff and a combined 100% increase in classified and certificated management positions, there was an increase of just 31% in full-time faculty positions. In 2007, the College had 182.75 full-time faculty. In 2014, the College has 175.55 full-time faculty, which according to the state Chancellor's office calculation is 4.75 over the FON. The growth in administrators is attributed to the addition of 16 managers who were hired to administer grants. (Standard III.A.2)

The Institutional Self Evaluation Report describes the process and frequency of evaluations for faculty, classified, and administrators. Administrators and faculty are provided with training on how to complete evaluations for staff. The Academic Senate played a pivotal role in developing the "Guidelines for Implementation of the Tenure Process." The evaluation process for faculty includes well-developed criteria. Full-time faculty are evaluated on their participation in department, division, and College activities. Through numerous interviews it was determined that the full-time faculty tenure process is clearly defined and is being followed. Similarly, the adjunct faculty evaluation processes are being followed. After considerable effort in recent years, the regular full-time faculty evaluations are now on track. (Standards III.A, III.A.1.b)

Both the College's Board Policy 7250 and the CSEA Contract require that evaluations for administrators and classified staff, respectively, be conducted on an annual basis. A formal instrument has been developed to evaluate classified staff on established criteria with opportunities for comment and examples of recognition as well as improvement. The administration reported that a system is in place to monitor compliance with regular evaluation of classified employees. During the site visit, classified leadership reported that an annual evaluation is not enforced and that if no evaluation was conducted, there is a presumption that the employee is performing satisfactorily. (Standards III.A, III.A.1.b)

A review of employee files during the site visit revealed a somewhat inconsistent pattern of evaluation of administrators and classified staff: for educational and classified administrators, there have been gaps of one year; for classified employees, out of 27 employee files reviewed, the range was from current (2014) to, in the case of two employees, four years since the last evaluation. At the time of the visit, 88% of classified evaluations had been completed. (Standard III.A.1.b)

At the time of the visit, the full-time faculty union had tentatively agreed to include the creation, assessment, and effectiveness in producing SLOs as components of the faculty evaluation process through the self-evaluation portion of the tenure review process. The faculty contract ratification process was being conducted during the site visit. The part-time faculty had recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding for the same purpose. Immediately following the site visit, the team received notice that the full-time faculty agreement had been ratified by the membership. (Standards III.A.1.b,c)

Several Board Policies are in place that address professional ethics, nepotism, discrimination and dismissal. The Academic Senate's Faculty Handbook includes a "Statement on Professional Ethics." Additionally, policies related to academic integrity are published and available. (Standard III.A.1.d)

The College has bargaining unit agreements, Board Policies, and the manual, Decision-Making at College of the Canyons, which detail personnel policies and procedures. Training takes place and employees, especially new employees, are provided with training and materials relating to these policies and procedures. (Standard III.A.3)

Board Policy 7100 defines the College's commitment to diversity and includes the following statement: "The Board recognizes that diversity in the academic environment fosters cultural awareness, promotes mutual understanding and respect, and provides suitable role models for students." Additionally, one of the College's strategic goals is Cultural Diversity. (Standard III.A.4)

The College's 2010 Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Plan is slated to be revised in light of recent changes to equal employment laws and Title 5 regulations. The College has established a process of assigning a Selection Committee Representative to monitor each selection committee regarding EEO practices. As noted elsewhere, AP 7120 articulates the EEO process as part of the orientation of selection committees. (Standards III.A.1, III.A.1.a, III.A.3.a, III.A.4, III.A.4.a, III.A.4.b)

The College annually assesses its progress in reaching equity and diversity. Overall, the College reports that there is an increase in the following: male faculty, male classified, female classified managers, female educational administrators. Full-time faculty and full-time classified administrators have experienced a slight growth in diversity while classified staff have declined by two percent in diversity. (Standard III.A.4.b)

The Institutional Self Evaluation Report presents data on full-time faculty applicants, which included the hiring of 23 faculty over four years. These data detail that progress

has been made with the hiring of Latinos, in that Latinos comprised 13% of all applicants but resulted in 26% of all hires. Whites comprised 48.8% of all applicants and were almost at parity with 47.80% of all hires. The same is not true for African Americans, who comprised 6.8% of all applicants, resulting in no hires.

The Institutional Self Evaluation Report also provides details on ethnic demographics of the Santa Clarita Valley compared to the College's students and employees. It is noteworthy that there is a significantly smaller proportion of employees from African American and Latino backgrounds than among the student population at the College. Although there are some indications that the College can improve in the ethnic diversity of its employees, no clear plan was presented that detailed how the College will reach that goal. The recruitment process stated in AP 7120 does not specifically mention any strategy to develop a diverse pool of candidates. The draft EEO Plan identifies a goal to review applicant pools and any bottlenecks that may be impacting the hiring of more diverse candidates. In recognizing this, the Institutional Self Evaluation Report states, "The College's continuing efforts need to be emphasized to ensure that the diversity of faculty at the College is consistent with the diversity of the student population." Although specific plans to achieve this goal are unclear, this statement was verified as a priority from all persons interviewed. (Standard III.A.4.b)

College policies and procedures define the limited access to employees' personnel files, including, in the case of placing anything of a derogatory nature in the employee's file, sending employees a form notifying them of their right to file a response within ten days. Active personnel and payroll records are maintained in locked and secured units. Inactive personnel records are stored in locked storage units. (Standard III.A.3.b)

The College's policies and procedures identify its commitment to prohibiting and investigating discrimination and harassment, as well as discipline and dismissal policies and procedures. (Standard III.A.4.c)

The College continues to be a recognized leader in the area of professional development. Interviews affirmed the high regard that employees hold for the work emanating from the Office of Professional Development. The office conducts annual needs assessment surveys to gather information for review by three separate committees. The Faculty, Classified and Administrative Development committees use the survey results to plan program offerings. Faculty Flex programs, new faculty training, LEAP (Leadership Education in Action Program), and the Professional Development Mentor Program are significant efforts to provide professional development activities that meet the needs of employees. Professional Development consists of one manager and a part-time classified support position, who together coordinate 600 workshops annually. (Standard III.A.5)

The Institutional Self Evaluation Report details numerous awards received from external agencies for the College's efforts in professional development. Professional Development obtains information about training needs from employee evaluations as well as from surveys. The surveys provide employees with a wide range of topics to prioritize. There appears to be sufficient linkage between the survey of employees' needs and the offering

of professional development opportunities. A committee comprised of the Vice President of Human Resources, the Cultural Heritage Committee, the Associated Students Government, and the Director of Professional Development meet to coordinate and calendar diversity-based workshops, speakers, activities and special events. (Standards III.A.4, III.A.4.a, III.A.5.a)

Adjunct faculty are paid to attend professional development programs and full-time faculty are required to complete 41 hours a year in professional development activities. Classified staff are supported to participate. There is an annual event for classified staff during spring break and an annual retreat for administrators in January.

Employees participating in professional development workshops complete evaluations that are used to improve offerings. A 2013 Faculty and Staff Survey found that 94% of respondents indicated that there are an adequate number of professional development opportunities and 76% are satisfied or very satisfied with the opportunities provided. Of note is that 85% of respondents indicated that the training provided them with “information that has contributed to their professional growth goals.” (Standard III.A.5.b)

### **Conclusions**

The College meets this Standard. Improvements are indicated in a few areas, however, that would increase institutional effectiveness.

The College has policies and an established process of evaluation for all classifications of employees. During the visit, some inconsistencies were discovered to indicate that not all classified and administrative employees receive an annual evaluation per College policy. The College is aware of these issues and is working toward greater compliance. The team suggests that the College adhere to its stated process of evaluations for classified staff and management, and that classified and management evaluations be brought up to date. (Standards III.A, III.A.1.b)

The College demonstrates through its policies and practices an appropriate understanding and concern for issues of equity and diversity. In alignment with the College’s mission statement referencing “embracing diversity” and the Standards related to this, the College has documented that its employment of individuals from African American, Asian American and Latino backgrounds is not at equity with the populations residing in the community. The College’s Institutional Self Evaluation Report states, “The college’s continuing efforts need to be emphasized to ensure that the diversity of faculty at the College is consistent with the diversity of the student population.” Although specific plans to accomplish this were still under revision during the visit, the team encourages the College to formulate a concrete plan to achieve this laudable objective. (Standards III.A.4; III.A.4.b)

### **Recommendations**

None.

## **Standard III — Resources**

### **Standard IIIB — Physical Resources**

#### **General Observations**

The College consists of two campuses: the Valencia Campus and the Canyon Country Campus (CCC). The Valencia site consists of 41 buildings on 154 acres and the CCC site consists of 38 modular buildings and one permanent building for a total of approximately 853,000 square feet of instructional and support space across the two campuses. This represents a 40% increase of square footage since the College's 2008 accreditation study, keeping pace with the institution's consistent enrollment growth.

The College uses its Educational and Facilities Master Plan (EFMP) to inform decisions related to physical resources. Long-range capital planning reflects and supports institutional educational and improvement goals, including the College's commitment to campus safety and sustainability. The Facilities Task Force Committee (FTFC) and the College Planning Team (CPT) take a lead role at the institution in planning for facilities.

Much of the increased physical space noted above was accomplished by leveraging District assets, in the form of general obligation bond funds, with state matching funds, reflective of the College's forward-looking planning efforts. Under Measure C, approved by voters in 2001, the College constructed the current Canyon Country Campus, Hasley Hall, the Sheriff's Academy, the Aliso Library and Aliso Hall, the East Physical Education Building and tennis courts, and the Pico Canyon Hall. Measure M, approved by voters in 2006, permitted the College to continue its growth through the Applied Technology Center, the Mentry Expansion, the Library Expansion, the Student Services/Administration Building and the Dr. Dianne G. Van Hook University Center. This is an impressive amount of construction over the past seven years.

Enrollment trends, anticipated growth and student contact data inform the College's Five Year Construction Plan. Expansion of the Applied Technology Education Center and a new science building to be constructed in 2014-15 are anticipated to accommodate educational needs and to assist the College in meeting student services needs at CCC.

#### **Findings and Evidence**

The College provides safe and sufficient physical resources that support and assure the quality of its programs and services, regardless of location or means of delivery. The College regularly renews its commitment to campus safety. During summer 2012 the College trained approximately 25 managers in National Incident Management System (NIMS) protocol, first aid and CPR, and has conducted numerous safety exercises, and 'live' drills in collaboration with primary responders such as local fire departments. These drills extended to CCC and provided the College an opportunity to refine emergency response efforts through feedback provided from external partners as well as from participants. (Standards III.B.1; III.B.1.b)

Policies and protocols reinforce the College's safety focus. BP 6800 dictates the requirements for a College Injury and Illness Prevention Plan and Hazardous Materials Communications Plan, both of which were evidenced. There was also evidence of College-wide communication regarding emergency preparedness. For example, the "Emergency Response Quick Reference Guide" was located in each of the classrooms and conference rooms visited. The College also participates in a District-wide Emergency Notification System. Although College interviews referenced the role of the Safety Committee in disseminating safety information, there is no evidence that the committee meets regularly. (Standards III.B.1; III.B.1.b)

The Fall 2013 survey of faculty and staff indicates that 94% of CCC staff responding, and 100% of faculty responding, reported feeling 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with personal safety while on campus. In the 2013 Annual Student Survey, 89% of responding students at Valencia Campus indicated that they 'agree' or 'strongly agree' with the statement, "I feel safe on campus during daylight hours." Students who reported feeling safe during evening hours fell to 70% in the same survey. The College has implemented the Campus Escort Service Program at both sites to enhance student safety. (Standards III.B.1; III.B.1.b)

The EFMP serves as the primary planning tool for allocation, maintenance and improvement of physical resources. Developed by CPT and the broader College community in collaboration with the District's master architect, the plan was revised in 2012. The EFMP informs the Five Year Construction Plan and the Facility Master Plan, the latter informing the Annual Scheduled Maintenance Plan. Taken together, the plans support institutional improvement goals. (Standards III.B.1.a; III.B.2.a,b)

The EFMP clearly delineates a vision for maximizing instructional space at CCC given that the Valencia Campus has nearly reached build-out capacity. Two new permanent buildings, adding nearly 39,000 assignable square feet, were planned to be constructed over the next four years at CCC. Referenced in the Institutional Self Evaluation Report, and in the Five Year Capital Outlay Plan, the College projected completing the new CCC science building, totaling 14,500 assignable square feet, in 2016-17. This project was predicated on receiving \$14 million of state matching funds, in the form of a state facilities bond on the November 2014 ballot. Given that a state bond has not materialized, the Vice President of Facilities Planning, Operations and Construction (VPFPOC) reported that the College plans to utilize current facilities at CCC while using Measure M bond funds to modernize 10,000 square feet of classroom and laboratory space in Boykin Hall on the Valencia campus. This short-term solution, the College indicated, will serve its instructional needs for the next two years. While the College's flexibility is to be commended, without additional imminent construction at CCC it is difficult to ascertain how enrollment growth there will be accommodated by the College in the near term. Following the site visit, the team received information from the College indicating that it has plans to address this issue. (Standards III.B.2.a,b)

The College has moved most scheduled maintenance projects to its bond programs. There is limited evidence of total cost of ownership (TCO) analyses with respect to general facilities/ physical assets planning and management. One example provided was in relation to the recently completed University Center that projected future operational and other costs. A systematic approach to TCO across current or future construction projects is not evidenced, however. As a new building is projected to open for use by students and staff, the VPFPOC requests additional staffing – in the form of an augmentation request via the program review process—based on prescribed formulas. These requests represent additional, unfunded, costs to the College’s general fund. Some of these costs are mitigated by increased rental income from the new buildings. The balance of these costs are planned and allocated in the District’s general budget process. (Standards III.B.2.a,b)

The Facilities Department assumes a lead role in designing and developing new spaces, with participation from key user groups, focused on meeting the instructional needs of the College. The department is also responsible for maintaining existing facilities and grounds and for the areas of access, safety, security and hazard mitigation. (Standards III.B.1.a,b)

To assure effectiveness of physical resources in supporting institutional programs and services, the College evaluates its facilities and equipment regularly and systematically. The Institutional Research Department, in conjunction with the Facilities Department, reviews efficiency and space utilization data and reports annually, in the form of a Space Inventory Report, for consideration by the FTFC and College leaders. Departmental program reviews, regular facility inspections, and the Chancellor’s Office Facilities Condition Index assessment help ensure quality control. (Standards III.B.2.b)

The College reports that as specific plans near fruition, the FTFC reviews the alignment between proposed projects and the EFMP, identifying programmatic gaps and making recommendations in collaboration with other shared governance groups such as the CPT and the Management Advisory Council. There is a relative lack of evidence to support the assertion that dialog around facilities planning occurs consistently and regularly, College-wide. For example, there is no information on the College’s FTFC intranet site under the heading “Meetings” and the most recent committee minutes posted are dated May 20, 2010. (Standards III.B; III.B.2.b)

It is evident that the College effectively integrates facilities planning into its College-wide planning. Requests for new facilities and/or additional facilities or space are elucidated in departmental program reviews prepared by department chairs. These reviews are filtered and assessed as to the implications on facilities over the subsequent year, a three-year period, and five years. The VPFPOC indicated, and process maps confirmed, that these requests are reviewed by the Executive Cabinet, prioritized, and ultimately included in the EFMP every five years. (Standards III.B; III.B.2.b)

Secondary effects planning is more dynamic. A process exists such that additional space is identified as it becomes available, then linked to extant program reviews, reviewed by

Facilities which provides feedback, and then by the Executive Cabinet, which ultimately decides which requests are approved. According to the Access & Success Flowchart, the “Submitter is notified of result” and then “Work is funded.” (Standards III.B; III.B.2.b)

The team found that communication with respect to facilities-related decisions can be enhanced, however. While it is evident that facilities planning is integrated into institutional planning, it is not as evident that the College has structures in place to communicate decisions effectively to the broader College community once made, or as plans change—which they have—during the cycle. The Breaking News communiqué appears not to have been used for this purpose. (Standards III.B; III.B.2.b)

The Fall 2013 survey of faculty and staff indicates that 70% of those responding were ‘satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied’ with the maintenance of classrooms and offices, but only 56% reported being ‘satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied’ with space available for meeting with students. 20% of respondents reported being ‘dissatisfied’ or ‘very dissatisfied’ with available space for meeting with students, indicating that instructional and student support space needs continue to be perceived as a challenge. The College has worked to mitigate these concerns as new space is created, and anticipates that its plans for future construction will progressively mitigate them as well. (Standard III.B.1.a)

## **Conclusions**

The College meets the standard, and is to be commended for the breadth and scope of its bond construction program, addressing student and community needs effectively. (Standard III.B)

The College effectively uses its physical resources to support student learning, to provide student services and to improve institutional effectiveness. Where deficiencies have been indicated in the data collected, they have been addressed, as noted with regard to the implementation of a Campus Escort Service. While survey responses indicate that instructional and student support space needs continue to be perceived as a challenge, the College has managed its fiscal and physical resources very effectively, and anticipates that its plans for future construction will mitigate these concerns. Given the vast amount of construction and physical resource enhancement over the past ten years, it is evident that the College considers the needs of its academic programs and support services when planning for new buildings or scheduling maintenance and upgrades. (Standard III.B.1.a)

The College integrates facilities planning into College-wide planning. Improvements to its processes may be made, however, to increase institutional effectiveness. In particular, the team notes that College-wide dialog around facilities planning is somewhat infrequent and inconsistent. Secondary effects discussions do occur and are thorough and practical, but these discussions are limited to the campus constituents immediately affected by changes, following a decision that appears to occur in CPT. Broad-based planning discussions for facilities have occurred in the development of the EFMP; beyond that phase, College-wide awareness of plans during intermediate phases is limited. The team

suggests that the College provide more frequent and consistent opportunities for dialog with the broader College community. The College's system of planning provides for participation in decision-making in the sense that members of the College community have input into the EFMP, and are updated on a regular basis through campus-wide meetings and electronic communications. More robust dialog, and more thorough and regular updates, would improve awareness and understanding. (Standards III.B, III.B.2.b)

The team also suggests that improvement can be made in facilities-related planning by adopting a systematic approach to Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) across current and future construction projects. (Standards III.B.2.a,b)

The lack of state bond funds in the near term has raised a concern related to the funding of new facilities at CCC, which the College is addressing. While the pace of enrollment growth there may be difficult to accommodate, the College is developing alternative plans. (Standard III.B.2.a,b)

### **Recommendations**

None.

## **Standard III — Resources**

### **Standard III.C — Technology Resources**

#### **General Observations**

The College's Information Technology Resources Department (IT) supports student and institutional operation systems by providing exemplary customer service. Technology resources are managed in a manner that enhances student learning programs and services, College-wide communications, research, and operations. Technology planning is integrated with institutional planning. The College regularly assesses technology needs to allocate technology resources and support so as to meet institutional priorities.

#### **Findings and Evidence**

Several College-wide committees are charged with assuring technology is used to its fullest both inside and outside of the classroom. The District's strategic plan for 2012-2015 articulates the need to incorporate technology to ensure student success and open access. The Institutional Research Office annually surveys faculty, staff, and students to assess the effectiveness of current technology. The Fall 2013 survey of faculty and staff indicated that nearly 100% of respondents were satisfied with overall computer support and audiovisual support. The Fall 2013 student survey found three quarters of the students were satisfied or very satisfied with the College website, computers and software. Overall, the College ensures that technology support is designed to meet student learning needs, teaching, College-wide communications, research, and operational systems. (Standard III.C.1)

The College has a robust array of technology support for faculty, staff, administrators, and students. The IT department is comprised of the Management Information Systems, Audio Visual (AV), Online Services, Networking, and Computer Support Services departments. IT is responsible for a wide range of services that enhance the operations of the institution. Services include technical support to the two campuses and three off-site locations; a help desk where users may report technical problems, request technology support and check out equipment such as laptops and AV equipment; hardware and software installations and the maintenance and security of the extensive network; and internet and email access for the entire institution. IT supports the instructional mission through the management of CurricUNET, the program used in the curriculum process; through the management of Blackboard, the College's primary online learning management system; and by ensuring technology in classrooms and computer labs is functioning. IT supports institutional communication by maintaining an email system for employees and students; BoardDocs, the software used for Board of Trustees records; and Blackboard Connect, the emergency notification system. (Standard III.C.1.a)

A planning agenda in the 2008 Institutional Self Evaluation Report identified the need for the College to evaluate and utilize co-location facilities and off-site storage to enhance disaster recovery efforts. In response, IT created a recovery plan with data storage at the Valencia Campus and at CCC. Tape and disk storage backups are used to store College

data at both locations, providing redundancy in data backup. The College network is now protected against power outage with an uninterrupted electrical power source in the form of a generator. A facility in Sacramento houses backup systems for the College's website, email system, and a replicated backup of critical institutional data.

The Professional Development Program (PDP) provides staff and faculty training on software and hardware supported by the College. Individuals may participate in scheduled group training or receive one-on-one training throughout the year. The College also holds an annual Summer Technology Institute. The PDP carries out an annual professional development survey of staff, faculty and administrators to glean data regarding training needs for the campus. Training needs are also identified by Human Resources and are based on global needs identified through the annual employee evaluation process. IT surveys the faculty, staff and administrators annually to gauge how well IT is meeting their needs, but also to identify employee IT training needs. Additional technology training needs are also identified through annual unit plans, workshop evaluation sheets, and IT assessment of the volume of calls on a certain topic. The technology classes offered during the Summer Technology Institute and throughout the year are vetted prior to offering through the faculty, staff, and administrative development committees and ranked in terms of the highest needs. (Standard III.C.1.b)

Another planning agenda in the 2008 Institutional Self Evaluation Report stated that the College would develop a plan for students to receive as-needed training on technology topics important to their academic success. The College designed a training program for students; however, participation did not warrant the continuation of the program. Students still have many opportunities to upgrade their technology skills. There are credit courses in various computer application programs, one-on-one training in the Tutoring Center, and workshops in the Adult Education Program. (Standard III.C.1.b)

The College's strategic goals, departmental program reviews, and annual unit plan updates are used to determine the need for new technology that supports student learning and institutional operations. The Technology Master Plan, updated annually, outlines criteria for equipment replacement. Recommendations for technology development through 2018 align with the College's strategic goals. Equipment replacement is prioritized by the age of the hardware and the needs of the area in which it is located. The College funds technology equipment replacement through the allocation of District general funds, along with Measure M local bond funds. IT tracks technology equipment through an asset management program called TrackIT, a software program that inventories lab and end-user workstations using electronic system information. The College's technology is reliable and is operational 24 hours a day. The majority of the College's technology infrastructure is less than five years old and equipment is replaced on a regular basis to ensure uninterrupted operations and to guarantee sufficient bandwidth to support all of the College's applications. (Standard III.C.1.c)

Several academic programs offer specialized software and systems to support and enhance their curriculum such as high-tech mannequins used by nursing students. IT supports such specialized hardware and software programs. Procurement of new

technology, computer replacement, and software installation of instructional areas are all determined based on the curriculum requirements of instructional programs. Administrative technology needs are determined based on the functions and needs of the those departments. Specialized instructional software system requirements often dictate the replacement of computers in instructional labs before the end of the computers' useful lives. When this occurs, computers are often moved to other computer labs or administrative areas. (Standard III.C.1.c)

Patches and version updates for DataTel Colleague, the College's enterprise resource planning system, are applied twice a year and are scheduled at times that will not affect student learning or registration. Patches and versions updates were current at the time of the visit and are thoroughly tested before being installed in the production database. (Standard III.C.1.d.)

The College uses the program review and unit plan process as its main avenue to assess the technology needs of the institution. The program reviews and unit plans must support the College's mission and strategic goals, and must align with departmental or discipline SLOs and AUOs, and departmental goals. Technology requests are prioritized by department chairs/managers and submitted to the Executive Cabinet, which prioritizes requests and classifies them as forced costs, augmentations, and/or equipment. The Executive Cabinet presents priorities to PAC-B (Budget Committee) with a rationale, in alignment with College strategic goals. PAC-B prepares and forwards its recommendations to the Chancellor for review and approval. (Standard III.C.2)

## **Conclusions**

The College's technological support systems are exemplary and extensive; IT enhances the operations and effectiveness of the organization and allows smooth transitions throughout the institution. (Standard III.C.1.a)

The College has an exemplary IT department focused on customer service. IT is well respected by employees for being a highly professional department that supports student learning and institutional effectiveness. Technology is intertwined with every facet of the College, and IT provides the support needed for teaching, learning, College-wide communications, research, and operational systems. The College is to be commended for the quality of the services provided by the IT team. (Standard III.C)

The College meets the Standard.

## **Recommendations**

None.

## **Standard III — Resources**

### **Standard III.D — Financial Resources**

#### **General Observations**

The College manages its financial resources prudently. A twelve-year history of general fund surpluses and substantial reserve levels indicates adequate fiscal controls and proactive planning across the institution.

Through active enrollment management and a substantive mix of grant funding, Foundation support, partnerships and other local funding, as well as targeted budget reductions when needed, the College weathered the recent recession with resources sufficient to support all facets of student learning.

#### **Findings and Evidence**

A review of external audits confirms that the College's fiscal affairs are well managed. Unqualified opinions and findings-free audits over the past twelve years attest to this fact. Further, in spite of years of fiscal uncertainty, vis-à-vis state funding levels for community colleges, the College has consistently completed its fiscal years with a general fund surplus, revenues exceeding expenditures. The one exception to this record was in 2010-11 when the State of California issued mid-year reductions that could not be responded to within that fiscal period. General fund reserve levels have ranged from 5.97% to 15.98% over this same twelve-year period. The College completed its 2013-14 fiscal year with a general fund reserve level of 11.02%. Financial resources appear sufficient to ensure financial solvency. (Standard III.D; USDE 602.19 [a-e])

A review of program reviews and the College's strategic plan indicates that resource allocation is linked to the College's mission, strategic plan and Educational and Facilities Master Plan. Budget workshops conducted with the Board at the adoption of the Tentative Budget (June) and the Final Budget (September) demonstrate a reliance on the College's mission and goals and show new programs being implemented and funded by the proposed budget. This, of course, comes at the end of the budget development process. The budget development and program review process timeline clearly delineates the College's planning process and indicates close linkage between SLOs, AUOs and budget requests/allocation. (Standards III.D.1; III.D.1.a)

The College proactively and consistently assesses its financial resources throughout the budget development process. Current information from the Chancellor's Office is married with enrollment projections and refined as necessary. These are then shared with the College community via the President's Advisory Council- Budget (PAC-B) and are, ultimately, approved by the Board. Budget managers and grant managers share information, and deliberation concerning the viability of a particular grant occurs at the Executive Cabinet Grants Review Committee and the Grants Implementation Team. Information is shared broadly throughout the College, through Datatel Colleague reports and Board of Trustees financial reports. (Standard III.D.1.b)

The College demonstrates adequate sensitivity to the long-term fiscal implications of short-term decisions as part of its annual budgeting process. This is most clearly evidenced by the College's approach to its Certificates of Participation (COPs). The COPs were used to fund capital improvements, and current debt service is funded primarily through revenues generated, in part, by the use of those assets. Another example of solid long-term planning is the District's commitment to funding its Annual Required Contribution (ARC) of its Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEBs) as determined by bi-annual actuarial studies. When inquiries were made with respect to long-term costs of the College's numerous grants, the Vice President of Administrative Services reported that more effectively assessing potential impacts of ongoing costs related to grants is an area of current focus. (Standards III.D.1.c; III.D.3.c,d,e)

As a key component of the College's decision-making process, the charge of the PAC-B is made explicit: it is "designed to focus on both short-term and long-term fiscal responsibility, provide insight to the development of the budget, encourage understanding of the budget on an ongoing basis, work to ensure that the budget allocation process is driven by campus-wide planning and strategic priorities and provide recommendations on budget items to the District Chancellor to review and use to make recommendations to the Board of Trustees." A collegial group of eighteen appointees, the group receives input from other teams including the Management Advisory Council, the College Planning Team, and the Executive and Full Cabinet. These planning meetings inform the Budget Parameters tool, and subsequent budget iterations. (Standard III.D.1.d)

During the site visit, information became available that indicates that the level of engagement by the College with the PAC-B with respect to its advisory role and decision-making contribution needs clarification, if not improvement. While structures are in place and education has begun, College-wide, collective dialog around resource allocation needs to be more inclusive. PAC-B members are representative of college constituencies, and they are thoroughly briefed on their responsibilities to communicate as well as to contribute. Moreover, budget information is made available to the College community through all-College meetings and through administrator visits to division and department meetings as needed. Nevertheless, the team learned through interviews that dialog and general awareness can be improved with regard to the fiscal conditions that affect the institution. (Standard III.D.1.d)

Appropriate internal controls, policies and procedures exist to ensure financial integrity at the College. External audits—of both unrestricted and restricted resources—have consistently been free of findings and have resulted in unqualified/unmodified opinions. Financial information is made available to administrators, faculty and staff through the Datatel Colleague financial software. Financial transactions are reconciled periodically between Datatel Colleague and the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE), which serves as the College's fiscal support. Financial information, reflecting budget transfers and adjustments, is also shared monthly with the PAC-B and at all-College presentations. Annual audits of the College and its Foundation are shared publicly with the College community and with the Board. (Standards III.D.2; III.D.2.a,b,c)

College staff receive training on compliance measures related to grants and categorical funding. Business Services also works closely with staff to ensure that expenditures are consistent with the purpose of the funding source. Internal controls are evaluated primarily during the external auditing process. Although the College has used the same external auditing firm for the past twelve years, there is evidence that the firm's visiting team changes frequently to ensure objectivity. Audits of the College's bond funds have indicated appropriate use of funds. When audit findings have materialized, in terms of control deficiencies or other concerns, the College has acted quickly to resolve them. (Standards III.D.2.d,e; III.D.3.h)

Cash flow has been managed adequately by the use of short-term borrowing, in the form of interest-free borrowing from the LACOE or through the issuance of Tax Revenue Anticipatory Notes (TRANS). Reserve levels, reflecting prudent fiscal management, are consistent with ensuring financial stability. (Standards III.D.3; III.D.3.a)

The College effectively manages its student financial aid program, grants and auxiliary organizations through a multi-pronged approach that includes collaboration of its Executive team, Fiscal Services team, Student Services team, and its Contracts, Procurement and Risk Management team, among others. External audits in each of these areas have resulted in unqualified opinions. Student loan default rates are evaluated annually and have historically fallen below the threshold of concern established in Federal regulations. (Standards III.D.3.b,f; Commission Policy on Title IV)

External audits also indicate strong contract management on the part of the College. Although decentralized with respect to initiation, contracts with external agencies are managed by the College's Contracts, Procurement, and Risk Management team. Contracts consistent with its mission and goals are negotiated, reviewed by legal counsel as appropriate, and approved or ratified by the Board. Federal and other guidelines are taken into account when crafting the language of contracts. (Standard III.D.3.g)

Financial resource planning is integrated with institutional planning. Departmental program reviews are aligned with College goals and objectives and with enrollment projections that drive staffing and other resource allocations. SLOs and AUOs are then evaluated at year end to determine the efficacy of resource allocation with respect to student learning and departmental goals and to assess where there is room for improvement. Fiscal planning for capital construction is also evaluated through College bond oversight committees for its efficacy and compliance with Proposition 39 mandates. The results of these assessments are communicated College-wide prior to the start of the subsequent budget development process and shared with the Board. (Standard III.D.4)

## **Conclusions**

The Finance team is competent, professional and experienced. The College demonstrates prudent and conservative fiscal management evidenced by its general fund reserve balances and historically balanced budgets. Fiscal resource allocation is clearly integrated

into the College's planning processes. This fiscal management approach supports student learning and protects its programs and services.

The College is commended for its successful fiscal management, the breadth and scope of its bond construction program, and its leverage of taxpayer dollars with State matching funds and donations. (Standard III.D)

The College meets the Standard. Minor improvements may be made, however, in order to increase institutional effectiveness. As the College reviews its governance and decision-making systems and educates members of the College community about them, it is advisable for the College to clarify the means by which members of the College community may engage with the PAC-B with respect to its advisory role and decision-making contribution. While evidence indicates considerable efforts on the part of the administration to communicate concerning fiscal issues, the College should continue to strive to make collective dialog around resource allocation more inclusive. (Standard III.D.1.d)

The team also encourages the College to continue its focus on more effectively assessing potential impacts of ongoing costs related to grants. (Standard III.D.1.c)

### **Recommendations**

None.

## **Standard IV — Leadership and Governance**

### **Standard IVA — Decision-Making Roles and Processes**

#### **General Observations**

The College practices a team approach generally, encouraging widespread participation in problem-solving and pursuing innovative and effective solutions. The institution and its leadership team values a collegial consultation process that enables all constituent groups to provide input, take responsibility, and participate in the areas in which they are specifically affected. The Chancellor establishes those teams and processes. She sets a high standard for ethical leadership and encourages widespread participation. This process involves a myriad of participatory governance committees that forward recommendations to the Board through the Chancellor. The College Planning Team (CPT) is the primary participatory governance structure at the College. The Board acts on their recommendations at its monthly meetings, as well as on recommendations from other institutional governance committees. Outside of this governance structure, the administrators use the Educational and Facilities Master Plan, the Technology Master Plan, and the Strategic Plan Highlighted Goals 2012-2015 and Strategic Plan Highlighted Accomplishments 2009-2012 as reference documents to assist in making day-to-day decisions. The College also uses its manual, *Decision-Making at College of the Canyons* (July 2014), to delineate the methodologies and pathways for making major decisions at the institution. This guide has been updated every July for the last five years. It is a valuable management and leadership tool. It also contains the names of the governance committees, committee membership, committee missions, and who each committee reports to, as well as who chairs each of the committees.

#### **Findings and Evidence**

The mission, vision, and philosophy statements in *Decision-Making at the College of the Canyons* provide evidence that the College has a set of guiding principles. These are also easily accessed via the College website, and there is evidence that they have been recently updated with input from the various College constituency groups. This College guide contextualizes the College community's shared commitment to maintaining an open and inclusive process that allows the College community to participate in collegial consultation, decision-making, and in taking action on those decisions. Though the guide is updated every July, it has not been endorsed by the Board of Trustees. Instead, it is signed by the co-chairs of CPT, that being the Chancellor and a member of the faculty appointed by the Academic Senate. (Standards IV.A.2,3)

There are a large number of collegial consultation bodies within the College. The umbrella decision-making group is the CPT. It consists of 52 College constituents who meet monthly. This institutional governance committee collegially consults and discusses a myriad of College-wide issues and provides advice and recommendations to the Chancellor. In addition, the Executive Cabinet as well as other administrators discuss and make recommendations to the Chancellor in regards to the day-to-day operations of the College. On the academic side, there are a total of 31 program advisory committees

covering programs like Fire Technology, Hotel & Restaurant Management, Land Surveying, Library & Media Technology, and Manufacturing Technology, to name a few. There is also the President's Advisory Council – Budget, a committee designed to focus on fiscal responsibility, provide insight to the development of the budget, encourage understanding of the budget, and work to ensure that the budget allocation process is driven by College-wide planning and strategic priorities. It is co-chaired by the Vice President of Business Services and a faculty member that is appointed by the Academic Senate. There is evidence that these institutional governance committees meet regularly, that there are agendas for their meetings, and that minutes are taken. Many of the minutes for these meetings are accessible via the College website. (Standards IV.A.1,2,3)

Vice Presidents, Assistant Superintendents, Deans, and Directors directly manage and oversee their areas, and provide leadership to their staff on a daily basis. These administrators provide input and leadership by participating in weekly and monthly meetings such as division deans' meetings, Management Advisory Council, President's Cabinet, Executive Cabinet, and the Institutional Advancement Team. Administrators are also represented in the College-wide committees as well as in the oversight of College operational processes. (Standards IV.A.2,3)

Classified staff members are encouraged to participate in all College governance. Currently, the College's California State Employee Association (CSEA) chapter has taken on all of the responsibilities mandated by State law with regard to classified staff representation regarding compensation and benefits, seeking recommendations for collegial consultation, and committee appointments for classified staff. There is a Classified Senate that has been relatively inactive since 2009. Recently, however, the Classified Senate has begun to create a Memorandum of Understanding between themselves and the College's CSEA chapter. This is evidenced through agendas and minutes, which include committee membership and attendance as well as a draft of the Memorandum of Understanding. (Standards IV.A.1,2,3)

Faculty play the primary role in determining the content and delivery of courses. They also play a central role in the governance of the College, and do so primarily through the Academic Senate. The Academic Senate participates in governance through collegial consultation, by representation at Board meetings, and by having a regular place on the Board's agendas for a monthly Academic Senate report. After minimal collaboration with the Chancellor, the Academic Senate appoints faculty to all of the College-wide governance committees and hiring committees. The Curriculum Committee forwards all curriculum recommendations to the Academic Senate for approval, which in turn sends them through the Chancellor to the Board for final approval. The faculty co-chairs for the CPT and the PAC-B (Budget Committee) are also approved by the Academic Senate. Board agendas and minutes as well as minutes for the CPT and PAC-B provide evidence that faculty have a role in governance. Faculty representatives participate on numerous other collegial consultation committees as well. (Standards IV.A.1,2,3)

Students also have a substantial role in providing input and leadership with regard to decision-making. Student input on the impact of policies and procedures is made possible through active participation on College committees and through the Associated Student Government. Student representatives are on a majority of the institutional governance committees. They volunteer to serve, and are appointed by Associated Student Government to serve for one year. They have been given office space in the Student Center. The Student Trustee plays a different role than that of the President of Associated Student Government. The Student Trustee is elected by all students to represent both campuses. In contrast, there are separately elected Associated Student Government leaders for both the Canyon Country and Valencia campuses. The Student Trustee casts an advisory vote as a member of the Board of Trustees. That said, the Student Trustee is first when it comes to voting on all issues before the Board. Though his/her vote is nonbinding, it does serve to set the tone with the other five Board members in regards to where the students stand on each agenda item. Although they do not always agree on every issue, there is a significant amount of consultation between the Student Trustee and the President of Associated Student Government. (Standards IV.A.1,3)

The Board is responsible for setting, reviewing and updating the policies of the District as presented and recommended to them by the Chancellor. Board Policy 7215 stipulates that the Board will rely primarily on the recommendations of the Academic Senate on academic and professional matters or will come to mutual agreement with the Academic Senate. The College honors the precept of participatory governance as delineated in the Standard and in state law. The College relies heavily on faculty, its Academic Senate, the Curriculum Committee, and academic administrators for recommendations about student learning programs and services. (Standard IV.A.2)

The College is committed to open processes that include not only members of the College community but the College's major stakeholders in the community, and well established College-community partnerships. These groups help inform academic and professional matters; planning, designing and hiring for the future; and identifying and acquiring resources. Community representatives participate with the College on advisory committees, the Foundation, and partnering initiatives. The College has conducted a number of online surveys that included all College constituencies. (Standard IV.A.1.3)

A well-established set of policies and procedures govern the College. The role of leadership and the institution's governance and decision-making structures and processes are not being regularly evaluated in order to assure their integrity and effectiveness. The team noted that at the time of the visit, the College was preparing to hold educational forums on governance processes. (Standard IV.A.5)

The College works closely with the surrounding community. Through members of the Board and of the College community, the College has created a large number of community partnerships. Evidence is found in the large number of partnership agreements and in the many relationships between the College and external agencies and businesses. The College complies with Commission policies and requirements for public disclosure, and has submitted required reports. Development of the Institutional Self

Evaluation Report was a year-long, College-wide effort. There were five writing teams, each with faculty co-leads, as well as an evidence team. The Academic Senate ensured that a large percentage of faculty, covering all disciplines, were involved. Two of the five Board members were involved in the writing of Standard IV.B, and participated in the review of all the remaining Standards. In addition, all Board members were involved in document review and provided input. (Standard IV.A.4; E.R. 20; E.R. 21)

## **Conclusions**

College constituents feel as though they are stakeholders in the organization. There are a number of lines of communication available to faculty, staff, administrators, students, and other members of the College community to have their voices heard. The Chancellor holds open office hours on a monthly basis, on both the Valencia and the Canyon Country campuses. This allows the Chancellor and the campus administrators to gain unfiltered insight into the campus community both internally and externally. There are annual meetings hosted on the Valencia campus that include the Boards from both the local high school districts and the College, as well as the superintendents and principals. (Standard IV.A.1)

There is a pervasive attitude at the College that permeates all constituent groups, and it says not to give up, to persevere, that relationships are important, and to be innovative. These are common themes that rang true in every interview. The institutional leaders have created an environment for empowerment, innovation, and institutional excellence. Faculty, staff, administrators, and students are encouraged to take the initiative in improving the practices, programs, and services in which they are involved. Additionally, it is okay to fail as long as you learn from your mistake and endeavor not to repeat it. (Standards IV.A; IV.A.1)

The College is commended for its student leadership. Student leaders are commended for their tireless efforts on behalf of all students on both campuses. Their energy and enthusiasm are infectious. They work very hard every day to ensure that the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few, or the one. These student leaders are engaging faculty, staff, administrators, and community members daily. (Standards IV.A; IV.A.3)

There are a significant number of actions that take place every day that are not delineated in a Board policy or procedures. For example, the College does not have a Board-approved policy nor any approved procedures that ensure that the institutional governance structures outlined in Decision-Making at College of the Canyons are working and are effective. While the guide defines the role of leadership and the institution's governance and decision-making structures, there are no approved procedures that are derived from a Board-approved policy that will ensure the governance structures and processes outlined in the guide are regularly evaluated, thereby assuring their integrity and effectiveness. The current effort to educate the College community on governance processes is a step in the right direction. Nevertheless, a well-defined, formal policy and procedure for regularly evaluating and assessing the institutional governance structures outlined in the College's guide would ensure that the College has a means to

assess and evaluate the work of the institutional governance committees. Those procedures would also serve as a means for the results of the evaluations to be widely communicated to all constituent groups, and the regular evaluations could then be used as the basis for improving the College's overall governance structure. Additionally, the team suggests that the College's guide for decision-making, and the processes it documents, would be strengthened if endorsed formally by the Board of Trustees. (Standards IV.A.2,3)

### **Recommendations**

Recommendation 3. In order to increase institutional effectiveness, the team recommends that the College develop formal, written policies and procedures to ensure that governance and decision-making structures and processes are regularly evaluated to ensure integrity and effectiveness, and that the College widely communicate the results of these evaluations and use them as the basis for improvement. (Standard IV.A.5)

## **Standard IV — Leadership and Governance**

### **Standard IVB — Board and Administrative Organization**

#### **General Observations**

The College takes pride in the stability of the Board and Chancellor and credits this stability with the excellent working relationship between the Board and the Chancellor. The Board delegates full authority to the Chancellor to administer Board policies without Board interference (Board Policy and Administrative Procedure 2430). Chancellor and Board have a good relationship with frequent interactions. The Chancellor provides Board members with a packet of documents in weekly updates. Board members feel free to contact the Chancellor directly with any questions or requests, the responses to which are then provided to the full Board. Board members express great trust and confidence in the Chancellor. Board members are exceptionally involved in the local community and help facilitate links between the College and the community.

#### **Findings and Evidence**

The Board of Trustees and Chancellor work together to establish policies that guide the College in fulfilling the College's mission. The Board serves as an independent policy-making body that reflects the public interest and acts as a whole. Board policies are consistent with the College's mission statement and identify Board responsibilities and duties as well as provide a strong statement of ethics. Board Policy (BP) 2200 clearly delineates the responsibilities of the Board to include oversight of fiscal affairs and regular review of indicators of student learning programs. BP 2430 identifies the duties of the Chancellor to include reporting disaggregated student learning indicators to the Board. Minutes of Board meetings illustrate that these policies are followed. The team found, however, that there is no established cycle to assure that all District policies are reviewed regularly. The Policy Council is responsible for policy review, and many policies have been reviewed, but the Council has no official, systematic review cycle. The Academic Senate plans to propose to the Policy Council that a regular policy review cycle be established and followed. (Standards IV.B.1; IV.B.1.a,b,c,d,e)

Board members are active participants in the Community College League of California (CCLC) Excellence in Trusteeship Program and are involved in a variety of professional and educational organizations. Members are involved in advocacy in Sacramento for community colleges, and have attended many community college conferences related to budget issues, sustainability, facilities planning, and other pertinent issues. The Board President has served on the CCLC Advisory Committee on Education Services for over twelve years, and leads new trustee orientations at state-level conferences. Moreover, the Board's newest member has been oriented to the trustee role. The Board's policy and procedures for trustee development and orientation are contained in BP/AP 2740. (Standards IV.B.1.f)

The 2002 accreditation team observed that the Board had not regularly assessed itself. Recommendation 6 from 2002 stated, "The team recommends that the Board of Trustees

review and follow its established policy for self-evaluation.” Similarly, the 2008 accreditation team stated in its report, “The Board is planning to integrate its goals resulting from their self-evaluation into the College’s annual goals process. The team suggests that the Board could improve the process by making such goals more transparent to the institution.” The Board’s procedures (AP 2745) stipulate that “the Board will use the results [of the self-evaluation] to assess and establish priorities for improvement in the coming year.” After compilation of the results of the self-evaluation, these results are to be discussed at a Board self-evaluation workshop at which priorities for improvement are set for the coming year based on the results. Board minutes from 2013 indicate that this process has been followed, though at a formative and minimal level: at the June 11, 2013 self-evaluation workshop, improvement goals were an outcome of the process. Board agendas and minutes also show that Board self-evaluation was a topic for discussion at the September 18, 2013 and October 29, 2013 Board meetings. The June 11, 2013 minutes mention revisiting Board goals at a mid-year meeting, and it could be argued that this did not occur. Minutes for the September 18, 2013 meeting include that the Board reviewed accreditation Standards and discussed what may be considered appropriate and inappropriate trustee behavior, but no discussion of priorities or goals is in evidence. The only part of the meeting that appears related to the goals announced out of the June 11, 2013 workshop was that an overview was provided of the status of Board Section 2000 policies and procedures. Minutes for the “Special Board Workshop – Board of Trustees’ Self-Evaluation” held on October 29, 2013 report that there was a discussion of the results of the self-evaluation tool but no action plan or goals are provided as an outcome. The discussion reported in minutes focused on individual trustee behaviors, including discussion of the book, *The Rogue Trustee*, and proposed use of a “Rogue Trustee Self-Assessment checklist.” These self-evaluative discussions were surely beneficial for the Board, and are a clear indication that the Board takes self-evaluation seriously, even though they do not completely fulfill the letter and spirit of the process envisioned in AP 2745. (Standard IV.B.1.g)

The Board has a code of ethics and has provided an accompanying administrative procedure that clearly defines the policy for dealing with behavior that violates this code. Moreover, Board discussion of *The Rogue Trustee* has surely heightened the Board’s sense of appropriate, ethical Board behavior. (Standard IV.B.1.h)

The Board is involved in the College’s accreditation process. Board members received updates during the months when the institutional self-evaluation was in process, reports on the Midterm Report and other accreditation reports, and additional information about the process. Board minutes indicate that an accreditation workshop was held for the Board on April 24, 2014 and consisted of a panel presentation by a visiting chancellor and trustee and a question and answer session. Two Board members participated in the writing of the Standard IVB section of the Institutional Self Evaluation Report. (Standard IV.B.1.i)

The Board is responsible for selecting and evaluating the Chancellor. However, the team found that the Board does not have clearly defined policies for selecting and evaluating the Chancellor. While there is a policy on the selection of the chief executive officer, BP

2431, the team found that this policy should be reviewed and perhaps revised, because it does not identify the process to be followed when a vacancy occurs; it has not been reviewed since 2008. (Standard IV.B.1.j)

The Board has established a policy on Evaluation of Chief Executive Officer of the District, BP 2435, and the policy has been regularly followed. The separate interviews of Board members and of the Chancellor indicate that the Chancellor provides an annual report of her activities and accomplishments to the Board that includes her proposed goals for the following year; this document is the basis for the Chancellor's annual evaluation. (Standard IV.B.1.j)

The College has experienced rapid growth over the past two decades and has had to plan and adapt to the needs of the Santa Clarita Valley and growing numbers of students. The Decision-Making at College of the Canyons guide, and the Strategic Plan Highlighted Goals 2012- 2015, provide evidence of the leadership of the Chancellor, her executive team and the Board in planning for and addressing these changes. These documents describe a planning process that involves all constituents at the College and representatives from the wider community. The Chancellor oversees a large administrative staff and delegates authority to these managers to carry out the College's mission. (Standards IV.B.2.a,b)

Planning, budgeting and assessing institutional effectiveness all depend on accurate data. There appears to be a continuous cycle of assessment which informs and integrates resource allocation and educational planning. (Standard IV.B.2.b)

The Chancellor is well informed concerning statutes and regulations, and communicates information on them to ensure College compliance. Budget and expenditures are effectively controlled by the Chancellor. The College has remained fiscally stable and has been successful at securing external funding through grants and the College's foundation. The Chancellor's role in the budgetary process is very clear and she is credited in the Institutional Self Evaluation Report with effective fiscal leadership. Ample evidence of the Chancellor's involvement in the local community was provided. It is noted that she has received numerous awards and accolades in recognition of her contributions to the College and the Santa Clarita community. (Standards IV.B.2.c,d,e)

## **Conclusions**

Based on a review of evidence and interviews, the team found that the College meets most of the expectations of the Standard very well—even, in one significant respect, to the point of commendation. There are other, specific areas where the College can benefit from targeted improvements.

The College is commended for the stability of its leadership and the community partnerships that have developed as a result of this institutional leadership. As detailed elsewhere in this report, this stability of leadership, development of an entrepreneurial

spirit, and focus on building relationships has been of profound benefit to both College and community. (Standards IV.B.2.a,b; I.A.1; II.A.1.a)

Concerning the Board's self-evaluation process, the Board has not fully benefitted from the guidance received in 2002 and 2008 visiting teams, and would benefit from specific improvements in its process. The Board should continue its progress in self-evaluation and rigorously fulfill all of the steps in its procedure for Board self-evaluation (AP 2745). In particular, the team felt that given the emphasis on goal formation in the 2002 and 2008 accreditation assessments, and the fact that the adopted procedures include a step where the Board requires itself to "establish priorities for improvement in the coming year," the Board could improve its practices of self-evaluation by documenting priorities and goals coming out of the self-evaluation workshop, then pursuing them and assessing progress on them formally. Moreover, given the fact that the 2008 team suggested that "the Board could improve the process by making such goals more transparent to the institution," the team suggests that the Board consider not only documenting its goals and priorities by posting them in minutes on the website, but also discussing them with, and disseminating them to, the College community and the community at large. Following the visit, the team learned that the Board has engaged the College community by holding workshops during College 'FLEX' days; the Board could use such opportunities to discuss its progress on its goals. (Standard IV.B.1.g)

The team found that the Board participates in development activities, and that the newest trustee has been oriented to the role of trustee. (Standard IV.B.1.f)

The team found that there is no established cycle to assure that all District policies are reviewed regularly. While it is clear that many policies have been reviewed in recent years, and that responsibility for this has been assigned to the Policy Council, the Council appears to have no official, systematic review cycle. The team suggests improvement to this process by establishing a formal cycle. (IV.B.1.b, IV.B.1.e)

## **Recommendations**

Recommendation 4. In order to increase institutional effectiveness, the team recommends that the Board formalize and adhere to a regular cycle of review for Board policies. (Standards II.A.6.c; IV.B.1.b,e)