

# **External Evaluation Report**

**Sierra College  
5100 Sierra College Blvd  
Rocklin, CA 95677**

A confidential report prepared for the  
Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges  
Western Association of Schools and Colleges

This report represents the findings of the peer review team that visited  
Sierra College from October 7, 2019 to October 10, 2019.

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**Sierra College  
Comprehensive Evaluation Visit**

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## Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| <b>Summary of Evaluation Report</b> .....  | 4  |
| <b>Major Findings and Recommendations of the Peer Review Team Report</b> .....       | 5  |
| Team Commendations .....   | 5  |
| Team Recommendations.....  | 5  |
| <b>Eligibility Requirements</b> .....  | 6  |
| <b>Federal Regulations and Related Commission Policies</b> .....                     | 7  |
| Public Notification of an Evaluation Team Visit and Third-Party Comment .....        | 7  |
| Standards and Performance with Respect to Student Achievement .....                  | 7  |
| Credits, Program Length, and Tuition .....   | 8  |
| Transfer Policies .....  | 9  |
| Distance Education and Correspondence Education .....                                | 10 |
| Student Complaints.....  | 11 |
| Institutional Disclosure and Advertising and Recruitment Materials.....              | 12 |
| Title IV Compliance .....  | 12 |
| <b>Standard I</b> .....  | 14 |
| IA. Mission .....  | 14 |
| IB. Assuring Academic Quality and Institutional Effectiveness, Academic Quality..... | 15 |
| IC. Institutional Integrity .....  | 18 |
| <b>Standard II</b> .....   | 21 |
| IIA. Instructional Programs .....  | 21 |
| IIB. Library and Learning Support Services.....                                      | 26 |
| IIC. Student Support Services.....   | 27 |
| <b>Standard III</b> .....  | 30 |
| IIIA. Human Resources .....  | 30 |
| IIIB. Physical Resources.....  | 32 |
| IIIC. Technology Resources .....   | 33 |
| IIID. Financial Resources .....  | 34 |
| <b>Standard IV</b> .....   | 37 |
| IVA. Decision-making roles and processes .....                                       | 37 |
| IVB. Chief Executive Officer .....   | 38 |
| IVC. Governing Board.....  | 39 |
| <b>Quality Focus Essay</b> .....   | 42 |

## Summary of Evaluation Report

INSTITUTION: Sierra College

DATES OF VISIT: October 7, 2019 to October 10, 2019

TEAM CHAIR: Dr. Joe Wyse

A twelve-member accreditation peer review team visited Sierra College on October 7 to October 10, 2019, for the purpose of determining whether the College continues to meet Accreditation Standards, Eligibility Requirements, Commission Policies, and USDE regulations. The team evaluated how well the College is achieving its stated purposes, providing recommendations for quality assurance and institutional improvement.

In preparation for the visit, the team chair attended a team chair training workshop on August 1, 2019, and conducted a pre-visit to the campus on August 31, 2019. During this visit, the chair met with campus leadership and key personnel involved in the self-evaluation preparation process. The external peer review team received team training provided by staff from ACCJC on September 5, 2019.

The review team received the College's self-evaluation document (ISER) and related evidence several weeks prior to the site visit. Team members found the ISER to be a comprehensive, well written, document detailing the processes used by the College to address Eligibility Requirements, Commission Standards, and Commission Policies. The team confirmed that the ISER was developed through broad participation by the entire College community including faculty, staff, students, and administration. The team found that the College provided a thoughtful ISER containing several self-identified action plans for institutional improvement. The College also prepared a Quality Focus Essay.

Prior to the visit, team members completed their team assignments, identified areas for further investigation, and provided a list of interview and evidence requests. On October 7, 2019, eight team members visited all of Sierra College's outreach sites in teams of 2-4 team members per site. All team members then attended a reception at Sierra College and were provided a tour of the campus. On October 8, 2019, team members began meeting with various individuals and groups, and these meetings continued through October 10. Additional requests for evidence were submitted during this time period.

During the visit, team members met with approximately 140 faculty, administrators, classified staff, and students (some duplicated) in formal meetings, and group and individual interviews. Team members also met with trustees from the Sierra Joint Community College District and observed meetings of the Board, Curriculum Committee, and Academic Senate. Two open forums were held, and these provided the College community and others with an opportunity to meet with members of the peer review team.

# **Major Findings and Recommendations of the Peer Review Team Report**

## **Team Commendations**

### Commendation:

The team commends the College for its exemplary practice of providing personnel with opportunities for continued professional development in order to meet its mission (IIIA.14).

## **Team Recommendations**

### **Recommendations to Meet Standards:**

None.

### **Recommendations to Improve Quality:**

#### Recommendation 1:

In order to improve, the team recommends that the College ensure DE courses consistently adhere to the policies established by Sierra College in AP 4105 (Distance Education) concerning regular and substantive instructor initiated contact with students (Policy on Distance Education and Correspondence Education).

#### Recommendation 2:

In order to improve, the College should ensure that all elements of the mission are clearly reflected where the mission is described in College publications and the College consistently convey the elements of mission as described in the standard (IA.1).

## **Eligibility Requirements**

### **1. Authority**

Sierra College is accredited by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) and is therefore licensed to operate and award degrees. ACCJC is a regional accrediting body recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.

The College meets the eligibility requirement.

### **2. Operational Status**

The team confirms that Sierra College is operational and serves approximately 25,900 students annually. During the 2018-19 academic year, the College awarded 3,522 degrees or certificates, according to the California Community College Chancellor's Office Datamart.

The College meets the eligibility requirement.

### **3. Degrees**

The team confirms that the majority of the College's educational offerings lead to a degree or certificate. A majority of Sierra College's students are enrolled in courses leading to a degree or certificate.

The College meets the eligibility requirement.

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

The team confirms that the Sierra College District Governing Board has appointed a chief executive officer (CEO). The CEO does not serve as a member of the board nor as the board president. The CEO has the authority to administer board policies. The current CEO began his employment with the district in July 2011.

The College meets the eligibility requirement.

### **5. Financial Accountability**

The team confirms that Sierra College undergoes and makes available an external financial audit by a certified public accountant. All audits are presented to the Board of Trustees at regular open sessions Board meetings. The College maintains compliance with Title IV regulations.

The College meets the eligibility requirement.

## Federal Regulations and Related Commission Policies

### Public Notification of an Evaluation Team Visit and Third-Party Comment

#### Evaluation Items:

|                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | The institution has made an appropriate and timely effort to solicit third party comment in advance of a comprehensive evaluation visit.                                      |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | The institution cooperates with the evaluation team in any necessary follow-up related to the third party comment.  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | The institution demonstrates compliance with the Commission <i>Policy on Rights and Responsibilities of the Commission and Member Institutions</i> as to third party comment. |

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

|                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements, but that follow-up is recommended. |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | The team has reviewed the elements of this component and found the institution does not meet the Commission's requirements.                                  |

#### Narrative

The Team has reviewed and concluded that the institution has made an appropriate and timely effort to solicit third-party comments in advance of a comprehensive evaluation visit. Sierra College advertised the external site visit on its website through Board of Trustee meetings, and held several open forums and received feedback that was used by the writing teams during the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report writing process and team visit.

### Standards and Performance with Respect to Student Achievement

#### Evaluation Items:

|                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | The institution has defined elements of student achievement performance across the institution, and has identified the expected measure of performance within each defined element. Course completion is included as one of these elements of student achievement. Other elements of student achievement performance for measurement have been determined as appropriate to the institution's mission. |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | The institution has defined elements of student achievement performance within each instructional program, and has identified the expected measure of performance within   |

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

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

**Conclusion Check-Off:**

|                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission’s requirements.                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission’s requirements, but that follow-up is recommended. |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | The team has reviewed the elements of this component and found the institution does not meet the Commission’s requirements.                                  |

**Narrative:**

Sierra College demonstrated that it defines, sets, and reviews achievement benchmarks. These benchmarks include job placement rates and exam pass rates where programs have associated licensure exams. The College analyzes its Institution Set Standards and Goals regularly and the results are used in program-level and institution-wide planning to support its mission.

**Credits, Program Length, and Tuition**

**Evaluation Items:**

|                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Credit hour assignments and degree program lengths are within the range of good practice in higher education (in policy and procedure).   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | The assignment of credit hours and degree program lengths is verified by the institution, and is reliable and accurate across classroom based courses, laboratory classes, distance education classes, and for courses that involve clinical practice (if applicable to the institution). |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Tuition is consistent across degree programs (or there is a rational basis for any program-specific tuition).   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Any clock hour conversions to credit hours adhere to the Department of Education’s  |



|                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
|                                     | conversion formula, both in policy and procedure, and in practice.   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | The institution demonstrates compliance with the Commission <i>Policy on Institutional Degrees and Credits</i> . |

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

**Conclusion Check-Off:**

|                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission’s requirements.                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission’s requirements, but that follow-up is recommended. |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | The team has reviewed the elements of this component and found the institution does not meet the Commission’s requirements.                                  |

**Narrative:**

Credit hour assignments and degree program lengths are listed in Board Policy (BP) and Administrative Procedure (AP) 4020 (Program and Curriculum Development). Tuition and fees are consistent across degree programs and listed in the proper BPs. The Team has found that the College adheres to the Department of Education’s conversion formula in policy, procedure, and practice.

**Transfer Policies**

**Evaluation Items:**

|                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Transfer policies are appropriately disclosed to students and to the public.                         |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Policies contain information about the criteria the institution uses to accept credits for transfer. |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | The institution complies with the Commission <i>Policy on Transfer of Credit</i> .                   |

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

**Conclusion Check-Off:**

|                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission’s requirements.                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission’s requirements, but that follow-up is recommended. |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | The team has reviewed the elements of this component and found the institution does not meet the Commission’s requirements.                                  |

**Narrative:**

The College has published transfer of credit policies and adheres to the Commission Policy on Transfer Credit. Transfer policies indicate criteria for that the College uses for acceptance of credit.

**Distance Education and Correspondence Education**

**Evaluation Items:**

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

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

**Conclusion Check-Off:**

|                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission’s requirements.                                    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission’s requirements, but that follow-up is recommended. |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | The team has reviewed the elements of this component and found the institution does not meet the Commission’s requirements.                                  |

**Narrative:**

Sierra College addresses distance education in BP/AP 4105 (Distance Education), which define both Distance Education courses as well as the means of regular effect contact. The College has an established protocol for distance education instructor training, which includes modules related

to the use of the LMS and a review of the requirements for regular and effective contact. Not all of the courses reviewed from the spring 2019 semester had satisfactory evidence demonstrating regular and effective contact, as defined in BP/AP 4105.

**Recommendation:** In order to improve, the team recommends that the College ensure DE courses consistently adhere to the policies established by Sierra College in AP 4105 concerning regular and substantive instructor initiated contact with students (Distance Education).

**Student Complaints**

**Evaluation Items:**

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

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

**Conclusion Check-Off:**

|                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission’s requirements.                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission’s requirements, but that follow-up is recommended. |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | The team has reviewed the elements of this component and found the institution does not meet the Commission’s requirements.                                  |

**Narrative**

Sierra College has board policies and administrative procedures related to student complaints and/or grievances (3410, 3430, 3435, 5530). The student complaint process is accessible via the College’s website, the Sierra College Catalog, and the College’s Student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook. Sierra College lists the names, telephone numbers, and emails of staff members based on types of complaints, including student conduct and Title IX. The Team

is encouraged to observe that the College has recently created an electronic shared drive that stores all formal student complaints.

**Institutional Disclosure and Advertising and Recruitment Materials**

**Evaluation Items:**

|                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | The institution provides accurate, timely (current), and appropriately detailed information to students and the public about its programs, locations, and policies. |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | The institution complies with the Commission <i>Policy on Institutional Advertising, Student Recruitment, and Representation of Accredited Status</i> .             |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | The institution provides required information concerning its accredited status as described above in the section on <u>Student Complaints</u> .                     |

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

**Conclusion Check-Off:**

|                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission’s requirements.                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission’s requirements, but that follow-up is recommended. |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | The team has reviewed the elements of this component and found the institution does not meet the Commission’s requirements.                                  |

**Narrative:**

The Team verified that Sierra College provides accurate and timely information to students and the public about its programs, locations, and policies. This information is provided via the standard methods, such as the College Catalog, website, and class schedule, and the College’s new smart phone application. The Team found that Sierra College meets the Commission’s requirement to accurately inform the public and students of its accreditation status via its website.

**Title IV Compliance**

**Evaluation Items:**

|                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | The institution has presented evidence on the required components of the Title IV Program, including findings from any audits and program or other review activities by the USDE.   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | The institution has addressed any issues raised by the USDE as to financial responsibility requirements, program record-keeping, etc. If issues were not timely addressed, the institution demonstrates it has the fiscal and administrative capacity to timely address issues in the future and to retain compliance with Title IV program |

|                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
|                                     | requirements.   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | The institution's student loan default rates are within the acceptable range defined by the USDE. Remedial efforts have been undertaken when default rates near or meet a level outside the acceptable range.                 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Contractual relationships of the institution to offer or receive educational, library, and support services meet the Accreditation Standards and have been approved by the Commission through substantive change if required. |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | The institution demonstrates compliance with the Commission <i>Policy on Contractual Relationships with Non-Regionally Accredited Organizations</i> and the <i>Policy on Institutional Compliance with Title IV</i> .         |

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

**Conclusion Check-Off:**

|                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements, but that follow-up is recommended. |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | The team has reviewed the elements of this component and found the institution does not meet the Commission's requirements.                                  |

**Narrative:**

The team was presented with the appropriate evidence on the required components of the Title IV Program, including the College's most recent audit report. Sierra College uses an external audit firm to audit its administration of Title IV aid. All audit reports are made public during Board of Trustees meetings. Sierra College publishes rules and regulations related to its issuance of Title IV aid, including the Student Loan Cohort Default Rate, on its website.

# Standard I

## Mission, Academic Quality and Institutional Effectiveness

### IA. Mission

#### General Observations:

Sierra College demonstrates a commitment to a mission that supports student learning and achievement. The College has devoted sufficient resources necessary to implement and evaluate its educational programs and services. Progress in meeting the mission is regularly monitored, and the College uses data in its decision-making, planning, and resource allocation processes to implement its mission.

#### Findings and Evidence:

The College's mission statement was recently revised. There are inconsistencies in the versions of the mission statement when comparing the ISER and the evidence cited in the report. The latest version of the mission statement, vision, and core values posted on the website does not fully describe the College's intended student population nor the types of degrees, credentials, and certificates that the College offers. Through discussions with College personnel, the team was informed that the intended student population and type of degrees are described in multiple places such as the educational master plan, College Catalog, and website. The College has a plan to update key communication documents to reflect its broad education purposes, its intended student population, the types of degrees and other credentials it offers, and its commitment to student learning and achievement. In order to improve, the College should ensure that all elements of the mission are clearly reflected where the mission is described in College publications and the College consistently convey the elements of mission as described in the standard (IA.1).

Through document review and interviews, it is evident that data are used College-wide to inform priorities and decision making such as the resource prioritization process in which requests are moved forward from the Planning and Resource Allocation Committee (PARAC) to the Strategic Council. Institutional data are abundantly available at the College. Data have been used widely, leading to the creation of major initiatives campus-wide, such as the adoption of a Guided Pathways framework for student success (IA.2).

The College's Strategic Master Plan and Educational Master Plan are the major planning documents guiding decision making. Programs align with the College's mission through the program review process. The Program Review Committee reviews all the program reviews and produces a report summarizing observations. (IA.3).

The College adopted a new mission statement in April 2019 and is in the process of being published in related documents in place of the prior statement. The mission statement is posted online and included in the College Catalog. The mission statement was vetted through a

participatory governance process before it was adopted by the Board of Trustees. All constituent groups participated in the review process (IA.4).

### Conclusions:

The College meets this Standard and related eligibility requirements. In order to improve, the College should ensure that all elements of the mission are clearly reflected where the mission is described in College publications and the College consistently convey the elements of mission as described in the Standard (IA.1).

## **IB. Assuring Academic Quality and Institutional Effectiveness, Academic Quality**

### General Observations:

Sierra College engages in College-wide, collegial dialog related to academic quality and institutional effectiveness centered on student equity. The team found an equity-centric culture that places closing achievement gaps at the center of their discussion and decisions. Constituents are provided with a wide range of disaggregated achievement data to support the identification of gaps and progress toward achieving goals and has demonstrated a continued commitment to the assessment and use of learning outcomes. The College has developed processes to integrate evidence-based assessment into planning and resource allocation to support academic quality and institutional effectiveness.

### Findings and Evidence:

The team reviewed minutes, committee reports, and other evidence that illustrated the College's commitment to a sustained, substantive and collegial dialog related to the areas of academic quality. The Strategic Council, a participatory governance committee, provides a collaborative forum for dialog related to the formation of policies and procedures. There is evidence that the Strategic Counsel routinely looks at data to monitor the College's metrics. The Educational Effectiveness Committee and the Academic Senate are charged with ensuring that student learning is regularly assessed, and that results are used to improve instructional programs. The New Legacy Committee addresses equity and inclusion and "utilizes a data-driven accountability-based approval to intentionally and deliberately target and implement strategies to improve underrepresented student success." The Program Review Committee oversees the program review processes, including peer review and executive summaries, resulting in recommendations to the Senate regarding outcomes of program review and program vitality. Interviews provided evidence that outcomes are reviewed and discussed by departments during the College's Planning and Assessment Day, which is held before each semester during Flex Week. Further, Student Services and other operational areas complete and review outcome assessment routinely as part of their annual reviews. While there remains opportunity for learning outcomes to receive broader College-wide dialog, the collective structures provide pathways for College-wide, participatory dialog leading to action (IB.1).

Evidence reviewed demonstrated the development of student learning outcomes at course, program, service, and institutional levels. The College maintains an Assessment Guidebook with definitions and rubrics to assist faculty and staff in the writing and assessment of outcomes. A

minimum of one course learning outcome per course is assessed every three years, and documentation of assessment is stored in a software tracking program. Discipline faculty discuss outcome assessments during Planning and Assessment Day, and action plans are created based on the results. Outcome assessment is supported by SLO assistants who track the completion of outcome assessments. The College has recently established core competencies for faculty, including assessment, and training to support improved understanding of how to assess will be provided through Professional Development and the New Faculty Academy. The documents and interviews provided evidence that the College is committed to improving outcome assessment, and they are encouraged to continue their work in developing meaningful assessment practices. The peer review team reviewed documents that service area outcomes have been developed that are appropriate to the mission of the specific service area. Interviews verified that these outcomes are assessed, mainly via user surveys and end-of-process evaluations, with results used to guide programmatic changes and resource requests (IB.2).

The peer review team found that the College has institution-set standards, referred to as “Strategic Planning Metrics,” which have been linked to the Educational and Strategic Master Plans. The College evaluates their success at meeting these standards, using dashboards that follow yearly cohorts. In its commitment to equity, the College is now disaggregating much of the data used in guiding strategic planning by equity groups. Early version identified metrics for a range of indicators, including student achievement, financial assessments, staffing levels, and revitalizing facilities and infrastructure. During the 2017-18 academic year, the metrics number was reduced to five areas of student success and achievement; Career and Technical Education programs are represented by the completion of 9 units in CTE. The College provides metric assessment data to their Board of Trustees, Strategic Council, Academic Senate, and other participatory governance councils to inform the evaluation of progress and development of action plans (IB.3).

The team reviewed the Student Equity Dashboard, Strategic Planning Metrics, and Department Statistic Report (DSR), which provided evidence of the use of achievement data to inform discussion about institutional processes that support student achievement. The College has been maturing its process over the last five years, and data has become the basis of their discussions around student achievement. This is evidenced by the College’s use of data to inform initiatives such as their Guided Pathways work and R4S design team. The Sierra College Student Equity Dashboard and Student Equity Plan demonstrate their commitment to continued use of student achievement data to close equity gaps. Interviews provided evidence that Student Services and Learning Support are using their areas’ outcome assessment data to inform action plans. There is evidence that the College is aware of their opportunity to strengthen student learning outcome assessment such as providing additional professional development in assessment methods. Documents reviewed and interviews conducted further substantiated that the College is committed to greater depth and breadth of outcome assessment in an effort to make them more meaningful. The peer review team encourages the College to continue developing training and support for these competencies (IB.4).

Evidence was reviewed that documented the College’s established program review process for the instructional, student services, and ancillary programs. Program reviews are completed on a three-year, staggered cycle, with instructional program leads and management being the key



participants in the process. The College is encouraged to find ways to increase the active participation of classified staff in the program review process. The template for program review is thorough and provides the opportunity for reflection on goals and objectives through the assessment of program relevancy, program currency, program effectiveness, and resource needs. The program review includes reflection and synthesis of any learning outcome assessments that were complete. The instructional program review includes success and retention data for courses disaggregated by modality. The Program Review Committee is responsible for reviewing all program reviews using a rubric that provides feedback to the originators related to the quality of their program reviews. The Program Review Committee creates an executive summary year-end report for distribution to the participatory governance committee and use in resource request prioritization, allocation of funding, and faculty hiring (IB.5).

The peer review team reviewed evidence of the College's use of student achievement data to inform the development of plans and strategies to reduce/eliminate gaps outlined in their Student Equity Action Plan and R4S planning document. Resources have been allocated to support the organizational structure to implement these plans and strategies. The College presents the Strategic Planning Metrics disaggregated by disproportionate impact group, displaying these data in a "Student Equity Dashboard." The dashboard is a central tool in identifying significant gaps and creating action plans for improvement. Interviews provided evidence that Student Services and Learning Support area complete outcome assessment and then use it to identify barriers to students and create action plans to remedy. After implementation, the new or revised process is further evaluated for meeting the intended outcome. Selected student learning outcomes are assessed by discipline faculty for discussion during Planning and Assessment Day when the assessment results are used to identify pedagogical or class structures that can be changed to improve success (IB.6).

The team examined evidence which was further substantiated via interviews that board policies are reviewed and vetted with the Senates and Strategic Council before being approved by the Board of Trustees. The College engages in long-term planning, producing Strategic, Facilities, Technology, Education, and Equity Master Plans. These plans are reviewed periodically per the plan's intended lifespan. Review and revision of master plans are informed by the College's mission and goals and are used as a framework for short-term planning. The College provided evidence of self-evaluation by the Board, included in BP 2745 (Board of Trustees Self-Evaluation). There is additional evidence of changes brought about by process evaluation within Curriculum, Educational Effectiveness (SLOs), and the budgeting processes as well as changes brought via the inquiry related to R4S and Guided Pathways. Interviews provided evidence that there is a three-year, staggered evaluation process for participatory governance committees with subcommittees, Senates, and Strategic Council/PARAC completed once per year. Additionally, the College is in the process of undergoing an evaluation of their governance structures to determine if there are redundancies in their committee structure that can be streamlined to increase efficiency. Generally, the evaluation of processes has been conducted on an ad hoc basis and has resulted in major changes, such as the recently adopted budget and planning calendar. The College is encouraged to establish a regular and systematic evaluation of their processes such as program review, outcome assessment, and strategic planning to assure the collective and integrated work of their participatory governance committees is effective (IB.7).

The team reviewed documents illustrating the variety of activities used to communicate results of assessments and evaluations. Convocation provides the College's agenda in serving the mission, including upcoming initiatives or developments, such as those related to equity, student achievement, and other measures of success. Convocation agenda items are addressed during the College's subsequent Flex Week and additional department meetings during the semester. Additional discussion at participatory governance committee meeting and at Board meetings provides additional opportunities for the dissemination of information related to the College's strengths and weaknesses and the setting of priorities. There is evidence that these discussions stimulate dialog and action regarding issues facing the College, including equity, and from these conversations come recommendations and actionable items. The College also maintains a public-facing website, including its PSLOs, program reviews, Equity, and Reengineering Sierra College for Student Success (R4S) (IB.8).

The team reviewed a variety of documents, including a planning timeline that demonstrated the College's commitment to integrated planning. This evidence was further substantiated through interviews with a variety of employees across constituency groups. The College has recently revised the planning process in order to align long-term planning with short-term planning. Planning occurs on an annual basis and is supported by the Planning and Assessment Day during Flex Week. A review of assessment, program review, and/or department goals can justify a request for resources, and the College has a defined process for the prioritization of resource requests. Criteria for rankings are focused on improving the institution and supporting the College's mission. There is wide participation through participatory governance committees in the prioritization and vetting of recommendations, and this was validated through interviews with a wide range of constituents. (IB.9)

### Conclusions:

The College meets the Standard and related eligibility requirements.

## **IC. Institutional Integrity**

### General Observations:

Sierra College demonstrates institutional integrity in publications provided to the public and staff. The College uses its website, the Sierra College Catalog, and other documents to describe degrees and certificates, programs, and courses offered, as well as relevant learning outcomes.

### Findings and Evidence:

Sierra College maintains a number of resources that communicate the types of programs and services that support the College's mission. The College provides an online catalog with information on requirements, policies, and procedures. The College website and College Catalog provides information on its mission, accreditation status, learning outcomes, educational programs, student services, and academic support services. BP1200 describes the College's mission statement (IC.1, IC.2).

The College uses documented assessment and evaluation of student achievement to assess academic quality. The Program Review website provides information on program review for instructional and student services programs. The College assesses learning outcomes and assessment information is made available to appropriate constituent groups. The Sierra College Catalog provides the public information regarding the purpose, content, course requirements, and outcomes for the College's degrees and certificates. The class schedule also contains information on course content and prerequisite requirements (IC.3, IC.4).

Administrative procedures and board policies are regularly reviewed by the management, Senates, Strategic Council, and the Board of Trustees to ensure accuracy and currency. The College's established practices ensure policies, procedures, and other campus publications are current. Sierra College publishes information on the website and the College Catalog that informs current and prospective students regarding the total costs of education, including textbooks and other materials. The College website includes a link to the Net Price Calculator at the Chancellor's Office (IC.5, IC.6).

BP 4030 (Academic Freedom) addresses academic freedom and responsibility. The policy supports academic freedom for faculty and all constituencies and assures the free pursuit and dissemination of knowledge. This policy also appears in the Sierra College Faculty Association contract. Other relevant policies include BP/AP 3900 (Speech: Time, Place, and Manner), and BP/AP 5530 (Student Equity and Administrative Procedure Student Equity) (IC.7).

Sierra College maintains BP 2715 (Board of Trustees Code of Ethics) and AP 3050 (The Institutional Code of Ethics). These policies collectively guide the College concerning honesty and responsibility of employees. BP and AP 5500 (Standards of Student Conduct) outlines requirements for student conduct concerning academic integrity and honesty. Other relevant policies and procedures include BP and AP 5515 (Honesty in Academic Work). These policies are published in the College Catalog and are also available on the College website (IC.8).

The Sierra College Faculty Association contract outlines the expectation for faculty to maintain objectivity and to separate personal opinions or convictions from professionally accepted theories and facts. As part of the evaluation process, students give feedback as to the instructor's acceptance of differing viewpoints. Feedback from student evaluations are incorporated into the committee evaluation report for faculty evaluations (IC.9).

The College does not seek to instill specific beliefs or world views, nor does the College operate in a foreign location (IC.10, IC.11).

As demonstrated by a review of evidence and from interviews with College personnel, the College demonstrates a commitment to compliance with Commission policies, eligibility requirements, and standards (IC.12, IC.13).

The College is a public institution and demonstrates its commitment to high-quality education and student learning over other financial objectives as evidenced by its mission statement, planning, and financial resource allocation processes (IC.14).

Conclusions:

The College meets the Standard and related eligibility requirements.

## **Standard II**

### **Instructional Program and Student Support Services**

#### **IIA. Instructional Programs**

##### General Observations:

Sierra College offers instructional programs aligned with its mission to serve all students in the community; foster critical, creative, and engaged thinking; and prepare students for jobs. The curriculum approval process ensures that courses and programs are consistent with the College's mission. Sierra College uses Course Outline of Records to ensure articulation agreements with CSU and UC institutions are maintained. Faculty ensure that the content and methods of instruction meet expected standards and expectations. Systematic evaluation is used to continuously improve instructional courses, programs, and services. Evidence reviewed by the peer review team demonstrates that Sierra College has a sound process by which assessments are done. Course outlines are required to include SLOs. Syllabi are required to be distributed in all classes according to the Faculty Handbook. The institution clearly distinguishes pre-collegiate level curriculum and directly supports students in these courses. The institution's degrees and programs follow practices common to American higher education, including appropriate length, breadth, depth, rigor, course sequencing, and synthesis of learning. Course Outlines of Record state units and hours required; Student Education Plans, course schedules, and College catalogs also state this information. The Curriculum Committee must approve all courses and all changes to units. The institution ensures that minimum degree requirements are 60 semester credits or equivalent at the associate level. Faculty and staff at Sierra College take into consideration the time to complete and the necessity of the course when they design programs. Information on both completion and transfer is disaggregated. Sierra College effectively uses delivery modes, teaching methodologies, and learning support services that reflect the diverse and changing needs of the institution's students. The Curriculum Committee requires a Distance Education Addendum on which faculty must justify offering a course in a hybrid or online format. The Office of Institutional Research publishes a Distance Education Report annually; it is posted on the data dashboard. This information is utilized in program review.

##### Findings and Evidence:

Sierra College offers 95 associate degrees and 78 certificates in 50 educational areas, online classes, community education, and lifelong learning through the Osher Institute for Learning. Twenty-seven of these degrees are associate degrees for transfer. Based on evidence on the College website, the College Catalog, observations of lifelong learning classes in session at the Nevada County and Rocklin campuses, an information technology class connecting students at the Nevada Campus with the Rocklin Center through Spark video conferencing, and conversations with students by the team, the higher education provided to students by Sierra College is consistent with its mission of empowering students to achieve their educational goals of university transfer or immediate entry into a career, providing education that supports student success, and is responsive to the needs of the communities it serves. The instruction at Sierra

College is reflective of its broad mission to offer a variety of instructional experiences, both on-ground and via distance education (IIA.1).

The Curriculum Committee and professional development activities that include full-time and part-time faculty such as Planning and Assessment Day are used to ensure that faculty regularly engage in ensuring that the content and methods of instruction meet generally accepted academic and professional standards and expectations. Every three years, instructional and student services areas conduct a program review process in order to lead to improvement plans and requests for resource allocations and planning for the future. The curriculum and program review processes are used to improve teaching and learning strategies and promote student success (IIA.2).

The majority of courses, programs, certificates, and degrees are assessed using learning outcomes for instructional and student service programs. For those not assessed, SLO assistants are assigned to work with those courses not assessed, and a new form for department chairs to track progress of their assessments is also being used. The College works to ensure that all programs are assessed appropriately. The Course Outline of Record (COR) for each course can be found on-line through WebCMS. The CORs include student learning objectives and outcomes, resource impacts, degrees offered, and transfer course information. Sierra College has established institutional procedures to identify and regularly assess learning outcomes for courses, programs, certificates, and degrees. These procedures include Planning and Assessment (P&A) Day, scheduled during flex week. During P&A Day, faculty and SLO assistants, full-time and part-time faculty work together to discuss and update SLOs, review curriculum, analyze SLO results, identify gaps and improvement plans, address program review, and update department resource requests relating to SLO assessments. Although not all programs were assessed, there is a plan enacted from the Educational Effectiveness Committee which includes professional development for assessment practices, an alternative assessment management system, three hours flex credit per term for departmental assessment activities, and a clearly-defined assessment process for student services. Sierra College is doing a sufficient job to ensure that outcomes are being assessed. The team notes that the roles of the Educational Effectiveness committee and SLO Assistants are important when moving forward in order to ensure that all learning outcomes are assessed in a meaningful way (IIA.3).

Sierra College offers pre-collegiate curriculum and distinguishes it from college-level curriculum using the course numbering system in the College Catalog, labeled Understanding Course Descriptions. These courses are designed to ensure that students have the skills to succeed in the subsequent courses. Sierra College has also implemented programs such as PASS Peers, which includes embedded tutoring, Success Academies, and open-entry/open-exit non-credit modules. The PASS Peer Program is described on the website, under the Tutoring Center tab of Academic Help. Tutoring services are also available to directly support pre-collegiate courses at all site locations (IIA.4).

The quality of programs and course curriculum at the College are of high quality, relevant to the community and student needs, and evaluated regularly to ensure quality and currency. For each new program as well as substantial changes in existing programs, the following areas must be justified to administration: appropriateness to the mission, need, quality, feasibility, and compliance. According to Administrative Procedure (AP) 4100, an AA or AS degree at the

College must complete at least 60 degree-applicable units with at least a 2.0 grade point average. The course and program outlines of record capture the breadth, depth, rigor, and synthesis of learning in each course and program. The breadth of General Education requirements for Sierra College are outlined in the College Catalog, including the minimum semester units for each general education category and the grade point average required for successful completion (IIA.5).

As the majority of students at Sierra College have the goal of transferring or obtaining an associate's degree, the institution schedules classes for students to achieve their goal in the least amount of time possible. The course schedules are developed by the division deans who work with department chairs, and courses are offered to establish regular patterns for student awareness and to help completion rates and time to award. Some departments plan a two-year rotation for students and publish this plan online so that students may plan well in advance. An Executive Dean of Enrollment Management position was also added for a year in order to identify scheduling issues and to optimize the use of classroom facilities, resulting in the addition of 352 FTEs in high demand courses to the schedule (IIA6).

The institution offers a variety of course delivery modes, including face-to-face, web-enhanced, online, hybrid, full and short term courses, and dual enrollment in order to offer an equitable schedule for students. In order to assist students with equity issues, students can find and select course sections from the course schedule that are marked Zero Textbook Cost. Other learning support services include tutoring centers, math labs, writing labs, PASS peers, Student Success Workshops, and the new Success Center. There are also a variety of student support programs on campus to reflect the diverse and changing needs of its students and in support of equity, including CalWorks, Disable Student Services Programs and Services (DSPS), Veterans, First Year Experience, The Hub, EOPS, Foster Your Program (CAFYES), Puente Program, TRiO, Umoja, Rise Program, and College Promise (IIA.7).

Sierra College validates the effectiveness of department-wide course and/or program examinations, in order to ensure consistency, reduce test bias, and enhance reliability. Sierra College also has a process to review the direct assessment of prior learning for students (IIA.8).

A review of syllabi identified a designated section for course student learning outcomes. Each program listed in the 2018-2019 Sierra College Catalog included program learning outcomes. Institutional learning outcomes were listed in the Catalog. Website information on noncredit English as a Second Language and Construction and Energy Technology programs demonstrate student learning outcomes for noncredit programs. Interviews with the Vice President of Instruction, Curriculum Committee and the Educational Effectiveness Committee confirmed that the processes to award credit based on course, program, and institutional level outcomes has been intentional since 2013-2014, and is systematic. BP 4020 and AP 4020 (Program and Curriculum Development) provide general parameters for the units of credit awarded, which the Curriculum Committee Handbook enacts. Sierra College does not offer instruction based on clock hours (IIA.9).

Sierra College facilitates transfer for students to and from the institution in ways that are available to the public, accessible to students, and codified in institutional practices. Through a review of

the website and the College Catalog, it was evident to the team that the institution makes available clearly-stated transfer-of-credit policies and procedures to students and the general public to facilitate transfer to a four-year institution such as a California State University or University of California, as well as degree and certificate completion. Additionally, the ISER and an interview with the Sierra College Articulation Officer confirmed that there is clear guidance for and oversight of university transfer articulation processes in the establishment of articulation agreements with other colleges. The Dean of Student Services confirmed that the processes for transfer have been streamlined with counselor involvement (IIA.10).

Examination of the Sierra College Catalog and additional evidence examined during the site visit indicates that all degree programs include program learning outcomes. As confirmed by the Curriculum Committee and Vice President of Instruction in interviews, a review of mapping spreadsheets linking course and program learning outcomes with institutional learning outcomes showed a link to the institutional-level learning outcomes reflecting communication competency (i.e., Communication), information competency (i.e., Technology and Information Competency), quantitative competency and analytic inquiry skills (i.e., Critical and Creative Thinking), ethical reasoning, and the ability to engage with diverse perspectives (i.e., Citizenship) (IIA.11).

Sierra College BP and AP 4025 (Philosophy and Criteria for Associate Degree and General Education), as well as the College Catalog and Curriculum Handbook, provide evidence that the College has well-established policies for general education based on a carefully considered philosophy by the faculty, vetted through a participatory process that included members of the faculty and administration. General education courses at the institution constitute the foundation for associate degree programs. General education breadth requirements are distributed among broad subject areas consisting of natural sciences, social and behavioral sciences, humanities, language and rationality, health education, and multicultural studies.

Examination of evidence indicates that the Sierra College Philosophy for General Education is present in the 2019-2020 web-based College Catalog. Sixteen general education learning outcomes are based on the general education philosophy and fall under the categories of communication, technology and information competency, critical and creative thinking, and citizenship. Meetings with faculty confirmed that these learning outcomes are determined by the faculty as appropriate to their discipline areas. Four faculty Student Learning Outcomes Assistants provide support and oversight to ensure that the learning outcomes at the course, program, and general education levels are appropriate, measurable, routinely assessed (IIA.12).

Sierra College offers 29 associate degrees for transfer and 56 local associate degrees. The development of all degrees follows BP 4020 and AP 4020 (Program and Curriculum Development). For the associate degree, 18-semester units or more are required for degrees in a single and related discipline as determined by Taxonomy of Program (TOP) codes, or areas of emphasis majors at the California State University or University of California. According to the Curriculum Handbook, courses in the programs are based on appropriate course and programs student learning outcomes by faculty with expertise in the field of study, with attention paid to the job market for career education programs, ability to provide systematic instruction in a body of knowledge, or skills mastery as the basis for the student grade. Interviews with the Curriculum Committee and minutes from the Board of Trustees meetings confirm that approval by the Board



of Trustees, and at the state level, are in place before offering academic programs (IIA.13).

Examination of evidence and interviews with CTE deans confirm that the institution's career education certificates and associate degree programs include learning outcomes that reflect the technical and professional competencies necessary to meet the employment needs of the respective industry or profession. Learning outcomes are based on input from industry experts who participate in the advisory committee meetings of the respective technical education disciplines. Employment outcomes data reported in Perkins IV for 2018-2019 met or exceeded the goal of 72%, except for the occupational field of Fine and Applied Arts, while Nursing NCLEX examination scores were 92-100%, and Welding examination results were 92% in 2018-2019. These outcomes provide evidence that graduates of these programs meet the employment standards and they have been successfully prepared to sit for licensure and certification (IIA.14).

Sierra College has policies (BP and AP 4023: Strategic Reduction of Educational Programs) in place to guide the Strategic Reduction of Programs. BP and AP 4021 (Program Vitality) outline procedures for programs that are impacted by significant changes, such as labor market. These policies and procedures also outline the process and procedure for discontinuing a program, which ensures that students can complete their educational goals in a timely manner. Sierra College uses these policies and procedures as an opportunity to discuss program alignment with industry needs and changing external environments. Program documents and interviews with instructional administrators and the Curriculum Committee provided evidence that the Construction and Energy Technology program has gone through an established Program Vitality process that involved faculty from a variety of academic disciplines who realigned the programs with industry needs. For example, the Construction program was reconstructed into a short-term noncredit boot camp for individuals to become prepared for current local construction jobs. When it is necessary for a program to be eliminated or program requirements are significantly changed, Sierra College makes appropriate arrangements and uses a number of communication avenues to ensure that enrolled students may complete their education in a timely manner with a minimum of disruption. The procedure for discontinuation of programs includes steps to monitor the impact on other areas, a detailed plan for phasing out the program, a plan for currently enrolled students such as a teach out process, and a plan that ensures an open and transparent participatory governance process in generating recommendations to the Board of Trustees. An interview with the Curriculum Committee confirmed that these policies and procedures are followed (IIA.15).

Since 2015, the College has been intentionally engaged in several processes that allow for the regular evaluation and improvement of all instructional programs offered regardless of delivery mode. Student learning outcomes are expected in fee-based courses in Community Education and the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute. Sierra College demonstrated to the team that dialogue in departmental meetings, at Planning and Assessment Days, and in institutional committees has led to the development of institutionalized processes around assessment of learning outcomes and improvement of courses and programs. All courses are evaluated in a six-year curriculum review process to assess the currency of learning outcomes as outlined in the Curriculum Handbook and verified by the Curriculum Committee and Educational Effectiveness Committee. Deans and faculty confirmed that program review is a well-established, documented, systematic process that occurs every three years and dovetails with the three-year assessment process and

six-year curriculum review processes. While improvements in exemplary programs in photography, psychology, and philosophy were cited to the team, evidence demonstrated that the majority of courses and programs are engaged in assessment and program review processes. Based on discussions with faculty and administrators, and a review of the Core Competencies of Sierra College faculty, the Program Review Report template and rubric, Student Learning Assessment Summary form, and the Departmental Assessment Analysis form, the team found that Sierra College has processes for evaluating and improving student learning that is systematic, resourced, focused on closing equity gaps, improving the student experience through Guided Pathways and creating a fully realized culture of assessment (IIA.16).

### Conclusions:

The College meets this Standard and associated eligibility requirements.

## **IIB. Library and Learning Support Services**

### General Observations:

The College provides satisfactory library and learning support services and resources at its main Rocklin Campus as well as its Nevada County and Truckee campus locations. Its multi-level Learning Resource Center and newly renovated Learning Commons area provide a range of student-centered support services that include tutoring, writing and math centers, computing, and library resources that assist students across all educational programs whether in person or through distance learning. The the library's materials reflect content that is broad, current, and diverse for both print and online resources. Implementation of the Guided Pathways framework has centralized learning support services in keeping with the campus's student success efforts.

### Findings and Evidence:

The library's Collection Development Policy, along with faculty outreach and involvement, assist in the acquisition, maintenance, and evaluation of books, periodicals, and media. A wide array of print materials is spread across all site locations and electronic/digital content provides secure 24/7 access to all students and the campus community. Students have access to librarians through chat, text, email, telephone, and walk-in service during the library's hours of operation. Reference consultations, library orientations, and research and information literacy instruction are also available in-person and online. The Learning Resource Centers (LRC) at each district campus offer equivalent academic support services for computing and technology, tutoring, and assistance with English and Math courses. Of particular note is the Tutoring Center's program that provides one-on-one appointments, drop-in sessions, online services through Tutor.com and Zoom, embedded tutor support through its PASS (Peer Academic Support Structure) peer program, and outreach to special campus programs that assist underserved and underrepresented student populations (IIB.1, IIB.2).

The library and LRC services provide ample evidence of widespread regular assessment via program review and other analyses, which is directly tied to the College's mission and supports its institutional learning outcomes. Assessment data from surveys, usage statistics, and quantitative measures indicates that the increased use of learning support services may result in

higher rates of student success, retention, and persistence. Program review reports for both the library and tutoring are comprehensive and honest in their evaluation of their services and resources. Data results for the respective areas show high levels of positive student and faculty satisfaction. Outcomes assessment results in improvements that directly impact students, impacting, for example, the renovation and redesign of the new Learning Commons. The College's student success initiatives rely heavily on academic and student support services; therefore, adequate staffing and funding should be carefully evaluated to ensure long-term success (IIB.3).

Contractual agreements and licensing for support services are acquired and maintained through established policies and guidelines for implementation and to ensure secure remote access. The library and LRC work with the Business Office, Information Technology staff, and other consortia partners in providing appropriate long-term access to its online resources and services. Evaluation of these services is accomplished through regular assessment practices and reflected in their departmental program reviews (IIB.4).

#### Conclusions:

The College meets this Standard and related eligibility requirements.

### **IIC. Student Support Services**

#### General Observations:

Sierra College has demonstrated a commitment to evaluating the quality of student support services. The team was able to verify that each student support service participates in a program review and ePAR process that includes outcomes assessment data and student focus group feedback to support improvements. The College has assigned Service Area Outcomes (SAO) Assistants who provide guidance to student support programs to complete assessments. The team found that Sierra College has implemented adequate measures to complete delayed assessments. The SAO Assistants report assessment status to the Educational Effectiveness Committee and appropriate administrators and develops an action plan for missing assessments. The team found that the College has implemented adequate measures to complete delayed assessments.

The College provides student support services and programs across all locations, including robust online services. The team confirms that these services adequately support student learning, and enhance the accomplishment of the mission.

#### Findings and Evidence:

The College's formal program review process evaluates the quality of student support services every three years. Each Student Services area takes this information and assesses programs via an annual electronic Program Assessment and Review (ePAR). Sierra College uses this mechanism to request staffing, facilities, and/or equipment. The ePAR process connects resource requests to program review and aligns with the College's Mission and Strategic Plan. The process is supported by a program review website and data analysis. The program review process is integrated within the College's planning and governance processes. The College was able to

illustrate and provide evidence of its Student Services review process, including distance education. Sierra College has established systems and procedures that demonstrate how qualitative and quantitative data are used to make program improvements within Student Services. It has two Service Area Outcomes (SAO) Assistants that support its assessment process and its own evaluation of the SSAO process. The designated SAO Assistant works with appropriate administrators to develop an action plan for non-compliant student support services and programs and reports SAO assessment progress to the Educational Effectiveness Committee (IIC.1, IIC.2).

Sierra College demonstrates that it provides equitable and appropriate support programs across its three campuses and via online support at the Roseville Center. The College's comprehensive online real-time services are appropriate and serve all locations. A review of its website proved to be robust, accessible, and reliable (IIC.3).

The Sierra College District has adequate board policies and administrative procedures that support its athletics programs and co-curricular activities, which are aligned to the mission and contribute to the social and educational development of students. The athletics programs include 18 sports and use sound fiscal management that receives supplemental support funding from the College's foundation. The athletics program reports directly to executive management. The College Campus Life office supports multiple clubs, associated student government and equitable resources, such as the food pantry and undocumented student support services (IIC.4).

The College has invested significant effort and resources in its counseling and advising services. Sierra College holds training for counseling staff on a bi-weekly schedule and has a Faculty Handbook that includes student support services. The College has implemented nine integrated success teams, each assigned to a different academic interest area, and it has adopted a student case management approach to counseling. It also has a first-time student program and uses advising technology, such as Starfish and Degree Works, to support graduation and transfer policies (IIC.5).

BP 5010 (Admissions and Concurrent Enrollment) supports the mission of the College. AP 5011 (Admission and Enrollment of Academic Enrichment Students) guides high school students through the dual and concurrent enrollment process. The College's website clearly provides admissions information based on the type of student it seeks to serve and guides students to the appropriate academic interest area and to student support. Sierra College uses the California Community College Apply (CCCApply) electronic application. Admissions procedures and requirements are delineated in the College's Catalog, including residency and international student admissions processes. The College has recently implemented new approaches to advising and counseling, such as new student Career and Academic Planning sessions, Degree Works for full comprehensive educational plans, and a Ready4Reg tutorial website, which teaches students how to prepare and register for courses. The Success Team and Interest Area websites provide roadmaps that clearly define the College's degrees, certificates, and transfer pathways, with a holistic approach to serving and supporting students (IIC.6).

In 2014, Sierra College implemented multiple measures assessment procedures to place students into college-level math and English. These include increased consideration of high school transcripts when making placement recommendations. The College's current practices include

guided self-placement into English and math using an online questionnaire that automatically informs appropriate placement level (IIC.7).

The College provided sufficient information verifying that it maintains student records permanently, securely, and confidently. An Information Technology Specialist in the Admissions and Records Office provides support and resources to records staff. Sierra College has detailed computer and use of technology procedures, including an employee computer use ethics form. The College has a student information request form that directly cites FERPA and student privacy rights. Sierra College publishes student privacy rights and cites FERPA and BP/AP 5040 (Students Records, Directory Information and Privacy) on its website. The College has digitized and indexed all records into their document imaging system and is expanding capabilities that further supports a secured back-up system (IIC.8).

Conclusions:

The College meets the Standard and related eligibility requirements.

## **Standard III Resources**

### **IIIA. Human Resources**

#### General Observations:

Sierra College has sufficiently staffed facilities and services at all locations. There are clearly established policies, procedures, and practices to ensure staff are hired, trained, and evaluated in a manner that supports the instructional mission of the College.

#### Findings and Evidence:

Sierra College has policies and practices in place to ensure the hiring of qualified candidates. Hiring practices are clear and that mechanisms are in place to ensure that all personnel involved in the hiring process are well-trained. Collegial governance processes ensure that position postings are thoughtfully crafted to meet the needs of the District. Qualifications of candidates are verified through a rigorous vetting process and District vacancies are widely advertised (IIIA.1).

The application and candidate selection process has the appropriate rigor to determine whether faculty meet the qualifications to teach in a discipline. The College uses multiple methods to assess candidates, including a paper screenings, review of transcripts, interviews, and teaching demonstrations. Faculty position announcements include information about faculty responsibilities for curriculum development and assessment of learning. The College has hiring practices in place to assess the qualifications of administrators and staff. The processes include application screening and scoring as well as multiple interviews to verify candidate qualifications. All positions announcements include information about required qualifications and educational background. Transcript submission is part of the application process at the College. The College has administrative procedures in place to determine minimum qualifications and to establish equivalencies (IIIA.2, IIIA.3, IIIA.4).

Evaluation practices and criteria for all College personnel are well-documented. The College has established intervals and practices meant to measure and improve performance. Evaluation are tracked in the Banner system or a spreadsheet (depending on employee group) and evidence indicates that established processes are followed. Sierra College has a sufficient number of faculty to meet program needs and provide support services to students. The College has robust processes for annually evaluating needs for faculty hiring (IIIA.5, IIIA.7).

The institution has practices and policies that create opportunities for orientation, evaluation, professional development, and campus governance activities. Orientations for part-time faculty are held on a regular basis, evaluation practices are documented in the collective bargaining agreements, and part-time faculty are compensated for professional development. Efforts are made to engage part-time faculty in shared governance. There are designated seats for part-time faculty on Academic Senate (including subcommittees) and Strategic Council (IIIA.8).

Personnel needs are evaluated annually through the Program Assessment and Review process. Personnel requests are then prioritized through campus governance processes. A staffing update is a standing item on the Strategic Council agenda to incorporate hiring into the collegial governing process. To ensure employees have the appropriate qualifications, job descriptions are reviewed on a regular basis. A reclassification process is documented in the classified bargaining agreement. The College has sufficient administrative staff to support operations and personnel needs are evaluated annually through the same process described above for other staff. Continued development is encouraged as demonstrated by the Sierra College Leadership Institute, other local professional development, and participation in statewide development opportunities (IIIA.9, IIIA.10).

Personnel policies are well-documented and based on appropriate state and federal guidelines. The College subscribes to a service through the Community College League of California that helps ensure policies meet changing legal requirements. The campus community is made aware of these policies through multiple channels such as new employee orientation and campus governance meetings (IIIA.11).

A wide variety of policies and practices in the District support hiring diverse candidates. These include campus-wide training, Equal Employment Opportunity training, hiring manager training, and participation in nationally recognized training opportunities. The District has a manager for oversight of fair hiring and equity. Analysis of employment equity is part of the District's Equal Opportunity Employment Plan (IIIA.12).

A detailed code of professional ethics for all employee groups, including the Board of Trustees, is employed by the College. These policies include consequences for ethics violations. There was good evidence the College has a robust process for maintaining and securing personnel files. Files are stored in a secure system only directly accessible by a limited number of Human Resources staff. Employees may make an appointment to access their files during normal operating hours of the Human Resources office (IIIA.13, IIIA.15).

The District provides a wide range of professional development for all employees. A new office called Professional and Organizational Development was established to manage professional development and core competencies have been developed for all employee groups. The core competencies are meant to ensure professional development offerings intentionally address the College's strategic goals. The professional development opportunities support well-known practices aimed at improving student learning. Efforts are made to provide these opportunities at varying times and locations to support maximum participation. Some of the notable professional development efforts include the Sierra College Communication, Creativity, Culture, and Collaboration (SC4) program, New Faculty Academy, Instructional Skills Workshop, distance education, and equity trainings. The peer review team recognizes the exceptional investment in professional development and encourages the College to engage in formalized assessment practices for this program. The team commends the College for its exemplary practice of providing personnel with opportunities for continued professional development in order to meet its mission (IIIA.14).

### Conclusions:

The College meets this Standard and related eligibility requirements.

## **IIIB. Physical Resources**

### General Observations:

Sierra College maintains facilities at four locations in two counties: Rocklin Campus, Nevada County Campus, Truckee Campus, and Roseville Center. Three of the facilities are owned by the College and one of the spaces (Roseville Center) is leased. Facilities at all locations are planned and designed to meet the educational mission of the College.

### Findings and Evidence:

Sierra College's building construction is in compliance with California's Division of the State Architect (DSA) requirements which typically exceed standards established by local building codes. To ensure continued maintenance and safety, reporting structures are in place to request maintenance and repairs. Facility master plans and other documents provide evidence that the College is planning for and maintaining a safe learning and working environments (IIIB.1).

The College has an updated Facilities Master Plan (FMP) for the Rocklin Campus and the Nevada County Campus. The Truckee Campus is only 10 years old and the plan has not yet been updated to include that campus. The College also has a five-year construction plan for the Rocklin Campus that aligns with the FMP. The FMPs and other planning documents provide evidence that the College is planning to meet the long-term needs of both instructional programs and student services. A process exists to make facility improvement and repair needs known through a Facility Resource Request form and through the annual planning process. A review of evidence provided examples that their processes are working (IIIB.2).

The most recent FMP for the Rocklin and Nevada County campuses includes a thorough analysis of needs given the age of current buildings, changing building codes, dated infrastructure, and changing needs of students. The Rocklin and Nevada County FMPs include comprehensive plans for updating the entire campus to meet the needs of students. Team members reviewed building utilization analysis for the Rocklin, Truckee, and Nevada County campuses (IIIB.3).

The Rocklin Campus FMP details the condition of each room on campus using the Facility Condition Index. The plan includes a cost estimate for both renovation and replacement for all structures on the Rocklin Campus. The Nevada Campus FMP shows evidence of thoughtful long-term planning to meet the changing needs of the campus. The Truckee Campus is approximately 10 years old and the original master plan is serving the needs of the College. The Roseville Center is a leased space with the concomitant limitations on development. That said, planning for space is consistent with the mission of the College. Ongoing costs associated with construction and maintenance or incorporated into the campus resource allocation process (IIIB.4).



### Conclusions:

The College meets this Standard and related eligibility requirements.

## **IIIC. Technology Resources**

### General Observations:

Sierra College effectively administers technology resources to support the needs of their four locations (Rocklin Campus, Nevada County Campus, Truckee Campus, and Roseville Center). Sierra College Information Instructional Technology (IIT) has crafted a Technology Strategic Plan to address the needs of the College. The team found that Sierra College is committed to ensuring technology resources and support for staff and students.

### Findings and Evidence:

Sierra College ensures that various technology needs are identified throughout their campuses. In order to ensure the technology was meeting a wide variety of needs, the College has updated technology infrastructure and network capacity. Sierra College Technology Strategic plan is integrated to align with the Educational Master Plan and the College Strategic Plan. Technology requests are operationalized in three ways: as part of the electronic Program and Assessment Review (ePAR) process; as a budget augmentation; and as project requests. All requests are connected and aligned with the other College plans. This planning process allows the College to prioritize the distribution of its technology resources. Technology resources are appropriately deployed to support instructional and student services programs (IIIC.1).

Technology planning supports both the short-term and long-term needs of the College. Evidence gathered during the visit indicated that technology planning and resource deployment is the result of program review and other planning efforts. New technology requests are submitted and ranked through the College's planning process. The College utilizes satisfaction scores on work orders and information from the ePAR and program review to gauge the effectiveness of their services. Multiple methods are used to gather input from students regarding technology needs and improvements were made in response to student needs. Examples include an updated WiFi network and comprehensive technical support in the new Learning Commons (IIIC.2).

The College has invested in technology services and professional support at all locations. Sierra College Learning Commons Help Desk and online Canvas support is available to support students. Technological infrastructure is comprehensive with a variety of other hardware and software applications to support student learning and campus operations. AP 3721 (Data Backup and Recovery Procedures) outlines procedures for data security and reliability and evidence was shared to indicate that the College is actualizing the protocols described therein (IIIC.3).

Sierra College allocates resources for technology training for faculty, students, and staff. Evidence indicates a wide variety of training is provided to both staff and students. As examples, the College provides training on Canvas, Office 365, Microsoft Office Suite, Banner, mySierra, and Information Security. The evidence also indicated that needs assessment and evaluation are part of campus processes (IIIC.4).

Sierra College has policies and procedures that govern the use of technology on campus. These policies and procedures are posted on the College's website (IIIC.5).

#### Conclusions:

Sierra College meets the Standard.

### **IIID. Financial Resources**

#### General Observations:

The Vice President of Administrative Services is assigned to maintain the College's budget planning, financial stability and tracking of the allocation of fiscal resources. Multi-year planning for the College's general fund and other funding streams takes place and is regularly updated with changing situations, especially in state funding and personnel levels. The College has a well-documented process for integrated planning which includes participation from the various stakeholder groups. The team found that the College demonstrates strong fiscal planning and responsibility, and has set aside funds for future liabilities. The independent audits reports show a history of unmodified opinions in fiscal, compliance and performance audits. This is strong evidence that verifies good handling of financial resources.

#### Findings and Evidence:

Sierra College has sufficient revenue for operational needs and innovation to improve educational outcomes. Participatory governance structures and a clearly defined resource allocations process are in place to ensure that funding is allocated to support student achievement. The College has a mechanism to set aside funds each year to address its future liability as related to other post-employment benefits. The College's planning and budgeting process supports long-term financial stability (IIID.1).

The College's fiscal planning process has clear links to other planning processes, including the program review process. Evidence showed that the District appropriately weighs competing needs and engages with stakeholders when planning. Evidence of annual self-assessment of progress toward the Strategic Master Plan and other documented planning objectives was reviewed by the team. Established communication practices ensure stakeholders have a voice and the Board of Trustees is updated on budget planning (IIID.2).

The District has clear processes and timelines for budget development. The process ensures that a range of representative groups have the opportunity to participate in conversations associated

with fiscal planning. The formal process includes Academic, Classified, and Management Senates, the Planning and Resource Allocation Committee and Strategic Council; however, less formal processes are also in place for feedback on budgets (IIID.3).

The evidence presented indicates that the College is realistic in budget planning. External sources of information are used such as the Governor's annual budget proposal and the funding formula to help with planning. Internal sources of information include FTES forecasts and historical funding from general funds and categorical programs. During the budget planning process the College explores multiple revenue scenarios to ensure they can adapt to changing conditions (IIID.4).

The District has a Chief Business Officer and a comptroller to support the production of accurate financial statements. Timely information about financing and budget is shared through participatory governance processes. Participation in program review and external auditing helps the District ensure it maintains appropriate internal control processes. Funding allocations are consistent with proposed budgets and are aimed at supporting the College's goals. Budgetary information is widely discussed among various governing groups including the Deans Council, Strategic Council, and the Planning and Resource Allocation Committee. Discussions with campus constituents indicate that campus spending is well-managed and aimed at supporting the mission of the College.

The team reviewed the external audits for the past five years. All the opinions were unmodified, and there were no findings since 2013. The findings in 2013 were cleared by 2014. This provides evidence of strong internal controls being in place and that the institutional responses to external audit finds are timely. Information regarding all College finance information is communicated widely. Broad public communication of audit outcomes occurs through the Board Audit Committee and Board of Trustees meetings. The District reviews its financial internal control processes through the program review process every three years and through a periodic comprehensive permission and access analysis using the finance module in the enterprise and resource planning system (Banner). The yearly external audit process includes testing through sampling transactions, which provides another mechanism by which the District monitors its fiscal practices and internal control systems. The College has appropriate board policies and administrative procedures in place to help ensure compliance with laws and reliability of financial reporting (IIID.5, IIID.6, IIID.7, IIID.8).

The College's board policy requires the maintenance of an unrestricted general fund reserve at a level between 8% and 12%. Historical data demonstrates this reserve has been between 9.3% and 16.4% since 2008. Typical of many California community colleges, approximately 82% of the unrestricted general fund is allocated for compensation. The College last used a Tax Revenue Anticipation Note to help with cash flow management in 2014-15. A review of recent budget documents confirms that the College has managed the increasing public retirement system (CalSTRS and CalPERS) employer contribution increases over the past few years while maintaining a balanced budget. This demonstrates that there is a reasonable expectation of both short-term and long-term financial solvency. The College also regularly prepares and distributes multi-year budget forecasts, which demonstrates planning for the longer-term effect of short-

term financial planning. The College manages risk through several Joint Powers Authorities for property, worker's compensation and liability coverages (IIID.9, IIID.11).

The College has set aside funds for the other post-employment benefits obligation. It has procedures in place to ensure purchasing of goods and services follow formal bidding processes at established legal thresholds, outlined in a purchasing manual. The Financial Aid Office manages grants and financial aid to students, and the audit reports reviewed demonstrate a history of strong compliance for these programs. Regular review of grant expenditures to ensure compliance with requirements occurs. The Sierra College Foundation audits were also reviewed by the team and found to have no findings from the prior four years. A review of the College's recent budget documents and audit reports confirm that it annually allocates resources for the repayment of locally incurred debt, such as a 15-year capitalized lease obligation for a major heating system improvement. In addition, the College works with the Placer County Treasury to monitor the payments of several School Facility Improvement District and General Obligation bonds, which are also part of the annual audits. A review of the audits for the voter-approved general obligation bonds from 2012-2015 demonstrated clean audits (IIID.10, IIID.13, IIID.14).

The College's Other Post-Employment Benefit (OPEB) obligations are being recognized and provided for over time. Since the early 1990s, employees receiving this benefit contribute a portion of their base salary (and the district matches this contribution) into a fund for future costs of post-employment health benefits. An actuarial report for the OPEB liability is completed every two years, and the last one available was completed in 2018. Annual audit reports confirm that the College budgets for, and contributes funds toward, this obligation. These reports also provide evidence that the tracking of, and accounting for, the liability associated with vacation and compensatory time are tested. The collective bargaining agreements are limiters to this liability (IIID.12).

Sierra College's student loan default rate is within the federal limit as outlined in the Higher Ed Act. The last four years of College audits by its independent auditor had no findings or irregularities concerning the financial aid processed by the College. The College engages in a variety of activities aimed at keeping the default rate low including mandatory financial literacy training for loan recipients. Financial Aid staff receives yearly training to ensure compliance with Title IV (IIID.15).

The District has well-documented contract procurement policies and practices. Contract bids are managed through software designed to ensure adherence to regulatory requirements. Contract awards are consistent with the educational mission of the institution (IIID.16).

#### Conclusions:

The College meets the Standard and related eligibility requirements.

## Standard IV

### Leadership and Governance

#### IVA. Decision-making roles and processes

##### General Observations:

Sierra College has board policies and administrative procedures that establish the role of faculty, staff, and students for participation in the decision-making processes. BP 2510 and AP 2510 (Participation in Local Decision Making of the Board of Trustees) define the roles of the Strategic Council, the Academic Senate, the Student Senate, the Classified Senate, and the Management and Confidential Senate. Additionally, AP 2510 describes the manner in which individuals and participatory governance structures bring forward recommendations through the College governance process. Sierra College uses the contributions of leadership throughout the organization. College employees are trained in the College's collaborative decision-making process. Through its system of councils and committees, the College ensures the appropriate consideration of relevant perspectives and timely action.

##### Findings and Evidence:

New full-time faculty and classified employees at Sierra College are required to attend a three-day off-campus workshop to receive training on the collaborative processes used for decision-making and conflict resolution at the College. Through observations and interviews, the team found evidence that this training program is an effective introduction to the collaborative processes used for decision-making and conflict resolution at the College. The team found evidence that ideas for improvement that have institution-wide implications are formally and informally sought and implemented when feasible. The College monitors and makes revisions when participative processes have been less than clear for constituents (IVA.1).

The team confirmed that Board policies and administrative procedures define the purpose, structure, and processes for faculty, staff, students, and administrators to contribute to institutional policy development, planning, resource allocation, and budgeting. Furthermore, administrators and faculty have a substantive and clearly defined role in institutional governance. BP and AP 4020 (Program and Curriculum Development) define the role, scope, and duties of the Curriculum Committee. The Curriculum Handbook further describes and explains the processes for writing, evaluating, and approving curriculum proposals (IVA.2, IVA.3, IVA.4).

Through program review, instructional and student services departments incorporate and make recommendations for student learning programs and services including resource allocations such as requests for new staff positions, equipment, and facilities. Moreover, AP 2410 (Board Policies and Administrative Procedures) states that board policies and administrative procedures will be developed through the participatory governance process. Every board policy and administrative procedure contains a responsible executive to ensure a responsible party for policy maintenance and alignment to expertise. The College has established methods and processes for documenting and recording decision-making, and communicating the decisions made through the governance

process. Board Docs, a web-based application, is utilized for developing and publishing meeting agendas and recollections for the Board of Trustees, councils, and committees. The team reviewed evidence of other forms of communication, including emails and newsletters that inform constituents of relevant information.

Through observations and interviews, the team confirmed that policies and procedures are reviewed periodically by constituent groups and are approved through the participatory governance process. Additionally, the team verified that participatory governance structures and procedures are evaluated on a regular basis (IVA.5, IVA.6).

#### Conclusions:

The College meets the Standard and related eligibility requirements.

### **IVB. Chief Executive Officer**

#### General Observations:

The Superintendent/President serves as the institution's chief executive officer and has been delegated the authority to administer board policies and execute all board decisions requiring administrative action. Board Policies and Administrative Procedures delineate the role of the Superintendent/President including planning, organizing, budgeting, selecting personnel, and assessing institutional effectiveness. The Superintendent/President accomplishes these responsibilities and ensures that Sierra College is an educational institution with a focus on student learning.

#### Findings and Evidence:

BP 2430 (Board of Trustees Delegation of Authority to the Superintendent/President) delineates authority and responsibility to the Superintendent/President including responsibility for planning, organizing, budgeting, selecting and developing personnel, and assessing institutional effectiveness. The Superintendent/President accomplishes these responsibilities in part by serving as lead of the executive team and chairperson of the Planning and Resource Allocation Committee and the Strategic Council. These committees regularly review budgeting, staffing, policies and procedures, and the District's strategic plans (IVB.1).

The Superintendent/President is responsible for the appointment and supervision of all personnel and for establishing an organizational chart delineating the lines of staff responsibility. The District's structure is organized and staffed to reflect the institution's purpose, size, and complexity. The Superintendent/President regularly evaluates the administrative structure and facilitates changes deemed to be in the institution's best interest (IVB.2).

Sierra College's priorities and goals are set annually by the Superintendent/President and the Board of Trustees. The Superintendent/President is responsible for the creation and implementation of a comprehensive and integrated planning system that includes, but is not limited to, the formation of the District-wide Strategic Master Plan and Educational Master Plan. The College's established planning process engages staff, faculty, and management in plan

development, review, and implementation. The Superintendent/President regularly uses research and analysis to guide institutional improvement to assure that College practices align with the institutional mission (IVB.3).

The Superintendent/President leads the College's accreditation process by working with faculty, staff, administrators, and the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees delegates responsibility to comply with accreditation to the Superintendent/President. The Superintendent/President works with the accreditation liaison officer to ensure compliance with accreditation requirements (IVB.4).

The Superintendent/President assures that College practices align with the institutional mission and comply with regulations and board policies. The Superintendent/President stays abreast of federal and state regulations and statutes to ensure District practices are in compliance with the law and consistent with the District's mission and policies. The Superintendent/President regularly communicates with external stakeholders, holding leadership roles in several local and regional economic and advisory boards. Additionally, the Superintendent/President hosts an annual President's Breakfast for community leaders, elected officials, regional educators and College supporters, and he utilizes a community newsletter to communicate with interested citizens about the College (IVB.5, IVB.6).

#### Conclusions:

The College meets the Standard and related eligibility requirements.

### **IVC. Governing Board**

#### General Observations:

The Sierra Community College District Board of Trustees is responsible for establishing and maintaining policies that sustain the College's academic quality, institutional effectiveness, and fiscal integrity and stability. The Board consists of seven members elected from the District. Board members are trained in College policy and practice and regularly evaluate themselves. The Board adheres to policies and procedures which pertain to Board operations and the selection and evaluation of the Superintendent/President. As evidenced in the College's board policies and substantiated in interviews with College personnel, there is a clear delineation of roles between the Superintendent/President and the Board.

#### Findings and Evidence:

The team found evidence that the Board adheres to policies that assure the academic quality, integrity, and effectiveness of student learning programs and services, and the financial stability of the College. BP 4020 (Program and Curriculum Development) and BP 4021 (Program Vitality) outline the Board's role in maintaining academic quality and the integrity of student learning programs and services. BP 6250 (Budget Management), BP 2230 (Fiscal Management), and BP 6200 (Budget Preparation) outline the Board's responsibility for the College's fiscal

stability. The Board's authority and responsibility in planning processes are evidenced in BP 3250 (Institutional Planning) and BP 3225 (Institutional Effectiveness) (IVC.1).

BP 2715 (Board of Trustees Code of Ethics) requires that all decisions made by the board "advance the mission of the College, and demonstrate a commitment to students and the community at large." Interviews conducted at the College as well as Board meeting minutes indicate that the board acts collectively and uniformly support decisions made. The team confirmed the Board has a policy that establishes the process for selecting a Superintendent/President. The College describes the process by which the presidential search was conducted, including the development and dissemination of the Superintendent/President job description, the hiring committee's composition, and the timeline for the job search. BP 2435 (Board of Trustees Evaluation of the Superintendent/President) establishes the criteria upon which the Superintendent/President's evaluation is based. In accordance with the contract and BP 2435, the Superintendent/President is on an annual evaluation cycle (IVC.2, IVC.3).

The Board is elected from designated trustee areas per BP 2100 (Board of Trustees Elections). The Board also includes a student trustee, the president of the Associated Students of Sierra College (ASCC). The board acts independently without undue influence. The Board promotes "the interests of all citizens, and maintain independent judgment unbiased by any private, partisan or individual interests" per BP 2715 (Code of Ethics). Its members are not "financially interested in any contract made by them in their official capacity, or in any body or board of which they are members" per BP 2710 (Conflict of Interest) (IVC.4).

The Board is "the ultimate decision-maker in those areas assigned to it by state and federal laws and regulations" per BP 2510 (Participation in Local Decision Making of the Board of Trustees). These decisions include the establishment of policies supporting student learning, program development, planning and financial management, including the College's budget. Interviews with trustees as well as other College committees substantiated that the Board plays an active role in the aforementioned areas (IVC.5).

The Board's bylaws and policies are published on the College website. The College's board policies pertaining to the governing board are available on the website and through the office of the Superintendent/President. BP 2010 (Board of Trustee Elections) specifies the board's size and structure. The structure of the Board is also reviewed annually through the execution of BP2035 (Organizational Meeting of the Board of Trustees). BP 2200 (Duties and Responsibilities of the Board of Trustees) describes the duties and responsibilities of the board. The College also maintains and follows operational policies for the Board including those pertaining to voting, public participation in board meetings, and procedures for closed sessions (IVC.6).

Evidence from the College indicates that the Board acts in a manner consistent with its policies and bylaws pertaining to elections, operations, and the scope of Board members' responsibilities. Board policies and administrative procedures are periodically and revised as necessary per BP



2410 (Board Policies and Administrative Procedures). The College uses the Community College League of California Board Policy and Administrative Procedure service to ensure alignment between local policies and contemporary language and legal citations. The Board regularly reviews key indicators of student learning and achievement. The California Community College Chancellor's Office Student Success Scorecard and Institutional Planning Metrics are reviewed annually. The Board also regularly reviews key planning documents including the Educational Master Plan, the Strategic Master Plan, the Facilities Master Plan, and the Technology Master Plan (IVC.7, IVC.8).

The College has a mechanism for staggering members' terms in office and providing continuity for Board members who are elected from designated district areas, as per BP 2100 (Board of Trustee Elections). Once elected, Board members are trained using the Sierra College Board Member Guide and through orientation meetings. Further, trustees participate in Community College League of California training. Board members also participate in professional development opportunities such presentations, conventions, and conferences in and out of state. They also participate in College-specific professional development opportunities. BP 2745 (Board of Trustees Self-Evaluation) establishes a process for the Board's annual evaluation. Evidence and interviews with the visiting team indicate that Board shares the results with the public and uses these to improve Board performance (IVC.9, IVC.10).

The College maintains a code of ethics and a conflict of interest policy for all Board members as per BP 2715 (Board of Trustees Code of Ethics and BP 2710 Conflict of Interest). BP 2715 also outlines how charges of trustee misconduct are handled. Evidence provided by the College indicates that the Board adheres to its code of ethics (IVC.11).

BP 2430 (Board of Trustees Delegation of Authority to the Superintendent/President) affirms that executive responsibilities for administering the policies adopted by the board requiring action from the College's administration. The delineation of responsibility was also clear from interviews conducted at the College. BP 3200 (Accreditation) designates that the Superintendent/President shall keep the Board of Trustees informed of approved accrediting organizations and the status of accreditations. The Board is regularly provided with progress reports and opportunities to participate in the accreditation process (IVC12, IVC.13).

### Conclusions:

The College meets the Standard and related eligibility requirements.

## Quality Focus Essay

The Sierra College Quality Focus Essay contains four goals that are timely and important to student success:

1. Foster and support a culture of reflection and learning in which faculty regularly engage in professional development.
2. Decrease success gaps for equity populations.
3. Improve the meaningfulness of assessment practices.
4. Improve student success rates.

Creating a culture of reflection based on an equity mindset may be a powerful tool to increase student success and allow everyone to see the value in the assessment process. Although their goals seem separate, Sierra College recognizes the value of their Guided Pathways process, known as Reengineering Sierra College for Student Success (R4S), as a method to accomplish all four of these goals.

The outcomes of the Reengineering Sierra College for Student Success (R4S) taskforce and the Professional Development Taskforce address student success while simultaneously supporting the implementation of an equity-minded framework for professional development. In addition, the college has implemented a Rise program to address equity. Evidence shared by the college and interviews with college personnel confirmed that the College has already begun to embrace this framework. Sierra College recognizes the completion of their goals is “a multi-phase professional development program.” The QFE shows awareness that this type of work will require different types of professional development in order for faculty to see assessment as a tool. Additionally, the College has created Core Competencies for all employee groups which support the College’s efforts in equity-minded professional development. Finally, the QFE’s goals are tied to the first three Strategic Goals for the College.

Some components of the QFE such as “culture of reflection and learning,” “meaningfulness of assessment practices,” and “statements of trust” are difficult to measure, and therefore the College may not be able to document improvement. The review team recognizes Sierra College’s commitment to equity, assessment, and success and applauds the College for addressing these topics through professional development. The team recommends more specific planning on how the College will assess their progress.