

EVALUATION REPORT

American River College
4700 College Oak Drive
Sacramento, CA 95841

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 evaluation team that
visited American River College from October 12-15, 2009

Erlinda J. Martinez, Ed.D., Chair

American River College
Visiting team roster
October 2009

Dr. Erlinda Martinez (Chair)
President, Santa Ana College

Mr. Pedro Avila
Vice Chancellor, Institutional Effectiveness
& Enrollment Management
West Hills Community College District

Ms. Brenda Baity
Professor, East Los Angeles College

Dr. Edwin Deas
Vice President, Administrative Services
College of the Desert

Dr. Cindy Miles
Chancellor, Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District

Ms. Jean Perry
Division Chair, Glendale Community College

Dr. Donald Singer
President, Board of Trustees
San Bernardino Community College District

Ms. Kennethia Vega (Assistant)
Assistant to the President, Santa Ana College

Dr. Rajen Vurdien
Vice President of Instruction, Saddleback College

Dr. Lori Waite
Dean of Student Services, Chaffey College

SUMMARY OF EVALUATION REPORT

INSTITUTION: Los Rios Community College District – American River College

DATES OF VISIT: October 12-15, 2009

TEAM CHAIR: Erlinda J. Martinez, Ed.D.

A ten-member accreditation team visited American River College from October 12-15, 2009, for the purpose of evaluating how well the institution is achieving its stated purposes, analyzing how well the college is meeting the Commission standards, providing recommendations for quality assurance and institutional improvement, and submitting recommendations to the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) regarding the status of the college.

In preparation for the visit, team members attended an all-day training session on September 3, 2009, conducted by the ACCJC, and studied Commission materials prepared for visiting teams. Team members read carefully the college's self study report, including the recommendations from the Fall 2003 visiting team, and assessed the evidence provided by the college.

Prior to the visit team members completed written evaluations of the self study report and began identifying areas for further investigation. On the day before the formal beginning of the visit, the team members spent the afternoon discussing their views of the written materials provided by the college, reviewing evidence provided by the college and reviewed other materials submitted to the commission since its last comprehensive visit.

During the visit, the team met with over 200 faculty, staff, administrators, members of the Board of Trustees, and students. The team chair met with members of the Board of Trustees, the president of the college, and various administrators. In addition, team members visited two satellite campuses; the Natomas Educational Center and the McClellan Center. The team also attended two open meetings to allow for comment from any member of the campus or local community.

The team found the self study report comprehensive and well written. College staff members were very accommodating to team members and available for interviews and follow-up conversations. The college was well prepared and ready for the team's visit.

American River College Commendations:

Commendation 1:

The college has done an excellent job at implementing and articulating planning processes. The planning process is comprehensive and engages all segments of the

College. It is aligned and data driven, resulting in the improvement of programs and services.

Commendation 2:

The College is served by a robust research department devoted to providing the college and the various planning groups and processes with extensive data to inform decision making.

Commendation 3:

The college has done an excellent job using program review to improve programs. This has also engaged the college community in a dialog about the currency of programs and their relevance to the community (II.A.2.e).

Commendation 4:

The district's commendable commitment to its human resources is evidenced in its systematic and significant investment in employees. The well-established funding methodology (the "bucket" concept), whereby 80 percent of designated new funds to the district are allocated proportionately to the respective collective bargaining units is testimony to the value placed on employees. In the current budget crisis, the institutional commitment to protect employee positions is significant.

Commendation 5:

The College is commended for its commitment to the Natomas Educational Center. In particular to address classroom space and access to facilities an extraordinary partnership with the Natomas Branch of the Sacramento Public Library and Inderkum High School was formed. Additionally a full complement of comprehensive student services is available 58 hours a week. This action brought together multiple generations and multiple constituencies for a common good, allowing all to benefit, genuinely demonstrating the community in community college.

Commendation 6:

The conservative and responsible financial planning and budgeting has allowed the College to both manage and avoid overreaction to adverse external economic conditions.

Commendation 7:

The College has a culture based on trust and transparency. Faculty and staff work together for a common goal: the success of students. As a leader, the College President is visible, engaged, and authentic.

The inclusion of classified staff within the framework of governance is laudable. The procedure for classified position justification process is unusual and to be noted and commended as it professionalizes, validates, and elevates this important category of employees at the community college level.

Commendation 8:

The team commends the Board of Trustees and the Chancellor of the District for recognizing their respective roles, i.e, in the case of the Board for entrusting the Chancellor with the full responsibility for the implementation and administration of Board policies and for the Chancellor, in turn, for not micromanaging the college.

American River College Recommendations:

Recommendation 1: The AACJC SLO rubric speaks to authentic assessment and the full engagement of faculty and staff; therefore, to demonstrate SLO success at the proficiency stage by the Commission's 2012 deadline, the team recommends that American River College identify a formal process to review the quality of its assessment tools and to ensure part-time faculty participation in the assessment of SLOs (II.A.1.c, I.B.4, I.B.5).

Recommendation 2: The college recognizes that student development needs for leadership, active participation in shared governance, and awareness and tolerance for diversity are paramount at American River College. In order to improve, the team recommends that efforts, such as conflict resolution training, Interest Based Alliance training, and the Community and Diversity Center Initiative, be established for students and institutionalized to address these critical student needs (I.A.1, II.B.1, II.B.3.b, II.B.3.d).

Recommendation 3: In order to improve, the team recommends that the assessment of the services and the sequencing of the modules provided by the learning resource centers be formalized and systematic with support from the Research Office (II.C.2).

Recommendation 4: In order to improve, it is recommended that student participation in the shared governance processes and committees be actively encouraged to ensure the student voice is not lost. This recommendation was recognized in the Self Study, is detailed as a planning agenda, and was spoken to during the team visit (IV.A.1, 2.a, IV.A.3.).

ACCREDITATION EVALUATION REPORT FOR AMERICAN RIVER COLLEGE

Introduction

American River College is an independently accredited college within the Los Rios Community College District, a multi-college district with four colleges.

American River College offers instruction at its main campus, as well as the Natomas Educational Center (in cooperation with Inderkum High School), the McClellan Center (including Sacramento Regional Public Safety Training Center), Ethan Way Center, and Mather Center.

American River College (ARC) became a part of the largest system of higher education in the world when it opened its doors as California's 61st public junior college in 1955. The college's origin, however, dates back to February 28, 1942, when Grant Union Junior College was established in Del Paso Heights to train civilian personnel for national service during World War II. In 1945 the name was changed to Grant Technical College, and in June 1954, voters agreed to the establishment of a new junior college district. Grant Technical College ceased operation after 13 years, and American River Junior College was born in the fall of 1955. For the first three years, classes were offered at the former Grant Technical College campus. However, soon after the first semester of classes had begun, the college purchased a 153-acre site known as the Cameron Ranch on which to construct a permanent campus. By October of 1958, when official dedication ceremonies were held, eight new building complexes had been erected among the magnificent oaks native to the area.

In 1965 the college became a part of the Los Rios Community College District, and the word "junior" was removed from its name. Today, along with Sacramento City College, Cosumnes River College, and Folsom Lake College, American River College is directed by a seven-member Board of Trustees. The trustees are elected by voters residing in the seven trustee areas that make up the District.

As a large suburban college, American River College served approximately 38,000 students in fall 2008. Student demographics indicate:

- A majority of white students (48.2%), cross cultural representations including Hispanic (14.3%), Asian (9.1%), African American (9.0%) and Pacific Islander/Filipino (3.6%).
- There is a balance of female (50.4%) and male (49.6%) students.
- There has been a slight increase (7.1%) in day enrollments over the past five years in contrast to a surge increase (248%) in online enrollment.

American River College is located in a five-county region that is home to 1.7 million residents, with a projected growth to 2.2 million by 2010. The college's largest growth area is projected to be in Natomas, where the population in 1999 was 38,369. Since 1955, American River College has grown from 500 students to more than 38,000, from 32 full-time faculty members to more than 400, from 8 certificate programs to 71 (plus an additional 50 certificates of completion), and from three degree programs to 78.

American River College is served by a comprehensive and well maintained facility. After it became part of the Los Rios Community College District, the College added Davies Hall and a faculty office building.

In 1968-69 new facilities for chemistry, physics, engineering, physical education, and technical vocational studies were added. The campus continued the growth phase in the 1970s with the addition of a three-story library, a horticulture complex, a major addition to the technical education facility, a child care center and a counseling center. The 1980s saw the completion of the Rose Marks open-air pavilion and a new bookstore. The 1990s included major remodeling of laboratories and the addition of facilities for disabled student programs and services, instructional technology, and child development.

Since 2000 American River College has dedicated the Instructional Technology Center, Howard Hall, and the Health and Education building. Major renovations have occurred in the Learning Resource Center, physical education areas including a new swimming pool and water polo facility, and the theater and fine arts areas.

The college's plans for the next few years include additional major projects. One will involve a new and significantly larger facility for its Oak Café, the centerpiece of the college's highly regarded food service program. Also on the drawing board is a major renovation of the center campus, a project that will replace several of the oldest buildings in the liberal arts complex with a single three-story classroom and office building. The consolidation of the liberal art facilities will open space for a planned future expansion as well as provide a new look for the central region of the campus.

Evaluation of Institutional Responses to Previous Recommendations

Responses to the Previous Team's Recommendations:

Overall, the institution's responses to the previous team's recommendations are acceptable, not only in the Midterm, but amplified as well in the 2009 Institutional Self Study. In the Midterm Report, the institution responded to three out of three recommendations by the previous visiting team for reaffirmation. The Midterm report described: progress on the recommendation, analysis of results, and detailed plans. Detailed charts summarized progress for the college as identified in their 'Self-Identified' planning agendas. Further illumination of recommendations is detailed in the institutional Self Study with not only additional responses, but accomplishments relative to the 2003 Self Study action plans.

College Recommendation #1 (2003 – page 71 of Self Study Report)

The College's new process for program review, planning and decision-making, while excellent, is in an early stage of development. Accordingly, in order to increase effectiveness, A) it is recommended that the college assess their new process to clarify links between planning efforts to insure participation from all campus segments. Furthermore, in order to enhance campus wide understanding of the process and outcomes, B) the College needs to communicate to the college community a description of the process (as suggested in Planning Agenda 3.B.2) and the criteria used in determining final allocations (3.C.2, 3.C.3).

The recommendation has been met. The college has incorporated college goals and focus areas into the annual college-wide educational master plan (EMP) process, which has connected program review and EMP. The college has established college wide access to extensive data via Web sites, and the intranet lends transparency to the planning process. There has continued to be improvement in the visibility of institutional planning. The template-driven EMP process clearly details for faculty, staff, and administrators the connection between college plans, goals, objectives, and annual focus areas. Student Learning Outcomes are integrated into planning cycles as well, and the home grown SOCRATES offers a common receptacle for said processes.

College Recommendation # 2 (2003 – page 71 of Self Study Report)

The Los Rios District has developed a strategic plan to serve the people within the District through the creation of four colleges and a series of educational centers affiliated with each of those colleges. It is recommended that in order to increase effectiveness the District amplify on this strategic plan to include prescriptions for how appropriate instructional and student support systems will be provided at each center, a matrix of service levels associated with different thresholds of student headcount at a center, and a financing plan to ensure that no one college is unduly burdened in their responsibility as the educational center hosts (6.1, 5.6).

The recommendation has been met as a result of significant effort made since the last accreditation visit to weave the numerous constituents working in cooperation with the District in the development of District-wide standards for the regional educational

centers. The District roles and relationship to the college seem to be well understood and are offered in the college's Functional Mapping Document.

College Recommendation #3 (2003 – page 71 of Self Study Report)

The College has committed to inclusion of classified staff as active participants in the governance process. Accordingly, it is recommended that in order to increase effectiveness the College implement in a timely manner the Planning Agenda items identified in Standard 10.B.9. More specifically, it is recommended that the College:

- a. “explore ways to provide staff coverage for operational functions to ensure that all interested classified staff have the opportunity to serve on the college governance committees.***
- b. “explore ways to increase the participation of classified staff in matters of classified staffing projections in their area Educational Master Plan.***
- c. “explore ways to include classified staff leadership in the prioritization process for new classified positions.” (10.B.9)***

The three parts of the recommendation are being addressed effectively, as follows:

- a. This component has been met. The college established, via the president, both regular and frequent meetings with both the Academic Senate president and the Classified Senate president, whereas in the past only the Academic Senate president had routinely scheduled access to the college president. The president has also instituted an annual notice sent to all administrators to encourage the participation of classified staff in the governance process. Currently, there is classified staff representation on eight out of ten regularly standing governance committees.
- b. This component is well under way. Classified staff members now have access to formal training workshops on the preparation of EMPs. With the infusion of the EMP process through the college's intranet, classified staff has now established themselves as an integral part of the annual EMP process.
- c. This component has been met. The college has created a process whereby the hiring of classified staff parallels the existing process for hiring faculty. The Classified Senate establishes its own priority list for hiring consideration by management. Since 2006, the process has become a routine annual exercise.

Eligibility Requirements

1. **AUTHORITY** – The evaluation team confirmed that American River College is an institution of the California Community College System and is authorized to provide educational programs by the California Education Code. The college is accredited by the Accrediting Commission of Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC).
2. **MISSION** - The evaluation team confirmed that the mission statement was revised and approved by the Board of Trustees in June 2008. The mission is regularly reviewed, updated and published in the college catalog.
3. **GOVERNING BOARD** – The evaluation team confirmed that American River College is served by a publicly elected governing board consisting of seven members, joined by a non-voting student trustee. The Board is empowered to formulate policy, maintain integrity, financial stability and ensure the college mission is being carried out. The governing board has a Conflict of Interest policy and a Code of Ethics. None of the board members has any employment, family or personal financial interest in the institution.
4. **CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER** – The Governing Board selects the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). The Board not only confirms the appointment of the CEO but also approves the search and selection process, the position description, the qualities and qualifications to be sought and the time lines to be followed. The CEO is evaluated on an annual basis and serves as Chancellor/Superintendent. The College President is primarily responsible for the management of the college, implementation of board policy, and long range planning. The College President is evaluated on an annual basis.
5. **ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY** – The administrative structure of American River College is organized to address the growing needs and complexity of the college. All administrators are screened to determine their ability to service the college. Minimal qualifications are stated, job descriptions are created and all administrators are evaluated.
6. **OPERATIONAL STATUS** – American River College offers a variety of educational programs and services including a range of transfer, skill development and vocational curricula. Offerings and programs change regularly to reflect the needs of the students attaining their educational goals at American River College. The college has been continuously operational since 1955.
7. **DEGREES** – American River College offers courses that fulfill program requirements for Associate of Art and Associate of Science degrees and certificates.
8. **EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS** – American River College’s principal degree programs are congruent with its mission. Programs are based on recognized fields of study in higher education, are of sufficient content and length, present sufficient

variety within disciplines and are conducted and maintained at the appropriate levels of quality and rigor including distance education courses.

9. **ACADEMIC CREDIT** – The Curriculum Committee determines specific unit credit total for individual courses as well as credit or non-credit status. The committee follows guidelines established in the Program and Curriculum Handbook based upon standards established by the State of California’s Code of Regulations.
10. **STUDENT LEARNING ACHIEVEMENT** – Student learning outcomes for each degree program are evidenced in the college catalog. Substantial work has been completed in establishing SLOs for courses, programs, and Student Service units. Currently, the college is working toward adopting institutional level student learning outcomes. The visiting team has made a recommendation concerning the subject in order to ensure that the current timeline for the college’s work will permit it to achieve the Proficiency level by 2012.
11. **GENERAL EDUCATION** – General education programs and courses meet, and often exceed, requirements of Title V (55806). The quality and rigor of American River College general education is consistent with the academic standards appropriate to higher education, providing breadth of knowledge, demanding critical thinking within the disciplines and promoting intellectual inquiry.
12. **ACADEMIC FREEDOM** – American River College promotes academic freedom, free inquiry and intellectual independence as a central feature of its programs and certificates which is upheld by the college and is further evidenced by the faculty handbook.
13. **FACULTY** – Full time faculty develop new programs and courses, maintain quality in existing programs, conduct curriculum review, engage in departmental and strategic planning, serve in standing and ad hoc committee, act as coordinators and department chairs and provide services to the community and college outside of the classroom. Faculty responsibilities are outlined and assurance of compliance with minimum qualifications is maintained. The college has over 400 full-time faculty.
14. **STUDENT SERVICES** – American River College provides a range of student services consistent with its student population supporting student learning and development within the context of the institutional mission.
15. **ADMISSIONS** – Admissions policies and practices are consistent with the college’s mission and adhere to the establishment of the community colleges being “open door” access institutions. The admission policies for the college’s Nursing, EMT, Dietary Manger, Human Services option/Chemical Dependency Studies, Interior Design, Early Childhood Education, and Funeral Service Education programs adhere to guidelines and state regulations for community colleges.
16. **INFORMATION AND LEARNING RESOURCES** – The evaluation team confirmed that American River College provides long-term access to sufficient

information and learning resources and services to support its mission and all of its educational programs.

- 17. FINANCIAL RESOURCES** – The American River College documents a funding base, financial resources and plans for financial development adequate to support student learning programs and services, to improve institutional effectiveness and assure financial stability.
- 18. FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY** – The evaluation team confirmed that American River College annually undergoes and makes available an external financial audit by a licensed certified public accountant.
- 19. INSTITUTIONAL PLANNING** – The evaluation team confirmed that American River College has made significant progress in implementing an ongoing and systematic cycle of evaluation, integrated planning, resource allocation, implementation and re-evaluation.
- 20. PUBLIC INFORMATION** – Both the print and online version of the American River College Catalog provide constituents with precise, accurate and current information.
- 21. RELATIONS WITH THE ACCREDITING COMMISSION** – The Board of Trustees and American River College fulfill their obligations to the Accrediting Commission. The accreditation standards and recommendations of the Accrediting Commission are incorporated into the Board's planning activities.

STANDARD I Institutional Mission and Effectiveness

A. Mission

General Observations:

American River College has updated its mission statement, which is embodied in a three-part formal statement consisting of the college vision, the mission, and the values. To meet the diverse needs of its identified population, the college provides a broad range of program and course offerings in developmental education, career and technical education, general education, and lower-division education for transfer to a four-year post-secondary institution (I.A.2). The mission statement serves as the guiding force for the development of the college goals and focus areas, which in turn guide each department's program review and annual educational master plan.

The Planning Coordination Council (PCC), which is supported by the research staff and has representatives from all of the college constituencies, is the designated body that oversees the college-wide review of the mission statement every three-to-five years. The present mission statement replaced the statement that was in place from 2003 to 2008. The mission is published in the College catalog, on the website, in the schedule of classes, and in various college locations (I.A.2, I.A.3).

Findings and Evidence:

The mission statement was revised by the college in 2007-2008 and approved by the Board of Trustees in July 2008. It clearly identifies four broad educational areas which are accessible to its diverse student population (I.A, I.A.1). Minutes of the Academic Senate, the Classified Senate, and the Student Association, and the annual reports of the college's ten standing committees demonstrate that a college-wide review occurred (I.A.2). The process for reviewing the mission statement is found in the *Institutional Planning at American River College* document. The mission's role in institutional planning and decision making is stated in the *Decision Making Handbook* and is evident in departmental and administrative minutes, annual reports made by the ten standing committees, and educational master plans. A college survey of all American River College employees shows that over 88 percent are aware of the statement of vision, mission, and values and agree, while a smaller percentage, but still in the majority, agree that the mission guides institutional planning and decision making (I.A.3, I.A.4).

Conclusion:

The mission statement is the focal point for all campus planning. The college has a well-defined process that is consistently used in reviewing and revising their mission statement.

Recommendations:

None.

B. Improving Institutional Effectiveness

General Observations:

The American River College document, “A Self-Reflective Process: The Plan for Planning”, graphically depicts and explains the planning process cycle (I.B). A second document, “A Perspective on Planning,” identifies the goals and objectives listed in the “District Strategic Plan 2006” and the college focus areas 2008-2011, as well as describes program review, educational master planning, evaluation practices, and student learning outcomes.

Opportunities abound for college-wide dialogue regarding planning. The *American River Decision Making Handbook* describes the committee structure on which the college’s dialogue and institutional processes are based. An overview of how the planning process is based on dialogue is set forth in the *Institutional Planning at American River College* document. Ten shared-governance standing committees, with the overarching committee being the Planning Coordination Council, discuss and make decisions on key functions and programs. Additionally, three governance groups, the Academic Senate, the Classified Senate, and the Student Association speak on behalf of their constituents. Chairs of the instructional departments and Counseling meet with their faculty and area deans. The Administrative Leadership Council and the President’s Executive Staff (PES) dialog on overall college operations. The President maintains an open door policy for meetings with all constituencies to discuss college issues, including planning, and sits on various committees to assist him in informed decision making (I.B.2, IV.B.2.b).

The planning process is broad-based. All departments participate in planning through the development of their annual educational master plans and six-year program reviews. The Academic and Classified Senates have processes for reviewing hiring allocation requests. The Facilities Master Plan Committee will reconvene in fall 2009 to update the college facilities master plan. The “ARC Insider,” the college intranet website where procedures and minutes of the standing committees, the mission statement, and links to the online EMP and program review templates are posted and can be accessed by all employees (I.B.4, III.A.6, III.B.2.b, III.C.2, III.D.3).

The District in its “Strategic Plan 2006” and American River College in its “American River College District Strategic Plans Goals” have identified five essential goals consistent with their mission: student success, access and growth, teaching and learning effectiveness, organizational effectiveness, and community and economic development. Articulation of these goals and focus areas and evaluation of progress toward achieving them are found in the “American River College District Strategic Plan Goals” and “American River College Focus Areas (2008-2011).” Focus areas, aligned with the “Strategic Plan 2006,” are developed by the college every three to five years consistent with the review of the mission statement. The Planning Coordination Council, with continuing involvement by the standing committees and governance groups, monitors the progress toward the goals. Institutional research provides the data, including “Key Effectiveness Indicators” (KEIs), which are used to evaluate college progress on the outcomes and identify actions to attain the goals. All departments produce annual

Educational Master Plans (EMPs) based on college goals and focus areas. The plans provide the information needed for the college governance structures to discuss allocation requests for staff and faculty positions and other resources (I.B.2).

Evaluation and reevaluation occurs at the department and college levels. At the department level, evaluation occurs through the program review process, which identifies strengths and weaknesses; by the assessment of student learning outcomes; and through the development of the EMP which identifies the resources for addressing the strengths and weaknesses. Reevaluation occurs through the EMP process the year following the allocation and use of resources. At the college level, the college-wide programs are discussed, evaluated, and reevaluated in standing committees and governance work groups. Planning, Research, Technology, and Professional Development provide the institutional data needed to guide planning and decision making. The EMP process has been modified three times since 2002-2003. Similarly, the program review process has also been revised by placing it online and streamlining it to eliminate duplication of some of the components. In the fall 2009 the Academic Senate will undertake comprehensive review of program review. The SLO Assessment Committee was formed in 2004 in support of the college's effort to build SLO development and assessment into the American River College culture. The Research Office seeks user feedback from faculty and staff completing their program reviews on how the EMP and program review processes might be improved (I.B.3, I.B.6).

American River College reports to the following external constituencies: the general public, including feeder high schools and communities within the American River College service area; four-year institutions to which American River College students transfer; potential employers; the System Office; and the Accrediting Commission for Colleges and Junior Colleges (ACCJC). Examples of reports include the "Community College Survey of Student Engagement," the annual report on SLOs to ACCJC, and "Accountability Reporting of Community Colleges" (ARCC) to the System Office. Internally, quality assurance is demonstrated in various reports and documents, such as "Key Effectiveness Indicators," EMPs, program review results, SLO assessment results, and the "President's Goals and Accomplishments" (I.B.5).

The college assesses its evaluation mechanisms to determine their effectiveness in improving their instructional and non-instructional programs and services. The SLO Assessment Committee reevaluates the SLO process on an ongoing basis. The Planning Coordination Council, in consultation with the Academic Senate, oversees the evaluation of program review. The Academic Senate will be forming a taskforce in fall 2009 to evaluate the program review process. The PCC developed the annual report template used by the ten standing committees to report their activities and how their activities support the college goals and oversees the self-evaluative process of each committee, including itself (I.B.7).

Findings and Evidence:

All of the college constituencies have the opportunity to participate in continuous dialogue for improvement of student learning and institutional processes through their representative groups or their participation in committees. Representatives of the three governance groups, the Administrative Leadership Council, and PES meet regularly with

the president of the college. For example, as a result of dialogue, the development of student learning outcomes for course, program, and college levels has emerged. The report notes that during 2008-2009, as a result of political controversies and internal differences, the Student Association chose not to participate in the college dialogue related to continuous improvement. However, the president of the Student Association reported in an on-campus interview that the attitude is changing and students now participate on every standing committee. The existence of groups that represent all constituents supports how broad based institutional planning is at American River College (I.B.1, I.B.2, I.B.4).

Articulation of college goals and focus areas occurs through the standing committees and governance groups. Numerous reports, including annual reports from the ten standing committees, PCC's review of the "Key Effectiveness Indicators," departments' program reviews and educational master plans, professional development reports, and the biannual "President's Goals and Accomplishments Report," support and verify that goals are being achieved. Data from the faculty, classified staff, and management survey show that majority of the employees agree that they understand the college's goals and objectives and the extent to which they are achieved. They also understand the role the goals and objectives play in the development of EMPs, curriculum, and development (I.B.3).

Evaluation and reevaluation occurs through program review, educational master plans, and student learning outcomes and aid the departments in making decisions regarding their operation. Standing committees examine the effectiveness of their work through their annual reports. Surveys of faculty and staff provide feedback for reevaluation (I.B.3, I.B.6). Numerous reports document assessment results and are communicated to the appropriate constituencies (I.B.5). The PCC oversees the college's program review, SLO assessment, and EMP evaluation mechanisms to determine if they produce information that is helpful in guiding program improvements and makes recommendations for review (I.B.7).

Conclusion:

A well defined and organized structure exists for dialogue at American River College. All constituents are represented. Goals and objectives and the role they play in improving institutional planning are well understood and used. The college is encouraged to continue to provide guidance in resolving the self-identified issue of lack of student involvement on committees.

The planning function is well defined and can be articulated by employees. Extensive data, both quantitative and qualitative, produced and explained by the Research Department is widely available to assist all constituencies in evaluating and reevaluating whether their goals are achieved.

The college uses and shares multiple assessment measures to assure the quality of its activities with interested parties and stakeholders through its publications and reports. Further, American River College demonstrates that it conducts systematic review and

modification of its planning and resource allocation processes, including educational master planning, program review, and SLO assessment, through its ten standing committees and governance groups.

Recommendations:

None.

STANDARD II

Student Learning Programs and Service

A. Instructional Programs

General Observations:

The Self Study Report is very comprehensive and describes its many instructional programs. The College is well staffed and well equipped to service the 78 degrees and 71 certificates that are part of its offerings. The college claims 38 program advisory committees, uses student learning outcomes in the design of all its courses and programs, and assesses its programs in three ways.

American River College has developed a sophisticated system to monitor its curriculum. The curriculum process is entirely managed by the SOCRATES system to track courses from the concept of an idea to final approval by the Curriculum Committee. Courses are offered in four broad areas, namely developmental, career technical, general education and lower division. Several of these offerings are available online. The faculty teaching online receive appropriate training. At the present time, more than 50% of several degrees can be achieved online. The College filed a substantive change report with ACCJC which was approved.

Under Standard II.A.1.a, the institution must show that the institution “relies upon research and analysis to identify student learning needs and to assess progress toward achieving stated learning outcomes.” American River College provides students with the opportunity for self assessment for developmental courses in Mathematics and ESL. Environmental scans are used to determine needs for new courses and programs. Using data, American River College was able to create an Educational Initiative to help struggling first time freshmen. American River College participates in the Basic Skills Initiative and has been working on Student Learning Outcomes since fall 2006.

One important change that sets the stage for the discussion of this standard was the fall 2006 Academic Senate sponsored lunch-time “Brown Bag” to discuss student learning outcomes assessment. This was followed in fall 2007 by the formal adoption of the SLO assessment model. The assessment process is a rotating three-cycle process with the first year devoted to student self assessment and faculty designed assessment, the second year development and implementation of an Action Plan, and a third year of continued implementation. This cycle is then assessed and begins again.

American River College uses two distinct approaches to course-level SLO assessment: (i.e., student self-assessments and faculty-designed assessments). Greater weight is placed on the faculty-designed assessment as a direct measure of student learning. This is evidenced by: (a) the relative time and effort that faculty invest in both assessment design and in interpreting and analyzing results, in contrast to the time and effort spent on student self-assessments, and (b) the significantly greater time that the SLO Assessment Committee spends reviewing faculty-designed assessment plans and the resulting action plans. In cases where the results of the faculty-designed assessment point to different

findings than those of the student self-assessments, the SLO Assessment Committee would expect departments to rely primarily upon the faculty-designed assessment data to create the action plans.

American River College's SLO Assessment Plan (September 2007) describes the intent and the work to achieve the intent of the faculty-designed assessment as follows: "in order to promote a more thorough and in-depth assessment of courses ... faculty will identify or develop a direct assessment tool and apply it to the highest enrolled course (or courses) in their program" (page 5).

American River College offers courses in a variety of delivery modes of instruction which include lecture, lab, field studies, online distance education and hybrid. Dialogs about the curriculum and the delivery modes take place at a professional level in the Curriculum Committee. The Committee also reviews the success rates of these courses.

In December 2007, the first cohort of departments administered the student self assessments. In spring 2008, the Research Office began working with the faculty to create the faculty designed assessment. In spring 2009, the Institutional SLOs were designed, and discussions are in progress on how to assess them. The College will develop a process to assess the Institutional SLOs during the fall semester of 2009 and that is part of its planning agenda.

American River College has a well established process to review curriculum including study abroad programs. American River College also recognizes the importance of faculty in the process of establishing quality and improving instructional courses and programs. Faculty are involved from the start of the curriculum process until the courses are approved for instruction. All student learning outcomes are created by faculty with the exception of career technical education classes where advisory committees play an important role in helping faculty develop the student learning outcomes.

American River College faculty have a high level of commitment toward student success. Faculty congregate on a regular basis to share information and ideas about best practices and what works or does not work. American River College hires highly qualified faculty and provides them with the means to succeed in the classroom.

American River College uses a vast array of delivery modes and teaching methodologies to address the diverse needs and learning styles of the students. There also exist on campus approximately 28 different academic support programs to assist students. Additional support is also available to students taking classes online. Finally, the program review process at the college requires faculty and departments to evaluate the effectiveness of the delivery modes of instruction.

The SOCRATES system is an electronic database pertaining to curriculum. Program reviews are performed every six years, and educational master plans are updated annually by every department. The program review process is used to update out-of-date curriculum. American River College has a long list of courses that have undergone

substantive changes following program reviews. The College uses the program review process to allocate resources to programs.

Student learning outcomes are crucial in the awarding of degrees and certificates. Care is taken to show that there is a direct link between program outcomes and the outcomes of courses required for the degree. The American River College Research Office is very active in the achievement of this goal as it provides relevant data used by faculty and administrators to achieve this goal.

American River College is committed to ensure that all degree recipients receive well-rounded preparation in general education. To that effect, the college works closely with UC and CSU to ensure that articulation agreements exist and transferability is not an issue. A process exists for the college to monitor all courses and their continuous meeting of requirements. Focus is also on interdisciplinary studies and other areas of inquiry to have well rounded graduates.

The preparation of students in the vocational and occupational areas is a strength at American River College. Students are ready to face the workforce. Their programs of study are designed with the help of employers, advisory committees, professional organizations and apprenticeships in the field. Many of the programs require national or state certification.

Students attending American River College receive very clear and accurate information on the courses programs and degrees they are about to study. All information in the catalogs and schedules is updated on a regular basis to ensure that the information is never out of date. The courses articulate with four-year institutions, and that information is available to students.

American River College also has a process for program elimination. So far only one program has been eliminated following that process. All that information is shared with the public in a very candid manner through catalogs both on line and hard copies.

American River College faculty have academic freedom and at the same time understand that they need to separate their personal convictions from professionally accepted views in their disciplines. Faculty are evaluated on a regular basis. There is an opportunity for colleagues as well as managers and administrators to observe the faculty members while they are teaching. Faculty and students alike are held accountable for academic honesty and the consequences of dishonesty. There is a clear expectation that everybody abides by a code of ethics.

Findings and Evidence:

a. Student Learning Outcomes

When American River College started the process to implement the course level student learning outcomes, discussions took place across campus on how to best comply with the accreditation standard II.A. requiring colleges to identify learning outcomes. At the same time, American River College together with the other

colleges of the Los Rios district was building an in-house computer system to host curricula. The district built a system which they named SOCRATES. SOCRATES houses not only course outlines but also course level learning outcomes and program level learning outcomes.

The faculty methodology was to change learning objectives into learning outcomes and to include a "behavioral activity that is measurable." While this methodology resulted in accomplishing SLOs from a compliance base, the team questioned this approach. Conversations with the curriculum chair, the student learning outcomes coordinator, the Academic Senate President, and administrators indicate that they recognize the fact that learning objectives and learning outcomes are different.

It may be helpful for American River College faculty to review the ACCJC Rubric for Student Learning Outcomes as they work towards full implementation by 2012.

b. Program Review

American River College is on a 6-year schedule for program reviews. Career Technical programs are reviewed every two years. The evidence shows that this process is going smoothly. Information from the program reviews is disseminated across campus. Presentations are made to the Planning Coordination Council. Following the presentations, the members discuss the presentations and follow up actions take place. In one instance, a program was asked to go back and redo the program review. Information is used to allocate budgets and apply for faculty positions. In one instance, two programs used information gleaned from their program reviews to ask for a shared lab and an instructional assistant. Likewise, English and Arts and Media have collaborated to create a magazine.

American River College has succeeded in not only implementing a successful application and use of Program Review to improve curriculum and programs but at the same time to use the findings to influence budgetary decisions

c. Distance Education

American River College generates approximately 9% of its FTES through Distance Education. The Curriculum Committee approves Distance Education courses. Once a course is approved to be offered through the Distance Education mode, the Dean can schedule the class. Distance Education faculty are encouraged to complete training workshop for Distance Education instructors. Quality control of the program is conducted by the department. Instructors are reviewed by their peers who have access to their classes.

In addition, the success and completion rates are carefully monitored to ensure a high level of instruction, retention, success, and completion. When it was determined that in some mathematics courses, students were not doing as well, the number of sections was reduced.

A task force has been established to review options on how American River College will be able to authenticate the students who are taking classes online. The program is well supported by a team of two faculty members on full reassigned time and classified staff. Students and faculty alike have 24-hour customer service/help desk through an outside vendor. There are some questions with the quality of the service, and the District is looking into how to improve the services.

d. Curriculum Review and Articulation Process

American River College reviews its courses on a regular basis and ensures that the courses transfer to 4-year institutions. When the curriculum review process detects a problem with courses and programs, the department takes action to make the appropriate corrections. An example is the French program which was completely revamped after the hiring of a faculty member to address the deficiencies of the program. The French program was only teaching language classes and was neglecting civilization and culture. These areas were addressed through the introduction of new courses.

e. Study Abroad

American River College conducts the study abroad program through a consortium of colleges including the three other colleges in the district and neighboring colleges. The courses are taught by faculty members from the consortium colleges. Travel and living arrangements are made through an outside vendor. The rigor and quality of the courses are equal to courses offered on campus.

Information obtained from program review combined with a curriculum reorganization has led to the closing of one program.

f. Support and Tutoring services

American River College has an excellent Learning Resource Center with two full-time faculty members, instructional assistants, computer technicians, and administrative assistants. Students are referred by their instructors and they are provided with the support they need to succeed in college. Students going through the program improve their performance significantly.

Conclusion:

American River College has successfully addressed the various components of Standard II.A. However, more work is needed to be done in the area of student learning outcomes using the Rubric provided by ACCJC. American River College is making progress towards meeting full compliance by 2012.

Recommendations:

Recommendation 1: The AACJC SLO rubric speaks to authentic assessment and the full engagement of faculty and staff; therefore, to demonstrate SLO success at the proficiency stage by the Commission's 2012 deadline, the team recommends that American River College identify a formal process to review the quality of its assessment

tools and to ensure part-time faculty participation in the assessment of SLOs (II.A.1.c, I.B.4, I.B.5).

B. Student Support Services

General Observations:

American River College offers a variety of comprehensive student support services including: Admissions/Records, Matriculation (including assessment, orientation), Counseling, Puente, Student Life (Outreach, ACE, Beacon, PACE, WAC, Student Activities), Disabled Students Programs and Services, Career and Job Opportunity Center, Extended Opportunity Programs and Services, CalWORKs, eServices Center, Child Development Center, Financial Aid, Health Center, International Students Office, Re-Entry Center, Native American Center, and the Learning Disabilities Program. Additionally, there is a cascade of learning support programs/centers: MESA, Multimedia Math, Reading, Science Skills, and the Writing Centers. The college established the SPOT, a student support center where students can obtain counseling, tutoring, and seek out peer mentors. The SPOT is a student centered 'hub', a natural place to gather and study. Student Services staff and faculty are an integral part of the institution and are at the heart of conception and vision that allow the college to offer services to students with enhanced integration and coordination.

Findings and Evidence:

All departments and services in the Student Services division participate in the college's planning, evaluation and review process, which includes the annual educational master plan (EMP), student learning outcome (SLO) development and assessment, and the program review process. The college has administered the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) and participated in Noel-Levitz studies to evaluate the effectiveness of student support programs. Categorically funded programs also participate in state site program reviews. (II. B.I)

The college publishes annually a catalog readily available as both hard-copy and an online document for its constituents with accurate and precise data as it pertains to information, policies and procedures. In fact, the catalog is consistently reviewed and updated for accuracy on a yearly basis by the Public Information Office and the dean of enrollment services with input from individual departments and the Instruction Office (II.B.2, II.B.2.a, b., c., d.). The college catalog and an online addendum created for the 2008-2009 are available on the college website.

The Student Services division offers services in a variety of formats including online, telephone, and face-to-face. Assessment for course placement occurs on campus and at the college's outreach centers. Currently, the college requires assessments for English, ESL, math, reading, and chemistry placement, and utilizes multiple measures for making the final placement determination. The college uses a math self-assessment process that students can access on the Internet. The assessment process also includes administration of the Learning and Study Skills Inventory (LASSI) used to evaluate student's learning skills and habits. The instructional support services (e.g., RAD, WAC, and the ESL

Center) also assess each student's needs and design curricular plans to meet those needs. The college provides a comprehensive approach to assessing and meeting student needs that streamline student service and fosters a learning environment to support student retention and success. (II.B.3, II.B.3.a)

The College's 2008-2009 catalog articulates in its Vision Statement that "American River College transforms and enriches people's lives" and the Mission Statement declares students will achieve knowledge, skills, and attitudes for post-secondary success, personal enlightenment, self-development, and a purposeful and meaningful life as a member of a global community. Keeping in that spirit, students are offered opportunities to develop a sense of civic responsibility, and personal development through the work of Campus Life. A variety of programs and centers have been developed to support this growth. The "Road Home Conference" as well as the American Medical Student Association (AMSA) one of the largest pre-medical conferences in the nation are such examples that reach a broad group of students. The AMSA conference is student-run and provides a plethora of leadership opportunities.

Currently, the Associated Student Body (referred to as the Student Association in the *Self-Study*) has a student-elected council of 17 officers and five standing committees that direct a wide variety of student activities. There are 38 active student clubs and students are appointed to a number of shared governance standing committees at the college (e.g. Disciplinary/Appeals, Budget, Equity, Planning Coordination Council, and Building/Safety). There are numerous workshops and focused topic areas as well for students in EOPS/CARE, CalWORKs, Athletics, DSPS, Re-Entry programs and for students seeking employment.

In the 2008 Accreditation Student Survey Report, fewer than 20% of students surveyed stated "very much" when asked if the institution provides an environment that encourages self-understanding, and 39% responded "quite a bit." The 2009 program review conducted by the Campus Life Office further illuminated the need to foster leadership development and training opportunities for students through the Campus Life Office, including students that are elected officials in Associated Student Body. Student Services took a comprehensive review of all Campus Life programs to ensure these programs create a culture of civic responsibility and development of students beyond the classroom. To this note, in spring 2009, the college accelerated its efforts to re-vitalize the Campus Life unit, initially with an examination of the infrastructure. In August 2009, the Dean for Student Development was hired along with two part-time faculty Campus Life coordinators. This has lent to relatively new stability, following a turbulent past year for the Associated Student Body, that riveted division among faculty and students during the writing and vetting of the institutional *Self-Study*. In addition to the infrastructure, limited space for student government and Inter Club Council was source of frustration for students, in particular but also faculty and administration. The Vice President for Student Services tackled this issue evidenced with resources that have begun to define a clear space for students. This action has infused students with a renewed sense of optimism. Student spirit was obvious in the Student Council meeting of October 13th where team members witnessed lively discussion. Interdisciplinary Student Leadership course

offerings are being explored to foster a servant leadership model with a directed focus on a renewed sense of service learning and volunteerism. (II.B.3.b)

The college evaluates its counseling services through the development of Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs). They participate in program review and EMP processes. Student Service departments are assigned to one of three cohorts of the college's three year SLO assessment cycle. Support services are also evaluated through student evaluations, counseling retreats, departmental meetings, Noel-Levitz survey results, and the compilation and analysis on student contacts as evidenced in the Counselor History Report of January 26, 2008. Counselors maintain currency and relevancy in their discipline by attending numerous trainings, conferences, and, participating in workshops. Counseling services and faculty are adequately prepared for their advising functions, and, services are seamless and interlaced with the college at large. (II.B.3.c)

Additionally, the institution recognized the need to continue improving programs that support student understanding and appreciation of diversity. The Community and Diversity Center Initiative (CDCI) was created in spring 2009 and currently intersects with the Equity Committee. Faculty, as part of their college service obligation, present lectures that range from tolerance issues, to divergent points of thinking, to career ladders etc. CDCI along with International Student office will eventually migrate to the Cafeteria, where Campus Life, Associated Student Body, and eServices are housed to foster a student hub and, to create a culture of communication, particularly targeted at equity, diversity, mutual respect and transparent governance. (II.B.3.d.)

The college uses multiple measures for placement of new students into appropriate courses and all assessment instruments are in accordance with college policy. American River College currently uses the CTEP to assess English and Reading, as well as a locally-developed assessment for math. The Chemistry Department continues to utilize the CCDT as its assessment tool and the COMPASS is utilized to assess ESL. The ESL faculty have developed a writing sample to supplement the COMPASS ESL assessment, and validation studies are underway. Overall, the college validates its placement instruments to ensure against bias. (II.B.3.e.) The college offers a prerequisite challenge process for students. This process is detailed in the schedule of classes.

The college has satisfactory methods for maintaining student records and related student records with secure storage and backups. All college servers are automatically backed-up on a regular basis, with backups stored at a secure off-site server. In keeping with District-wide procedures (Campus Server Administration Guidelines, 2009) college staff members who are authorized to access student information are individually identified and access to records is limited by individual log-in. (II.B.3.f.)

The college has developed SLOs for all student service units. These programs are participating in the college's three- year SLO assessment cycle, and, are assigned to cohorts one, two, or three. Therefore, programs are at a variety of stages with SLOs. SLOs are assessed through student surveys and faculty-designed assessments. After analyzing the assessment results, programs will develop action plans aimed at program

improvement. The college's formal program review is the venue to evaluate Student Services programs and to facilitate continuous program improvement. To illuminate the aforementioned process, as an example, the Financial Aid Office has linked the use of assessment data and developed an Action Plan approved by the SLO committee that amplifies the annual EMP process. The linkage of SLOs to Program Review will be established in the units' next rotational cycle. (II.B.3. II B.4).

Conclusion:

Student Services has embarked in unit wide dialogue, and action along with the institution regarding student learning outcomes to improve not only services but close the loop utilizing assessment that will cultivate a culture and practice of continuous improvement. With the establishment of a systematic three year cycle of planning and assessment, evidence verifies that Student Services contribute to the skills, abilities and knowledge that students acquire as a result of the collegiate experience at American River College.

Recommendations:

Recommendation 2: The college recognizes that student development needs for leadership, active participation in shared governance, and awareness and tolerance for diversity are paramount at American River College. In order to improve, the team recommends that efforts, such as conflict resolution training, Interest Based Alliance training, and the Community and Diversity Center Initiative, be established for students and institutionalized to address these critical student needs (I.A.1, II.B.1, II.B.3.b, II.B.3.d).

C. Library and Learning Support Services

General Observations:

The library lists a large collection of titles and a large usage. The Self Study identifies that the campus has outgrown its library and is undergoing an expansion to be completed in August 2010, yet the Self Study does not identify the plans in the expansion for online capacity for the library. Program Review shows enrollment at American River College up 12.5% but library usage up 1.1%. Interviews with library staff indicate that this is due to the current temporary facilities and that they project the expanded library will afford better usage figures.

Findings and Evidence:

The library embraces the college mission with its own subsidiary statement covering information resources and support services. Campus surveys indicate that faculty, staff and management feel that the American River College library maintains sufficient hours and services. Self-selected student survey information shows a high satisfaction rate with the support provided. A recent effort by the librarians to update the collection has resulted in 42% of the aggregate holdings being published after 2000. Database funding presently depends upon an annual allocation from the State and District divided equally among the four schools in the district. As the current funding method makes no provision

for either inflation or additional demands, librarians are seeking a predictable, long-term database funding system. (II.C.1.a)

In Fall 2006 the library instituted its research appointment service which enabled students to meet individually with a librarian for a 30 minute personalized session. This has proven to be an unqualified success as attested to by the student and librarian surveys.

The main campus and all outreach centers offer information competency training to students. Students are self-selected for the most part for these outreach centers. Evaluation of services currently is taken selectively and the Self Study report indicates that students are satisfied.

Learning Support Services boasts nine support services which assist students to develop their skills. Faculty, staff, and management surveys show great satisfaction with these services, although data from the Research Department do not show that the success rate of students moving through sequenced classes such as English composition is particularly strong. Discussion with the research analyst indicates that the English Department is aware of this problem and has convened a task force to address the drop-in nature of the lowest level of the Learning Resource Center writing class, adjusting the work modules, and modifying the student tasks to better fit the skill sets necessary to succeed at the higher levels.

Fall 2009 marked the first meeting of the Information Competency Committee, an Academic Senate-approved committee looking at the efficacy of information competency as a component of the curriculum or as a graduation requirement. (II.C.1.b)

Although American River College is currently expanding its library on its main facility with an (on-time) anticipated open date of August 2010, and its Natomas center is awaiting the (also on-time) open date of January 2010, it has managed Herculean efforts to maintain more than adequate library facilities for its student population. In addition to on-line resources and inter-library loan services, there are arrangements made with Inderkum High School to serve the Natomas Center, and temporary facilities on the main campus have made up for the loss of the main library during the remodeling phase. The Sacramento Regional Public Safety Training Center at McClellan Park is also served. Data from student and public surveys indicate that the library has managed its task well. (II.C.1.c)

Maintenance and security are maintained for the library and learning resources centers by American River College's Information Technology (IT) Department. The 2008 Accreditation Survey finds that 63% of the campus staff agrees that American River College maintains the technology of the library infrastructure equipment well. The Self-Study Report finds that there is currently a need for a full-time IT computer support employee in the library. (II.C.1.d)

American River College evaluates its library and learning support services to assure that their adequacy in meeting student needs is sufficient as noted above. However, as

discussed in II.C.2. data show that success rates for students assisted in learning assistance programs, which are drop-in in nature, are difficult to correlate to matriculation in sequential classes. Thus, success rates (in this case, to a certificate) per 100 students for developmental English two levels below transfer level show to 6%. The measurement tool is flawed here and the English Department and learning support staff in conjunction with the Research Department are working to better develop assessments which will show a more meaningful student success rate. (II.C.2)

Conclusion:

The college library is in transition but is well served by staff. While in temporary portables, use of the library is down but should be regained, if not increased when the renovation is completed. The centers are growing and planning continues to address providing adequate library resources.

Recommendations:

Recommendation 3: In order to improve, the team recommends that the assessment of the services and the sequencing of the modules provided by the learning resource centers be formalized and systematic with support from the Research Office (II.C.2).

STANDARD III Resources

A. Human Resources

General Observations:

American River College is marked by a remarkable cadre of highly qualified and dedicated professionals, from its exemplary faculty and classified staff, to its dedicated leadership team. Due to major state budget cuts, an increasing number of temporary classified positions remain unfilled, and departments across the college report managing with fewer staff members while demands for classes and services are growing. Still, given the current budget crisis, with an average of 10 percent budget cuts among community colleges throughout the state, these workforce shortages are understandable, and are part of the district solution to maintaining existing jobs and salaries for current employees.

Across the district, the annual turnover rate of employees is less than 6 percent, and American River College has many examples of individuals who have worked for the college for 15 to 20 years and more. The district also demonstrates particular success in promoting temporary faculty into full-time positions. Approximately 55 percent of new, tenure-track faculty openings are filled by part-time and/or temporary faculty through an open, competitive search process. Longevity of service is demonstrated by the average 26 years of service for employees who retire from the district.

Like the other colleges in the district, American River College is supported by a well-organized and efficient Human Resources (HR) office of the Los Rios Community College District, which serves approximately 3500 district employees as well as job seekers throughout the community. Policies and procedures required for compliance with Standard III A are in place at the district level. The district Human Resources office follows a comprehensive, systematic approach to the appropriate recruitment, evaluation, compensation, and management of disciplinary and legal processes related to prospective, current, and retired employees. College personnel at district and college level are compliant in following the established policies and procedure of the Human Resources Department.

Findings and Evidence:

Criteria, qualifications, and procedures for selection of personnel are clearly and publically stated on the Los Rios Community College District (LRCCD) human resources website and distributed. LRCCD posts open positions on its website and advertises in a variety of publications, locally and nationally. The district uses an online application system, and the Human Resources office has computers that applicants can use with assistance available in the office or by phone. The online application system is noted to be relatively new, and to enhance accessibility for job applicants and to enhance maintenance of security and confidentiality of personal records during interview/screening processes (III.A.3.b). Some usability issues from the perspective of committee members are reported, but these are generally viewed as being “new system

bugs” that are being addressed. The HR website is a notable resource, with extensive information including details of the hiring process for all position types, frequently asked questions, data about organizational philosophy and working conditions in the district, and current salary schedules (III.A.1.a).

Job descriptions appear to be relevant to the institutional mission and goals, as well as to needs of each position. Hiring adheres to high standards prescribed by LRCCD policy and informed by relevant external regulations and laws, including hiring manuals for full-time faculty and classified personnel. Qualifications of employees are documented through district human resources verification that applicants meet required minimum qualifications (including official degrees called for from accredited institutions) before applications are forwarded to the college. Equivalency of qualifications of expert professionals to teach in or provide leadership for specific career fields is verified by an equivalency committee. Degree equivalencies from non-U.S. institutions are considered important to bringing global perspectives to the college, and are verified by a professional degree certification agency (III A.1.a.). Applicants are referred to agencies that perform foreign transcript evaluations via the Los Rios Community College District website. Due to its Sacramento location, the agency most predominantly used is Educational Records Evaluation Services, Inc.(ERES).

Evaluation is in place for all classifications of employee, and appears to be thorough and consistently practiced. In particular, probationary evaluation is taken seriously, with three evaluations undertaken within the first designated probationary period (generally the first year of employment). Criteria for evaluating supervisors, faculty, classified employees, and service employees are documented in the employment agreements for each of these units. Criteria for evaluating managers and confidential employees are outlined in LRCCD policies and regulations. A review of a variety of personnel files provided evidence that systematic and timely evaluations are undertaken for American River College employees and that evaluation processes seek to assess effectiveness and to encourage improvement. Actions taken following evaluations are formal, timely, and documented. (III A.1.b)

Efforts have been recently undertaken to address standard III A.1.c, which calls for faculty to have a component of their evaluation focused on their contributions to producing student learning outcomes. In April 2007, American River College Academic Senate passed a resolution urging all faculty to include SLOs in their syllabi. The faculty contract also includes “effectively assesses the student learning outcomes as stated in the approved course outline” among the professional responsibilities for classroom faculty criteria for performance review. Although this is in the contract, it is one of 17 Standards and Criteria for Performance Review, and the degree to which faculty evaluations focus on the effectiveness of the faculty member in producing student learning outcomes seems to vary according to how far along their departments and courses are in the college cycle of developing and implementing SLO assessment. A number of faculty and deans with whom team members met felt that the discussions about SLOs in faculty evaluation processes are helping to advance the college’s learning outcomes agenda (III A.1.c).

However, the accreditation team suggests that American River College more thoroughly incorporate SLO adherence in performance appraisal as indicated in the faculty contract.

The college has written codes of professional ethics outlined for faculty, classified, and management personnel, each of which appears in the American River College catalog. Adherence to these codes of ethics is fostered through new employee orientation and professional development activities. (III A.1.d).

The college maintains a well-qualified faculty (approximately 452 FTE) with full-time responsibility to the institution. The current American River College ratio of full-time to part-time teaching faculty is reported to be almost 67/33, lower than the optimal state goal of 75/25, but significantly higher than the state average of 62/38. As evidence of the institution's commitment to maintain sufficient college staff, growth in employee staffing since 2003 of 19.8 percent is reported to have exceeded student growth for that same period of 13.4 percent. (III A.2)

As noted, personnel policies and procedures are developed, maintained, and reviewed at the district level, with participation from representatives from each college through the district's well-established shared governance process. Policies and procedures are shared through the LRCCD web site, hiring manuals, and professional development activities. Equitable and consistent administration of personnel policies is assured through the district's four collective bargaining contracts and demonstrated by a lack of formal grievances and complaints documented by the District's Human Resources Office. Employees reported to team members that the overarching American River College culture of trust and goodwill seemed to foster the ability to discuss and reach resolutions before formal complaints or grievances escalate (III A.3.a)

College records are kept electronically and centralized at the district level with restricted local access. The security and confidentiality of personnel records are protected by this centralization, and by a secure, password-protected system kept in strict adherence to laws relating to employee confidentiality and employee access to records. Employees can access their own files via a private appointment with the district Human Resources Department (III A.3.b)

A focus on equity and diversity is found in a variety of college and district policies, procedures, and practices: LRCCD and American River College value statements; American River College statement of community; and Board policies and regulations prohibiting discrimination and harassment of students, faculty, staff, and administrators. In the employee hiring process, equity is assured by the inclusion of a trained, independent equity assessor on each hiring committee. Extensive professional development is offered in cultural competency, sexual harassment, and equity training, as well as extensive programs promoting understanding of a growing range of diversity considerations (ethnicity, disabilities, generations, age, learning styles, etc.). (III A.4.a)

Evidence of the college's regular assessment of its record in employment equity and diversity is offered in the annual report from District Human Resources office

documenting the numbers of employment applicants and hires by ethnicity. The most recent data provided indicate that 41 percent of applicants and 35 percent of those hired across the district in 2007-08 were from underrepresented groups, and increasing from previous years. Although discussion has been undertaken of aligning the faculty and staff ethnicity with the student population and that of the service area population, no data has been drawn showing the student population diversity. The district's statement of commitment to diversity in terms of *Social Justice*, calls for "ensuring that all populations are represented equitably throughout the Los Rios community colleges," but how American River College is making progress toward this goal was not clear. The accreditation team suggests dialogue be continued and a plan be explored regarding such diversity. (III A.4.b)

The college's dedication to and high regard for treatment of all members of the college community is promoted by extensive Board policies, administrative regulations, and institutional practices promoting the American River College valuing of faculty and staff as "our most important resources" and students as "our primary responsibility." American River College seems to place special emphasis on creating and maintaining a welcoming teaching and learning environment. Efforts to ensure integrity and fair treatment of employees are underscored in the spring 2008 district employee satisfaction survey. Notably, the singular planning agenda in the college's entire self-study for Standard III, was for the American River College research office to undertake a local employee satisfaction survey in 2009-10 to hone in on issues raised by the district survey and help identify solutions. (III A.4.c)

A wide array of professional development opportunities suggest that American River College provides sufficient access to professional development for all classifications of employees. Professional development committees for each of three employee groups (faculty, classified staff and administrators), and an overarching professional development coordinating committee, as well as two dedicated venues (Center for Teaching and Learning; Instructional Technology Center) demonstrate the college commitment to employee professional development. (III A.5.a) Evaluation of the quality and effectiveness of these activities and services is consistent and systematic. Immediate feedback, center reports, and employee surveys are part of a large scale evaluation effort overseen by the Professional Development Coordinating Committee. Results are used to improve American River College professional development activities (III A.5.b)

Linkages between human resources planning and institutional planning are found in several institutional structures and processes. The allocation of resources—including faculty and classified staff—to departments is driven by the annual educational master plan (EMP) process. Input from Academic and Classified Senates, departmental needs assessments, dean's councils, and the President's Executive Staff, contribute to the planning and resource analysis process, which ultimately is subject to data-driven district allocation process. Effectiveness of the human resource allocations is demonstrated by statistics showing equitable growth of different classifications of employees relative to the growth of student enrollments. (III A.6)

Conclusion:

The college meets the overall intent of Standard III A, and in some cases exceeds the standards. In sum, the college employs qualified personnel to support student learning and institutional effectiveness. Hiring, evaluation, development, and support of employees are closely controlled by well-articulated district policies and procedures adhered to at the local level. Employees are generally satisfied that they are treated consistently and equitably. The effectiveness of the LRCCD human resources policies and their enactment is confirmed by the absence of formal grievances from the four labor unions.

Evidence verifies that the college is in full compliance with Standard III A. Review of processes confirms that LRCCD and American River College are committed to meeting all the standards in terms of qualifications, equitable selection, evaluation, professional development, diversity, and integration of HR planning with institutional planning.

Recommendations:

None.

B. Physical Resources

General Observations:

American River College has provided a very comprehensive report of this section of Standard III dealing with physical resources. The college continues to plan, build, maintain, upgrade and replace its physical resources in a manner that assures effective utilization and the continuing quality necessary to support programs and services. With the help of Measure A money, the college and District have been able to fund several projects on and off campus, including among others, the Natomas Educational Center, portables for swing space, Allied Health modernization, Learning Resource Center expansion, Fine Arts modernization and expansion, PE Space Addition, and others. These buildings and construction planning allow the college and district to support its programs (III.B.1.a, b).

The College is very committed to assure access, safety, security, and a healthful learning and working environment. When outside auditors uncovered six areas of concern, the college and the District had all of them corrected within a reasonable amount of time. However a survey conducted on campus showed that the majority of respondents felt that the campus was safe and secure but not well maintained. It appears that the college and District are planning to address this issue. An external consultant has been hired to provide the college with recommendations to improve its maintenance of facilities.

The college's long-range capital plans have been discussed at great lengths at the college and district. The college has also undertaken the task of reviewing and updating the college's facility master plan (III.B.1.b, III.B.2.a).

There is a definite integration between the college's physical resource planning and institutional planning. This is done through the Educational Master Plan. The individual

departments assess their physical resources and determine sufficiency to meet their ability to provide the services they are expected to deliver (III.B.2.b).

Findings and Evidence:

American River College is fully committed to providing a safe and secure workplace environment. It has a well designed master plan that it adheres to and integrates planning, facilities planning and budget. The District hired an outside firm to study the maintenance of the buildings and the dissatisfaction of survey respondents. The result of the study was that the custodians who had been working for American River College for a long time were not trained in the use of the modern equipment purchased by the District and American River College. Consequently, training has been provided to the custodians. It is generally believed that this will have a positive impact on the maintenance level of the buildings.

American River College has shown that it can do an excellent job integrating planning and budgeting. Institutional planning identified parking as a problem that can be resolved with the construction of a parking structure. This identification occurred as American River College was doing an assessment of needs for planning purposes. Following this, money from Measure M was used to move forward with the parking structure. III.B.2.b.

The program review process is integrated with the budgetary process. All decisions are made directly from program reviews. The last one was done in 2003-04, and the department is doing a new one at this time.

Conclusion:

American River College has shown evidence that it has complied with all the topics covered under this standard and has provided evidence to support this compliance.

Recommendations:

None.

C. Technology Resources

General Observations:

It is evident that technology plays an important role in delivering instruction, enhancing student learning, and supporting student services at the college. Technology is also effectively and increasingly used for administrative purposes (e.g., network services, electronic productivity and communication tools, PeopleSoft, web resources, intranet). Student and employee technology use and expectations have grown significantly in recent years, and the college has specific goals for enhancing the use and effectiveness of technology for teaching, learning, and college operations.

To meet these goals and growing demands with limited resources, the college has made improvements in the integration of technology planning into the college planning and decision-making processes. The Information Technology (IT) Department works closely with various advisory groups at the college and district levels to obtain input and provide maintenance and continual examination and evaluation of technology services and infrastructure. The Technology Committee is one of the college's ten standing committees and, as such, is a highly participatory shared governance group that sets policy for the main campus and its off-site venues, reviews college technology needs, and sets priorities for maintenance and expansion of technological resources.

Decisions regarding technology issues from a district-wide perspective are jointly made by the member colleges and the District IT Committee and the District Educational Technology Committee. Examples of district-wide policies and decisions include adoption of the Desire2Learn online course management program; email access for faculty, staff, and students; and implementation of the PeopleSoft suite for enrollment management services. Delivery of IT services is also jointly managed, with user equipment and software support services provided by college IT support personnel and administration of the districtwide technology network infrastructure and switch architecture provided by district personnel.

Findings and Evidence:

American River College has a robust and widely used technology system. The Information Technology Department, college Technology Committee, and district Technology Committee oversee technology support for the college and maintenance of security and functional unity with district technology systems and standards (III.C.1, III.C.1.c). Computers for students are housed in the Learning Resource Center (LRC), the library, and in the lobby of the Instructional Technology Center. Every employee has access to computer services through individual or departmental resources. The college intranet allows online access to institutional documents, schedules of classes, class rosters, textbook orders, printing requisitions, the SOCRATES curriculum management system, and flex reporting. Technology support mechanisms at the college include telephone and direct technical support available 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., a locally developed online support system, and the IT Help Desk for faculty and staff experiencing technology problems (III.C.1.a).

The LRC trains and supports students in using technological resources. The Instructional Technology Center is the college hub for college staff and faculty technology training. Faculty and staff receive technology training through a variety of professional development activities including workshops, web-based classes, individualized assistance, and self-paced instructional DVDs/CDs offered by college and district staff. Faculty and staff professional development committees, as well as feedback from college surveys and direct training requests, help define the training agenda. Growth in American River College online courses and migration of the online learning platform from Blackboard to Desire2Learn have boosted requests for technology training. The Online Training Institute, a 30-hour workshop that prepares faculty to use online resources and teach online classes is strongly encouraged by college deans and is increasingly popular with faculty (III.C.1.b).

Departments identify and prioritize their technology needs and the use for the technology in their annual educational master plans, which are integrated with the decision making process as described in the American River College *Decision Making Handbook*. Program reviews include an evaluation of the use of technology. At the college level, input on needs and setting of priorities is managed by the widely-representative Technology Committee. There appears to be systematic processes in place to ensure that the highest performing equipment is provided to higher-end users (with priority given to student use) and that computers made available by upgrades are redeployed to other college needs through a technology cascade plan. Instructional lab computers are reviewed annually and funded for upgrades or replacements, as appropriate. Faculty and staff workstations are also reviewed periodically and upgraded as necessary (III.C.1.c, III.C.1.d).

Technology planning is guided by the District and American River College Information Technology Master Plan and the American River College Technology Committee and the District Technology Committee (III.C.1.c, III.C.1.d, III.C.2). Linkages between technology planning and institutional planning are strengthened by the standardized review of the American River College Technology Master Plan by the college Planning Coordination Council. The current college IT Master Plan (2005-2008) has expired and is being updated by the American River College Technology Committee. In order to increase campus technology planning and effectiveness, the team suggests that the Technology Committee finalize the update of the college IT Master Plan to include short- and long-term technology and IT training goals for the campus. Such a strategic technology plan would provide comprehensive guidelines for the integration of individualized departmental technology needs that emerge from the educational master plan process. The IT Master Plan should be integrated with other institutional planning efforts and include the use of evaluation to improve college technology services and training. (Standard III.C.2).

The college and district IT routinely assess the use of and employee satisfaction with technology resources and training. Feedback from a 2008 employee survey revealed significant satisfaction with technology training for staff and faculty. Results from a

recent survey of American River College faculty suggest the need for greater communication of tools and training already available (III.C.2).

Conclusion:

Technology resources are abundant at American River College. Technology resources support student learning program and services as well as college administration, planning, research, and decision-making for institutional effectiveness and improvement. Quality training and support are provided for the use of technology. Technology needs are integrated into overall planning for the college through each department's annual educational master plan.

Technology staffing has increased in recent years, but still is often stretched to meet increasing needs for services, support, and training particularly in light of the college's growing outreach centers and distance learning program. Sometimes, distribution of computing equipment is determined by which departments have discretionary funds for upgrades, but overall, American River College appears to have good priority setting procedures and a commitment to sharing resources across the college that helps promote access to technology resources. The attention to innovative and responsive solutions to college technology needs for students and staff and the strong customer-service orientation of IT staff is praiseworthy. Nevertheless, the American River College Technology Master Plan is outdated and in need of replacement with one that articulates college plans for the expansion and maintenance of these key resources to ensure ongoing integration of planning, budgeting, and coordination of college administrative and instructional technology needs.

Recommendations:

None.

D. Financial Resources

General Observations:

The American River College financial milieu comprises two very distinctive operational environments bound together by a very strong pervasive culture. The proportionate share methodology (or "bucket" concept) embraces all salary and benefits expenditures and provides virtually total control, whether funding is increasing or decreasing. The planning and allocation of discretionary funds process is a highly integrated model involving centralized services at Los Rios Community College District (LRCCD), priority setting and distribution of funds at American River College, and integration of the two entities. The presence of both environments enables American River College to meet the requirements of Standard III.D. And, the culture of the district and, particularly the college, which is imbued with a strong sense of collegiality and common purpose, is the glue that holds the two environments together.

Findings and Evidence:

In keeping with much of the other service areas in Standard III, LRCCD operates a heavily centralized financial model, particularly in relation to policy setting and initial

allocation of resources to the four colleges through the budget process. The budget processes at the district level and the American River College level are similar in that they are based on the premise that the status quo is given, i.e. existing payroll commitments from the previous period are resourced first, as are contractual obligations like incremental steps (III.D.1.a). This important section of the budget process is underpinned by language in each of the collective agreements that has existed for almost twenty years—a remarkable testimony to fiscal stability. Then, ongoing funds remaining are allocated, relative to size of the college according to a well-established formula. The only competitive or priority based component to the budget process appears to be the allocation of new discretionary funds at the college level, which is directly related to the annual updated EMPs (III.D.1.b).

Often, such funds are deployed on a one-time basis, thereby allowing for the opportunity to address new needs in subsequent years. This approach has merit in that it is open, transparent, and predictable and appears to be supported as fair according to employee opinions (III.D.2.b). However, it is essentially predicated on continuous growth and that is probably not the case for American River College at this time of state funding crisis. Even the practice at the district level of having prepared three-tier budget projections ranging from conservative to most optimistic may not take account of the funding reality that falls into a level below conservative called retrenchment. It must be stated, however, at this point in time that American River College is well placed, and in much better position than most colleges, to withstand the funding crisis. It has a three year plan that will permit maintenance of contractual obligations, no planned layoffs, and minimal cutback of service to students by drawing on reserves that are additional to its declared reserves, which themselves are considerably higher than state prescribed levels. Thus the long-standing fiscally conservative strategy of the district and college has clearly positioned American River College to cope with the state fiscal crisis (III.D.2.c).

The district and the college align their budgets with the goals and objectives of the district strategic plan which flows directly from the district mission, and American River College's goals and areas of focus are developed through a highly participative process that adopts both short and long-term perspectives (III.D.1; III.D.1.c: and III.D.2.e). The plans, moreover, have fluidity to them as a result of continuous review and revision if necessary (III.D.2.g and III.D.3). It should be noted that the continuous review is facilitated by good, timely and accessible data (III.D.2.b).

LRCCD appears to have its future health and wealth benefit commitment well provided for through a strategy adopted well before GASB 45 required it (III.D.2.d). These conservative practices at the district level are obviously adopted at American River College too, and the employee survey indicates a consistently high level of satisfaction with the college fiscal stewardship (III.D.2.b). That is also borne out by its fiscal results over the years.

The distribution of budget growth resources is clearly directly related to the integrated planning process and traceable to the EMPs, thereby meeting the requirements of the standard. There is evidence that both short and long-term perspectives are taken into

account by the district in the individual development of each college (they do not share histories or sizes) and by American River College in the development of programs and services at the main campus and two centers (III.D.1.c). There is a confluence of planning endeavors involving operational resources, facilities, and technologies which informs the budget allocation (III.D.1.a and III.D.1.d).

Most matters related to statutory fiscal audit reside at the district level because of the financial model in place, but there appears to be an active internal audit function also focusing on the colleges' operations. Internal audit findings and management responses are not openly published but were reviewed to confirm appropriate management responses (III.D.2.a).

Finally, the following documents were carefully reviewed for evidence of regulatory compliance and fiscal stability and solvency:

- Fiscal trend analysis of CCFS 311 data;
- Actuarial study of post-retirement health benefits;
- Certificate of consent to self-insure;
- Master agreement between LRCCD and the Los Rios Foundation;
- Foundation audit reports;
- Citizens Oversight Committee audit reports;
- LRCCD audit reports; and
- AMERICAN RIVER COLLEGE budget committee communications and meeting minutes.

No indication was found of anything other than full compliance and admirable level of fiscal stability and solvency (III.D.2; III.D.2.a; III.D.2.b; III.D.2.c; III.D.2.d; and III.D.2.f).

Conclusion:

American River College is meeting all the requirements of Standard III.D. In fact, given the unique planning and priority setting environments and culture noted earlier, it is probably exceeding the standard in general especially noting that the mission, planning process and decision-making on allocation of resources are truly integrated. It was reported more than once that all constituents view the budget process as crucial to the well-being and future direction of the college and buy into its outcomes. That is a powerful endorsement of the budget process and its effectiveness has been recognized externally by the Association of School Business Officials International (Meritorious Budget Award).

Recommendations:

None.

STANDARD IV Leadership and Governance

A. Decision-Making Roles and Processes

General Observations:

Standard IV requires that the institution recognize and utilize the contributions of leadership for the continuous improvement of the institution. Interviews and discussion with staff along with the evidence cited below clearly indicate that the college meets most parts of Standard IV. It should be noted that in discussion with and interviews of staff members there was clearly a high degree of trust and respect between faculty and classified staff, administrators and faculty, and classified staff and administrators.

Findings and Evidence:

Standard IV.A.1 cites the need for institutional leaders to create an environment for empowerment, innovation, and institutional excellence. Evidence that this environment exists at American River College can be seen by the adoption and “marketing” of American River College’s values (the value statements are a ubiquitous presence in almost every classroom in the college); the role of the Planning Coordination Council (PCC) which receives recommendations for new or amended policies from all the standing committees of the college and, after discussion forwards its recommendations to the college president; and a number of initiatives related to improvement which have moved through the college’s participative processes. Discussion with representatives of all segments of the staff indicates that there exists an environment at American River College which encourages innovation and a recognition that the staff is working as a whole in order to facilitate student success.

Standard IV.A.2 promulgates a written policy for participation in the decision-making process. Evidence for the implementation of this standard is shown by, among other criteria, the results of a study which indicated that the college governance structure follows an organized process. The *Decision Making Handbook* provides specific and comprehensive detail on the decision-making process so that college constituents can understand how and where to bring ideas forward and work on college issues. This publication is widely disseminated.

With regards to Standard IV.A.1.a, institutional governance, discussion with representatives of the faculty clearly indicates that this important constituency has a substantial voice in all institutional policies, and is also evidenced in the widely disseminated *Decision Making Handbook*. In addition, the college most effectively responded to a 2003 recommendation that the classified staff have “increased participation” in governance. This recommendation has been carefully considered and changes have been made to fully address this recommendation. The college president now meets on a regular basis with representatives of the classified staff, the classified staff now fully participates in the prioritization for new classified positions, and there is an increase in the number of classified staff participating in the standing committees of the college (IV.A.4).

The one constituency of the college which admittedly has not fully participated in the governance process are the students, and the self study states that “student involvement has been at an unacceptably low level” (IV.A.1, 2,a, IV.A.3).

Interviews with faculty and staff provide evidence that effective communication is provided. It was noted that the Chancellor’s presentation at the college’s convocation each semester provided not only information but also vision for the district in serving students and promoting student success. In addition, in the presidential evaluation survey, 92% of the respondents indicated that the president meets or exceeds expectations for leadership.

Conclusion:

The college is well organized. Its management structure and standing committees support institutional decision making. Leadership is displayed by all constituency groups within a highly collaborative climate displaying a high degree of trust and mutual respect.

Recommendations:

Recommendation 4: In order to improve, it is recommended that student participation in the shared governance processes and committees be actively encouraged to ensure the student voice is not lost. This recommendation was recognized in the Self Study, is detailed as a planning agenda, and was spoken to during the team visit (IV.A.1, 2.a, IV.A.3.).

B. Board and Administrative Organization

General Observations:

Standard IV.B.1.a-e describes the roles of the governing board, including its role in establishing policies, delegating to the chancellor (in a multi-college district) the responsibility of exercising leadership on a day-to-day basis, and reviewing the performance of the chancellor.

Findings and Evidence:

The team found that American River College meets this standard. Interviews with members of the Board of Trustees clearly indicates that the Board does not micromanage and adheres to LRDC Policy 3412 which states, “the Board of Trustees shall delegate to the Chancellor the function of specifying required action and designing the detailed arrangement under which the District shall operate.” Further evidence of the validity of this standard can be found in the minutes of the Board and in the agendas of the two retreats held annually by the Board. In addition, the Board, in concert with the Chancellor, develops its goals for the coming year and prepares a report on the accomplishments of the previous year.

The Board of Trustees has a self-evaluation process which evaluates itself as a governing entity but also reviews its achievements related to goals which it sets for itself and the degree to which the Board met those goals (IV.B.1.g).

Not only does the Board of Trustees evaluate itself on an annual basis, it also reviews the performance of the Chancellor at different points during the year, including discussions during the two annual Board retreats. A formal evaluation is conducted during a closed session of the Board at its regular business meeting in late October. The evaluation instrument (but not the contents of the evaluation itself) is made available to the public.

The president of American River College has primary responsibility for the quality of instruction at the college and represents the college to the community. The president is not only highly visible on campus (including visiting classes) but is also active in the community at large, according to interviews with faculty and members of the Board of Trustees. To state that those administrators who work with him recognize his ability and skill in the delegation of authority is not to overstate the case. In a survey conducted last year, fully 100 percent of those administrators who responded to the survey said that the president was very good or excellent in “delegating authority to administrators” (IV.B.2.a).

In order to provide for an environment which facilitates instructional improvement, the president works with both the district and his vice presidents in setting the college focus areas. He does so in a collaborative manner and emphasizes the need for mutual and frequent communication.

It is imperative that the president works effectively with those external agencies with which the college collaborates and that the president is most successful in this very important regard can be seen by the results of a 2008 survey, 97 percent of the respondents said that the president meets or exceeds expectations or is superior in “effectively representing the college in his interaction with outside agencies” (IV.B.2.e).

Leadership for the Los Rios Community College District is provided by the Chancellor. The Chancellor provides direction to Vice Chancellors and Directors in support of the colleges, defines the roles and responsibilities between the colleges and district and acts as liaison between the colleges and governing board. The operational responsibility has been clearly defined and is understood by the College President and his administrative teams. There is a mapping document that addresses roles and responsibilities. More importantly, the team found that the delineation is followed in practice on a day-to-day basis. (IV.3.)

In a multi-college district there always exists what might be called “creative tension” between a given college and the district, and thus there is a continuum between the concepts of centralization and decentralization. In many cases it is imperative that the college president in such a district be given full responsibility to implement and administer delegated district policies. This is the case at American River College and is validated in discussions with staff members at the college and with members of the Board of Trustees.

The team found a number of mechanisms for communications between the district offices and the colleges. For example all minutes of district meetings such as board of trustees, governance committees, and curriculum council are readily available on the Los Rios Community College District website. Members of the American River College staff serve on the various district committees. In addition, the chancellor meets regularly with college presidents. He also speaks at each semester's convocation at each of the colleges. (IV.3.)

Conclusion:

The roles of the governing board, chancellor and president are clearly defined and followed. Appropriate delegation of authority is practiced in a positive environment. There is regular and clear communication between the district and the colleges.

Recommendations:

None.