EVALUATION REPORT

Sierra Joint Community College District
Rocklin, California

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 Sierra College from October 15-18, 2007

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Sierra Joint Community College District
Visiting team roster
October 2007

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SUMMARY OF EVALUATION REPORT

INSTITUTION: Sierra Joint Community College District

DATES OF VISIT: October 15-18, 2007

TEAM CHAIR: Dr. Steven M. Kinsella, Superintendent/President
Gavilan Joint CCD

A ten-member accreditation team visited Sierra College from October 15 - 18, 2007, 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 6, 2007, conducted by the ACCJC and studied Commission materials prepared for visiting teams. The team was divided into four committees, one for each standard. Team members read carefully the college's self study report, including the recommendations from the 2001 visiting team, and assessed the online 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 the Progress Report completed by the college on March 15, 2005 and other materials submitted to the commission since its last comprehensive visit.

During the visit, the team met with over 105 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 the satellite campuses at Roseville Gateway, Nevada County Center, and Tahoe-Truckee. The team also attended two open meetings to allow for comment from any member of the campus or local community.

The team felt that the self study report was lacking references to evidence and that it could have been enhanced substantially through analysis of the data presented in asserting the college’s compliance with the standards. The team also believes that the self-study could have been enhanced by listing and cross-referencing sources of evidence in the body of the report. 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.
Major Findings and Recommendations of the 2007 Visiting Team

As a result of the October 2007 visit, the team made six recommendations:

Team Recommendations

Recommendation # 1 (2007)
Mission Statement
To ensure services and programs offered by Sierra College are meeting its stated purpose, the team recommends that the college amend the mission statement to specifically identify its intended student population and its commitment to achieving student learning. (Standard I.A.1, IV.B.1.b)

Recommendation # 2 (2007)
Integrated Planning, Evaluation, and Resource Allocation Decision Making
In order for the college to ensure an ongoing, systematic, and cyclical process that includes evaluation, planning, resource allocation, implementation, and re-evaluation, the team recommends the following plan development, implementation, evaluation and improvement steps:

1. Develop a comprehensive, integrated, long-range Strategic Plan including goals that can be used to influence resource allocation decisions. The Strategic Plan should incorporate the priorities established in all of the college’s major plans to include its:
   a. Technology Plan
   b. Facilities Master Plan
   c. Educational Master Plan
   d. Human Resources Staffing Plan
   (I.A.4, I.B.2, I.B.3, 4, III.A.2, III.B.2.b, III.C.2, III.C.1.d)

2. Modify the budget development process in a manner that will place the college’s strategic plan priorities at the center of its resource allocation decisions (III.D.1, 1.c.)

3. Develop and work to implement as appropriate a Human Resources Staffing Plan that will satisfy the college’s long standing expression of need for additional full-time faculty and support personnel to improve student learning. (III.A.2, II.C.1, II.C.1 a., II.C.1.d.)

4. Develop mechanisms to regularly evaluate all of the college’s planning and resource allocation processes as the basis for improvement (I.B.6, II.A.2.f, II.B.4, III.D.3, IV.A.5).

Recommendation # 3 (2007)
Student Learning Outcomes
The team recommends that the college identify assessment methods and establish dates for completing student learning outcomes assessments at the institutional level and for all of its courses, programs and services. This process should also include the development of performance measures to assess and improve institutional effectiveness of all programs and services. The college should disseminate the outcomes widely and use these results in the strategic planning and resource allocation process. It is further recommended that the college include effectiveness in producing student learning outcomes as part of its faculty evaluation process. (II.A.1.a, c, II.A.2.a, h, II.B.4; II.C.2 III.A.1.c)

Recommendations # 4 (2007)
On-line Support Services for Students
The team recommends that a more robust set of on-line support services be developed for students at Sierra College to effectively serve students in distance education classes as well as students enrolled in traditional classes at developing Sierra College campus sites. These services might include but are not limited to tutoring, financial aid advisement, and library services. (II.B.3.a, II.C.1, II.C.1.c).

Recommendation # 5 (2007)
Plan for Long-Term Debt Financing
The team recommends that the college develop a long term debt financing plan to address the costs associated with implementation of GASB 45 requirements. (Standard III.D.1.C)

Recommendation # 6 (2007)
Governing Board Evaluation
The team recommends that the Board complete an annual board self evaluation to ensure that its policies promote quality, integrity, and effectiveness of the student learning programs and services. (IV.B.1.g)
ACCREDITATION EVALUATION REPORT
FOR
SIERRA JOINT COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT

Introduction

Sierra Joint Community College District is a single-college district with three satellite campuses. These satellite campuses are Roseville Gateway, Nevada County Center, and Tahoe-Truckee. The main campus is situated on 300 acres located in Rocklin, California, about 30 miles from Sacramento.

Sierra College reports that it and began in 1882 as Sierra normal college in Auburn California. The college was reestablished as Placer Junior College in 1936. In 1943 the college served only 53 students, but enrollments climbed quickly after the end of World War II. In 1961, the Sierra College main campus opened in Rocklin, with 1,500 students enrolled. As of fall 2006, 19,721 students were enrolled at Sierra College. Starting in 1986, the college began to expand its physical presence in the communities that it served an open satellite campuses in Roseville Gateway, Nevada County, and Tahoe-Truckee. The college celebrated its 70th anniversary in 2006. Sierra College offers 72 Associate of Arts/Associate in Science degrees, and 55 Certificates of Completion.
Evaluation of Institutional Responses to Previous Recommendations

(Note: The numbering of the recommendations was added by 2007 Accreditation Team to assist in referencing follow up actions. The recommendations were not numbered in the 2001 Evaluation Report)

Recommendation # 1 (2001 – page 65 of the Self Study Report)

To ensure that the institution’s commitment to use supporting evidence and good data in integrated planning, budgeting, and program review and operations is met, the team recommends that the College focus its efforts on defining, coordinating and consolidating its research processes, priorities and existing resources.

The college has substantially responded to this recommendation by reorganizing the research office, adding staff and expanding the scope of operations by linking it to resource development work. A respected college leader has been assigned to the unit and is working across constituencies to create new research products that can inform decision making and program planning. These products include but are not limited to the expansion of the college Factbook, customized data query reports with nearly immediate turnaround to requestors, and training on data retrieval and use for key college leaders. It appears that this information has begun to migrate into strategic thinking at the program and course level, but has not yet become the foundation for strategic thinking and planning at the college.

The college has established an adequate Research & Resources Development Department. The department publishes its information and also responds to department requests for data.

Recommendation # 2 (2001 – page 65 of the Self Study Report)

The Team strongly recommends that a major deficiency be corrected by implementing program review immediately and integrating it with the current planning processes. The team also recommends a sharper mission statement be implemented through the program review process which would increase confidence in all staff that the College is not just doing things right, but it is doing the right things.

The college has put in place the Program Assessment and Review process (“PAR”). This process was implemented immediately following the previous accreditation report. The process is annual and provides information for budgeting and planning. The reports are widely disseminated to students and staff but there is some indication that they do not always coincide with the budget process for allocation of resources. The mission statement was revised and goals were developed. The PAR process requires that programs develop a mission statement that is consistent with the mission of the college. The departments have done that. However, the team is recommending the college reexamine its mission statement to address its intended student population and its focus on improving student learning to meet current accreditation standard requirements.

The team concluded that the college has implemented program review and has effectively instituted a process whereby a mission statement is considered by departments when developing operational plans. The teams concluded that the principle changes encouraged
by the recommendation have been implemented. The team did however also note that the mission statement does not meet current accreditation standards and prepared a new recommendation (Recommendation # 1-2007) to promote compliance with the standards.

Recommendation # 3 (2001 – page 66 of the Self Study Report)

The Team recommends that the planning structure, decision making process, information flow and all policies and procedures, be clearly communicated, published, and widely disseminated to students and staff.

The college follows a governance process described in Administrative Procedure (AP) 2510 approved on June 13, 1989 and revised on July 10, 2006. AP 2510 describes the purpose of shared governance at the college. The major components of the governance structure include Strategic Counsel, Academic Senate, Student Senate, Classified Senate, Management Senate and advisory committees. The number of representatives from each constituency group is identified in AP 2510. The recommendations from the Strategic Council are forwarded to the president for consideration. The president brings items forward to the Board of Trustees for decision. At times when the president’s recommendation differs from strategic counsel's, the president provides response to indicate why there is a difference. The information regarding the manner in which Strategic Council operates is well-known across the campus. The college has in place an effective decision-making process. All policies and procedures related to information and decision making have been widely disseminated to students and staff.

The college has a planning assessment and review process that is used to develop unit level plans. These plans are updated annually and forwarded to administrators for review and approval as appropriate. The team acknowledges the PAR is used throughout the college and has been institutionalized. Interviews with college personnel indicate there is little feedback to departments once the document is prepared. Members of Strategic Council receive information on resource allocation decisions, although the decisions as to how resources are allocated are made at the Deans and Executive Council level. The team has identified concerns about the planning process and has included comments in Recommendation #1 (2007) of this report. The key elements of this recommendation have been implemented and are considered resolved.

Recommendation # 4 (2001-page 66 of the Self Study Report)

The Team recommends that the College clarify and update its policies on student conduct standards, including the protocol on academic dishonesty and the student complaint and grievance procedures. The dissemination of these policies is also an issue and the Team also recommends they be publicized and communicated widely to ensure student awareness and ready student access. (See also Standard Five, below.)

The college has completed a comprehensive review of its student conduct policies and standards, including the processes and protocols related to academic dishonesty, student complaint, and grievance procedures. A new student handbook has been created and refined and is distributed to all students upon enrolling. In addition to being available on the web as well as in the catalog and schedule, the policies are independently printed and
distributed to faculty for distribution in conjunction with their course syllabi at the beginning of each semester. The college’s academic dishonesty policy is included on course syllabi. Faculty are provided with in-service training on the content of the policies and the resources available to them and to students related to student conduct infractions and student complaints.

The college did not reference this recommendation in the self-study but it did respond in the Midterm Report. It directs the reader to the student handbook. The Midterm Report indicates that the college policies were rewritten and board approved and a new handbook, The Student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook, was published in July 2002 for 2002-03 academic. Minor changes were made in 2003-04. The handbook is posted on the District website, information from the handbook is published in the college catalog. Additionally, the student handbook and day planner are given to all new students at orientation. The current handbook does not contain a publication date. The team concludes that this recommendation has been implemented.

Recommendation # 5 (2001-page 67 of the Self Study Report)

The Team recommends that the College provide stable and ongoing resources to enable the Learning Resource Centers to achieve the objectives outlined in the Sierra College Technology Master Plan, with special attention to staffing.

The self-study report details improvements made to increase resources in the form of library holdings and access to online subscription data bases. The opening of the new cooperative library with the City of Lincoln and Western Placer County Unified School district this year, and the new facility on the Tahoe-Truckee campus next year will also expand available resources for the college’s library users.

However, such facilities require adequate staffing, and a review of the Library/Learning Resource Centers’ Program Assessment Review Process (PAR) indicates that the inability to adequately staff these sites due to budget constraints has been a continued obstacle in meeting stated objectives. The college has consistently funded the library holdings although there remains concern that there is insufficient funding to staff the library to meet the needs of the college’s growing population spread over a variety of sites. The college has provided consistent funding to the Library and has been able to expand its services to additional parts of the college’s service area. The team recognizes a need to maintain support for this important service and concludes that the college does so within the constraints of available funding. The team concludes that this recommendation has been implemented, but makes an additional recommendation (Recommendation 2-2007) to be more aggressive in securing funds for adequate staffing of learning resource centers.

Recommendation # 6 (2001 – page 67 of the Self Study Report)

It is the Team’s recommendation that the College implement, through both the planning and negotiation processes, its longstanding commitment to improving both the numbers and percentage of full-time faculty and full-time classified staff.
Full-time faculty at Sierra College represent 42% of all faculty with the other 58% being part-time, according to Spring 2007 data published in Factbook 2007, the college’s annual data book. These percentages appear not to have changed significantly in the last five years. Full-time faculty were 43% of the total in fall 2002 and 42% of the total in spring 2007. According to college administration, Sierra College has one of the lowest full-time to part-time faculty ratios in the state.

A fall 2005 survey revealed that 70.4% of respondents felt that the college employed insufficient full-time faculty. The college does not use any measure other than the percentage of full time versus part time faculty to determine whether there is appropriate staffing at the college. The team is concerned that the college identified this situation as one that needs attention but it has not been able to craft a plan to resolve this concern. The team provides additional information about staffing in Standard III.A of the evaluation report. **The college has not implemented this recommendation.** The team provides additional evaluate points in the body of the evaluation report and created Recommendation # 2 to assist the college in making improvements that will meet the current accreditation standards.


_The Team recommends that the College develop a method to evaluate the success of the recently integrated planning process and the budget formula_

The institution states that the program assessment review (PAR) process provides an evaluation tool for the success of an integrated planning and budgeting process. However, the self study does not make clear as to how this is accomplished. In interviews with college staff, it is clear that there is a process. The PAR follows two parallel tracks, one through the Deans Council, and the other through the operations group. Each prioritizes the input from its area. The results are then reviewed, prioritized, and funding decisions are made by the Executive Council.

There is no feedback to the departments after the PARs are forwarded to the Deans Council and then on to Executive Council. It is not clear what criteria are used, and whether the funded elements are tied back to the college’s institutional goals. Strategic Council is not involved in the review of the PARs. Bypassing the college’s primary participatory governance body prevents broad based dialogue to assess needs across the college and resource allocation decisions that may influence establishment of priorities. The college’s Self Study Report states that the PAR process is out of sync with the budget development process and collective bargaining negotiations.

Interviews with college staff revealed that there is widespread understanding of the PAR process. What is not clear is what happens after the PARs are reviewed at the Deans Council. It is also widely acknowledged that the funding formula method developed by the college in which a stated percentage of the budget is set aside for labor related needs has reduced conflicts stemming from salary and benefit needs of employees.
The team found no evidence of an evaluation of the integrated planning and budget formula. Generally there is an acceptance across the college that the process is working. The team identified additional areas where improvements are necessary in order for the college to meet the requirements of the accreditation standards and prepared Recommendation # 2 (2007) to assist the college.


*The Team recommends that the Sierra Community College District Governing Board redirect their focus and prioritize duties and responsibilities concentrating on broad policies and strategic directions assuring that practices are consistent with the Board-approved institutional mission and vision.*

There were concerns expressed to the accreditation team by some members of the college community that the governing board was more involved in college operations and went beyond a focus on policy and strategic direction. The concerns were isolated to the 2005 period of time when the long serving college president suddenly decided to retire. As noted in the Standard IV of the evaluation report the college has united around the new college president. From interviews with employees from every level of the college in addition to interviews with members of the Board of Trustees, there was a difficult period, the college staff and the board have worked through it, and everyone is now focused on what is best for the students. The team offers other recommendations to encourage emphasis on a mission statement and overarching strategic planning and believes those sections of this recommendation need new focus to meet the accreditation standards. The team concludes that the board is now concentrating on policies and strategic directions allowing the college president the ability and authority to operate the daily activities of the college. This recommendation has been implemented.
Eligibility Requirements

1. **Authority:** The evaluation team confirmed that Sierra 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 the first mission statement, Board Policy 1200, was approved on May 18, 1984 and has been revised regularly with the last revision occurring on March 14, 2006. Board Policy 2900 serves to document and adopt the college’s mission. The mission statement is regularly reviewed, updated and published in the college catalog.

3. **Governing Board:** The evaluation team confirmed that Sierra College has a governing board consisting of seven members representing specific geographic regions serviced by the college. The Board is empowered to formulate policy, maintain integrity, financial stability and ensure the college mission is being carried out. Board policies were reviewed between 2003-2007. The governing board has a Conflict of Interest policy and a Code of Ethics.

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 the President and Superintendent. The CEO is primarily responsible for the management of the college, implementation of board policy, and long range planning.

5. **Administrative Capacity:** The administrative structure of Sierra College is reorganized periodically to address the growing needs and complexity of the district. 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. Although the college has been without a Chief Instructional Officer (CIO) since last year, a new CIO has been hired and will begin work at the college on October 31, 2007.

6. **Operational Status:** Sierra 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 Sierra.

7. **Degrees:** Sierra College offers courses that fulfill program requirements for Associate of Art and Associate of Science degrees or certificates.

8. **Educational Programs:** Sierra 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.
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.

10. Student Learning Achievement: Goals and outcomes for all major and certificate programs are listed in the catalog. New programs, program revisions and programs undergoing review require the development of stated outcomes. Career and technical education programs develop mission statements and outcomes in conjunction with expert advisory committees.

11. General Education: General education programs and courses meet, and often exceed, requirements of Title V (55806). The quality and rigor of Sierra 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: Sierra College promotes academic freedom, free inquiry and intellectual independence as a central feature of its programs and certificates. The Board of Trustees recently approved a revision of the Academic Freedom policy reflecting the philosophy of the American Association of University Professors.

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.

14. Student Services: Sierra 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: There is a clear statement of open admission in compliance with both California Educational Code and Title V.

16. Information and Learning Resources: The evaluation team confirmed that Sierra 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 Sierra 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 Sierra College annually undergoes and makes available an external financial audit by a licensed certified public accountant.

19. **Institutional Planning**: The evaluation team confirmed that Sierra 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 Sierra College Catalog provide constituents with precise, accurate and current information.

21. **Relations with the Accrediting Commission**: The Board of Trustees and the 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.
Accreditation Themes

Institutional Commitments
Sierra College acknowledges its intention to provide a supportive learning environment for its students and embodies it in its mission statement. These intentions were focused in Board Policy 2900, passed in 2006, and are currently being revisited as the mission, goals, and vision for the institution undergoes a college wide review. This commitment appears in many other areas:

- The Program Assessment and Review Process (PAR) requires that all departments align their mission with the college mission statement.
- The creation of the Learning Outcomes Institute (LOI) and the more recently organized Program Outcomes Institute (POI) institutionalizes the process of including student outcomes in course and program planning, assessment, and review.
- Discussions relative to student learning and outcomes take place at a variety of levels at the college including the Board of Trustees, Curriculum Committee, Career and Technical Education Advisory committees, the Academic Senate, and flex week topical workshops.
- The Educational Master Plan draft (dated September 2005) includes references to the inclusion of student learning outcomes throughout instruction.

The staff presentation on Student Learning Outcomes and conversations with other staff members confirmed this focus on incorporating student learning at all levels.

Evaluation, Planning and Improvement
The PAR process has been designed by the college to incorporate planning, evaluation, and improvement across all campus departments. These annual reports combine qualitative and quantitative data to evaluate program assessment and improvement and as a means to identify areas of need for the departments. These reports are forwarded through channels as part of the decision making process of the college for resource allocation. A clearer understanding of the process, including feedback of the results of resource allocation decisions, will be necessary to complete the cycle. Although this process is not fully functional at this time, it does demonstrate the progress the institution has made in becoming stronger in the areas of evaluation, planning, and improvement. For the instructional departments, the six-year cycle of the curriculum review process is close to completion. The results of this process contribute to further evaluation of institutional effectiveness. The Strategic Council plays an integral part in the overall planning, evaluation and improvement process.

Student Learning Outcomes
The team found that Sierra College has developed Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) for its courses and that they are included in the course outlines. The college’s Annual Report on Student Learning Outcomes: 2006-2007, submitted to the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) on August 7, 2007, asserts that 90% of courses have defined expected SLOs as well as assessment methodologies for those outcomes. The team confirms that course outlines appear to have both outcomes
and assessment strategies. The college’s curriculum handbook clearly explains how faculty should develop student learning outcomes for courses. The college’s Web Curriculum Management System (Web CMS) has an effective template for including learning outcomes in the approved course outlines.

In addition, beginning in 2001, the college instituted a Learner Outcome Institute (LOI), which faculty voluntarily participated in to familiarize themselves with the process of developing and implementing course outcomes. The semester-long course of study features a strong curriculum and requires faculty to work on their own courses for class projects. The New Faculty Academy likewise includes discussion of SLOs and their assessment as part of the orientation to teaching at Sierra College. The team also finds that non-instructional units--those in student services as well as a number in administrative services--have developed learning outcomes and have identified assessments of those outcomes. Dialogue about development of course and student services program SLOs appears to have been extensive as evidenced by the number of outcomes statements in course outlines approved by the Curriculum Committee.

Although course outcomes appear to have been developed and included in course outlines, program outcomes and institutional outcomes have yet to be developed in a consistent way. The college reports that conversations about program outcomes have recently begun through the Program Outcomes Institute, another semester-long staff development course of study which, like the Learner Outcome Institute, has a rich curriculum and requires the completion of projects using material from faculty members’ classes or activities. Although the team was unable to identify institutional SLOs, a number of staff, when asked, indicated that this work would be incorporated into the updating of the college’s mission, values, and vision statements, currently underway. The team did note that the Sierra College Program and Curriculum Handbook required every degree applicable course to include critical thinking outcomes.

Furthermore, the team notes that the college has not yet developed a clear assessment cycle for SLOs that would lead to continuous sustainable improvement in the quality of faculty instruction and student learning. The team could find only anecdotal evidence of the college using assessment of student learning outcomes to improve that learning. There appears to be no evidence, as yet, of the college systematically using the results of assessments to improve its teaching and learning processes. Though assessments are listed in the course outlines, in general, they appear to be summative assessments rather than formative ones that would reveal which outcomes, if any, students need to improve learning for and which outcomes, if any, faculty could improve teaching for. The team did note the emphasis on formative assessments contained in the Learner Outcome Institute.

The team also finds that the college has not yet included progress toward achieving student learning outcomes and effectiveness in producing student learning outcomes as a component of faculty evaluation.
Organization:
The team observed that recent changes at the executive levels of the institution have had a profound effect on the entire campus. Changes in the composition of the Board of Trustees and the hiring of a new president have been welcomed by campus constituencies as an opportunity to further the growth of the institution and to give it a clearer sense of purpose. The transition to a new campus software system, the filling of a number of long term vacancies, the realignment of some campus divisions, and the expansion of the campus Research and Resource department are all considered as positive influences on institutional progress. Physical expansions of site locations in Nevada County and at Tahoe-Truckee are also expected to contribute to strengthening the institution. Within the library setting on the main campus, space is being set aside to provide opportunities for faculty professional development in teaching technologies that will improve their ability to direct student learning.

Dialogue:
The team found the college has established opportunities for collegial, self-reflective dialogue at all levels of the institution starting from the Board of Trustees down to the Associated Students organization. The current president encourages such dialogue by being approachable to faculty, staff, and students. The process currently underway of reviewing the mission, goals, and vision of the organization is soliciting input from all campus constituencies.

The PAR process which originates at the program or department level engenders dialogue about needs for resources, staffing, and technology at the division levels. After prioritization at this level, the requests are forwarded to the appropriate vice presidents who take them to the Strategic Council and the Executive Council for review. At each level, dialogue takes place that is designed to determine how the requests pertain to the college mission and student outcomes. The team has determined through staff interviews that communication about the completion of the process is not as clear as it might be and that feedback on decisions that are made would complete the feedback necessary to inform the campus constituencies of the results of the process.

Institutional Integrity:
The team was welcomed by the college staff and provided access to information needed to begin their work prior to coming on campus. The electronic version of the self-study contained active links that took the reader directly to the evidence related to the standards. In the team room, hard copies of the same documents and those that could not be linked were made available. Requests for additional materials were complied with promptly. Meetings were arranged with all of the staff and faculty as requested, and the team felt that in their interviews, the respondents were forthcoming.

As mission, goals, and vision are updated, it is anticipated that the content of these items will appear in college publications that are shared with the campus and the community. The Research and Resource division had published a yearly atlas, and this year has created a fact book that supplies interested parties with all data on demographics, student success, and institutional effectiveness, among other topics.
STANDARD I
Institutional Mission and Effectiveness

A. Mission

General Observations:
A review of the mission statement was conducted and the mission statement was reaffirmed by the Board of Trustees in March 2006. A change in leadership at the college is resulting in a comprehensive review of the organization starting with the mission statement. At the time of the team visit the college’s mission statement did not indicate its intended student population and did not comment on its commitment on achieving student learning. As a result, the team could not conclude whether or not the college was reaching its intended student population as it evaluated the college’s services and programs.

Findings and Evidence:
Board Policy 2900 – Vision 2020, approved on March 14, 2006 formally records the mission statement of the college. There were no changes in the mission statement during its last update although guiding principles were added to expand on the intended mission. The mission statement is as follows:

“Sierra College provides a supportive learning environment to students with diverse goals, abilities, and needs. The College's programs and services promote personal and professional success, leadership, critical thinking, civic responsibility, and innovation. Its students will become contributing citizens of the complex and changing communities in which they live and work.

To achieve this Mission, we adhere to the following Guiding Principles

Sierra College will:
- recognize its role in the California Educational Master Plan
- model excellence in education
- provide the foundation for lifelong learning
- support diversity
- encourage the full development of human potential in a world of growth and change
- enhance the cultural, intellectual and recreational needs of the college and community
- foster environmental awareness and individual responsibility
- understand and contribute to the economic well-being of the community
- plan for and wisely allocate resources based on an annual, comprehensive, Districtwide Program Planning and Assessment (PAR) process”
The mission statement does not define the college’s intended student population in regards to either transfer oriented students, general education students, career technical program oriented students or students with an interest in life long learning. The college has a number of community education and noncredit course offerings that serve the interests of life long learners yet the mission statement does not state the college’s intent to serve this important segment of the community (I.A.1).

Each department is involved in development of a mission statement that serves to guide the department. The department mission statement is linked to the college mission statement and is intended to support achievement of the overarching college mission statement. (I.A.2)

The president has been at the college for a little more than one year. His leadership is responsible for a reexamination of the mission, vision and core values. The effort is healthy for the college and sets the basis to evaluate how well the college’s mission serves the needs of the community. A review of the draft mission statement revealed that the proposed mission statement still does not address the students it intends to serve or state a commitment to achieving student learning. However, a vision statement as well as a statement of core values is being added (1.A.3).

The program assessment and review (PAR) process is central to institutional planning and decision-making. The college incorporates the mission statement into the PAR process. As part of the PAR development, each department creates its own mission statement and must demonstrate how its program meets its own mission, as well as how the program supports the institution’s mission. As discussed in Standard III.D of this report the Team could not determine how the mission influenced institutional planning and decision making beyond the department level (I.A.4).

Conclusions:
The mission statement is used by departments when determining department level priorities. Taken as a whole, the mission and the guiding principles do not clearly indicate the intended student population such as transfer oriented students, career technical training, or programs for life long learners. Additionally, the mission statement does not include statements that demonstrate the college’s commitment to achieving student learning. The mission statement is approved by the governing board and published. The mission statement is not evaluated to determine if the college is effective in meeting the needs of its student population. The college does not meet the requirements of general provisions of Standard I.A., or the specific provisions of I.A.1.

Recommendations:

Recommendation # 1 (2007)
To ensure services and programs offered by Sierra College are meeting its stated purpose the team recommends that the college amend the mission statement to specifically identify its intended student population and its commitment to achieving student learning. (Standard 1A.1, IV.B.1.b)
B. Improving Institutional Effectiveness

General Observations:
The college has an effective program review process that is ongoing and systematic. The PAR process is also in place whereby departments prepare annual unit plans. Comprehensive program reviews occur on a six-year cycle. The PAR process has been institutionalized and operates as a routine process. A weakness noted is that the PAR information travels linearly from the department to the Deans Council and then to Executive Council. There is no feedback to the departments regarding resource allocation requests to achieve plan objectives.

The college is not working toward achievement of stated or collaboratively developed goals and does not have a strategic plan. Without goals, there is no measurement that the Team could refer to in determination of how effectively the college is working to achieve stated goals. The Team did find evidence that the college is working to improve student learning and has taken a number of steps to implement aspects of student learning outcomes.

Findings and Evidence:
The self-study report describes a number of situations where dialogue on student learning outcomes can take place, but does not describe what impact such dialogue has had on implementing and assessing student learning outcomes or if the dialogue leads to a collective understanding of the meaning of the data and research used to evaluate learning. Within the introduction to the self study report, the college describes the process of creating the Learner Outcomes Institute (LOI) that fosters dialogue on the development of student learning outcomes as part of the curriculum review process, but the participants at this level are full-time and associate faculty. One area where such discussion is leading to change involves preparation for increasing the level of mathematics required for obtaining an associates degree. The college meets the requirements of Standard I.B.1.

Institutional goals were established through a collaborative process and discussed and passed by the Board of Trustees in 2004 as part of Board Policy 2900, but they have not been implemented. Instead, the process is being revisited and should be accomplished in the near future. It is interesting to note that among the goals discussed at that time was the following: to develop more effective criteria for measuring student learning outcomes, both occupational and academic, at the course, program, and institutional levels. The report indicates that such activities are accomplished through management goals, key accomplishments, and the PAR process. Work in development of student learning outcomes at the course level is progressing. Institutional outcomes have not yet been established at the college, and the college is in the early stages of establishing program outcomes through its Program Outcomes Institute. The college does not meet the requirements of Standard I.B.2.

The PAR process was put in place in fall 2001 after the last accreditation visit, and the chart describing the process appears on page 145 of the Self Study Report. In addition, its
integration into the planning process is shown in charts on pages 156 and 159 of the Self Study Report. Department requests for data and curriculum review are also a part of the planning process in a six-year cycle. PAR is an annual review of instruction at the course level, student support services, library and other support services and departments. From material here and in several other sections, it appears that cycles have been established for a number of planning processes in many areas of the college. There is no description of how decisions regarding these processes result in improvement of institutional effectiveness. The data is posted but no comment is made as to how it is analyzed and interpreted for easy understanding by the college community. The self-study is silent for the most part on how the information gathered is used to improve instruction. Individuals reported examples of the utilization of data resulting in improvements in programs and services. For instance, the library does use its evaluation of orientation sessions and workshops to improve such sessions for future use, but this appears to be an isolated example for the moment. The college partially meets the requirements of Standard I.B.3.

The planning process is more fully set out in Standards III and IV. A Strategic Council serves as the primary shared decision making body of the college. Constituents have open access and opportunity for input to Strategic Council. The Self Study Report was silent in this area on how resources are allocated or what happens when resources are not available except as to the budget cuts by the state. In addition, there is no reference to what changes have occurred as a result of implemented plans. The team learned that resource allocation information in the form of summary budget documents are presented to the Strategic Council for information only. Dialogue occurs at many levels, but there is no description on how such discussion results in improvements. The PAR process has been institutionalized and is ongoing and systematic. However, there is no indication about how the PAR process influences resource allocation decisions. Additionally, there is no feedback to the departments regarding resource requests unless a request is actually funded (I.B.4).

The college collects data on high school graduates and their progress and reports to the high schools; basic math persistence is annually reported to all math faculty; the PAR reports are published mid-summer with detailed information at the course level; and productivity reports are generated each semester. This information is published in the Research & Resource Development Office Newsletter, the President’s Bulletin, High School Performance Data, Math Data, and Productivity Reports. Members of the Board of Trustees indicated that they used the data collected in assessing information and requests from the college for programs and services. The student data warehouse is scheduled to be available for direct access by the public in fall 2007. Despite the availability of such data, there is no indication on how this performance data is used for assessment of current activities (I.B.5).

The college does not evaluate the effectiveness of its planning processes. The team was impressed with the extent to which the PAR process has been institutionalized and is a routine annual planning activity. While the initial planning at the department level occurs on a regular basis, the college does not assess the effectiveness of the cycle of planning, resource allocation and implementation followed by subsequent reevaluation. The team
The PAR process was established in the fall of 2001. It is an annual review of programs and departments. Responses to Standard I.B evaluation questions rely primarily on this process to meet institutional effectiveness review requirements. The report is silent on how the information gathered is used to improve instruction or impact student learning. Institutional outcomes have not yet been established. The process to establish program outcomes is in the early stages of planning and set to start fall 2007. Institutional Goals for 2004-07 are part of Vision 2020, Board Policy 2900, but have not been implemented. The president is working with the college constituencies and the Board of Trustees to establish operational goals for the college. The PAR process uses qualitative and quantitative data in support of funding requests. However, the self-study does not effectively communicate how these results are used to improve programs and services, and the team did not find evidence to show how the results were used to improve performance (I.B.7).

Conclusions:
The college has made progress since the last accreditation report in the areas of planning and research. The college has done a good job of describing the planning process. The research office is adequately staffed and provides appropriate information to the college departments when needed for program review, special requests and general requirements for state and federal reporting. The college has not demonstrated that it fully utilizes the results of the planning process to complete the cycle of planning or to place the evidence from the data into evaluation and improvement of student learning and improvements consistent with its missions and institutional goals.

The team was impressed by the extent to which the college had implemented the PAR development across all aspects of the college at the unit or department level. The team offers a commendation to recognize this noteworthy accomplishment.

The college partially meets the requirements of Standard I.B. The team makes the following recommendations for improvement along with one commendation:

Recommendations:

Recommendation: # 2
Integrated Planning, Evaluation, and Resource Allocation Decision Making
In order for the college to ensure an ongoing, systematic, and cyclical process that includes evaluation, planning, resource allocation, implementation, and re-evaluation, the team recommends the following plan development, implementation, evaluation and improvement steps:

1. Develop a comprehensive integrated long range Strategic Plan including goals that can be used to influence resource allocation decisions. The Strategic Plan
should incorporate the priorities established in all of the college’s major plans to include its:

a. Technology Plan
b. Facilities Master Plan
c. Educational Master Plan
d. Human Resources Staffing Plan
(I.A.4, I.B.2, I.B.3, 4, III.A.2, III.B.2.b, III.C.2, III.C.1 d)

2. Modify the budget development process in a manner that will place the college’s strategic plan priorities at the center of its resource allocation decisions (III.D.1, I.c.)

3. Develop and work to implement as appropriate a Human Resources Staffing Plan that will satisfy the college’s long standing expression of need for additional full time faculty and support personnel to improve student learning. (III.A.2)

4. Develop mechanisms to regularly evaluate all of the college’s planning and resource allocation processes as the basis for improvement (I.B.6, I.B.7, II.A.2.f, II.B.4, III.D.3, IV.A.5).

See also Recommendation # 1 (2007)

Commendations:

Commendation # 1
Sierra College is to be commended for its robust development of the Program Assessment and Review (PAR) protocol which has been implemented college wide across all departments and campuses. The PARs have created a common protocol for articulating program mission statements, goals, assessment criteria, analysis of current performance, forces that influence the program achieving its goals as well as staffing and budget requests. The progress made in this important area is foundational to continued planning and assessment work at Sierra College.
STANDARD II
Student Learning Programs and Service

A. Instructional Programs

General Observations:
The College places emphasis and provides resources toward offering high quality instructional programs and emerging fields of study. The most recent is the creation of a Mechatronics program. The college also offers a recreational program recently developed to prepare students for hospitality and tourism in addition to many other transfer, certificate and vocational programs. The college offers traditional certificate, degree, transfer, career and technical education as well as personal and job enrichment courses and programs. There are skill development courses, tutorial programs, Learning Disability assessment and services, services for disabled students, writing assistance, and various special topic workshops (College Catalog, Community Education brochure, Osher Lifelong Learning Institute) (II A 1).

The College publishes an annual research document (Sierra College Atlas) that contains information on enrollment trends, student profiles, outcome measures and external demographics. Student demographics are analyzed by program faculty and committees such as the Enrollment Management Committee and the Online Taskforce to determine best practices for outreach and marketing. In order to assess student educational preparation, the majority of students are required to complete at least the assessment and orientation component of the state matriculation process. This measures student readiness in basic skills preparation, specifically English and math.

The primary modes of instruction are lecture and laboratory although the college has a growing distance education program. The curriculum committee reviews and approves proposed modes of delivery at the time of course conception. Existing courses are reviewed every six years through the PAR process (Curriculum Committee). An increasing number of faculty are utilizing web based learning to enhance pedagogy. The College identifies Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) for course and program improvement although there is little evidence of meaningful assessment leading to course improvement. The implementation of WebCMS relies on faculty with subject matter expertise to determine SLOs and appropriate methods of assessment. (II.A.)

Sierra College has established a rich array of staff development activities to acquaint faculty with student learning styles and to help them tailor instructional delivery strategies to those learning styles. It has also gathered evidence about student success in classes taught by an array of delivery methods. The college also has processes in place through its curriculum committee review, through Program Assessment Reports, and through faculty evaluation that examine and evaluate the success of its course and program offerings (II.A.2.d-e)
Findings and Evidence:
New vocational programs originate from demographic changes and recommendations from various advisory groups. In order to ensure programs fit the mission of the college, new ideas are brought from faculty through the curriculum process. Once approved, the course outline must document how the course meets the mission of the college and include SLOs with assessment measures (WebCMS). The college does not appear to have data relative to students attaining meaningful employment or licensure pass rates upon completion of vocational and certificate programs. Although the college has documentation of degrees and certificates awarded by major (Degrees and certificates Granted by Major), it does not have adequate documentation relative to transfer information (II.A.1).

All courses and programs go through a Program Review Process (Program and Curriculum Handbook). Started in 2001 the full six-year cycle of review will conclude in spring 2008. Courses are initiated by faculty, and the Educational Requirements Committee, a standing subcommittee of the Senate, determines if new courses, programs and certificates support the mission of the college. The college offers developmental, pre-collegiate, study abroad, short term training, contract, continuing and community education. The PAR is a comprehensive and planned cyclical process that has documented minutes from 2001. The type of credit and the award of credit units is determined by the Curriculum Committee (Curriculum Handbook). The PAC requires enrollment trends, FTES, and overall contributions to the college as part of the six-year cycle. The majority of classes have SLOs due to the purchase of the WebCMS software program. (II.A.2.a)

Minutes of the PAR process are available on line. A review of the WebCMS program demonstrates the required aspects of curriculum including SLOs, level of offering and units granted. Courses are reviewed every six years, and the initial cycle will be completed in spring 2008. Department chairs perform the initial assessment of competency levels and SLOs for all courses under their direction (IIA 2b).

There is support for the WebCMS program as the template ensures compliance with predetermined criteria that must be addressed to meet accreditation expectations. Dialog begins with the proposal of a course and is reinforced through the curriculum process. The Program Outcomes Review Committee assesses learning at the program level. Course sequencing is done at the department level by faculty experts within the discipline and “time to completion” is considered in the overall design and modified as needed (II A 2.c).

New and existing courses are designed and revised in conjunction with the Program and Curriculum Handbook. Web based software, called WebCMS, ensures all new and reviewed courses address required areas of curriculum accountability and responsibility. There is a clear process for course approval including outcomes, technical review, and determination as to the level of coursework. WebCMS enables faculty to develop courses using a predetermined template. The WebCMS program prescribes the inclusion of
Faculty determines competency levels at the course level. Students meeting the mandates for matriculation must complete at least two of the three predetermined requirements prior to registering for class. Vocational advisory committees, listed on pages 289-294 of the college catalog, are utilized to assess vocational/certificate programs. Faculty use advisory committees to ensure consistency across the curriculum, determine program viability and discuss ways to intervene/strengthen programs as needed. The quality of all courses is determined through the PARS cycle. WebCMS, a software curriculum program, ensures all aspects of a course are considered by providing a template for all new and revised course proposals. The college articulation officer ensures appropriate course level transfer for local universities and colleges (IIA 2b).

Department members attend the Student Learning Outcome Institute one semester before initiating their PAR process. Although the most recent minutes available on the public webserve for POI were February 2007, this process has been in place since 2001 when the PAR was introduced as a mandatory process. Students in transfer and certificate program are provided with a clear path to attain their educational goals. Counselors are available to assist students in attaining their educational goals. For students who opt not to use a counselor, certificate programs, with required courses, are listed on the web and in the college catalog.

The WebCMS program allows students to access approved course syllabi online. The curriculum committee evaluates all courses assuring each course includes an assessment of SLO’s as well as anticipated competency levels for each course. At the course level, faculty evaluates student performance in achieving student learning through various assessment modalities. Course outlines include sample assignments, assessment, and teaching methodology in reading, writing and problem solving (IIA 2b).

The college is committed to fostering high quality education with appropriate breadth, depth, rigor, sequencing and time to completion. The first step to ensure academic rigor is to hire quality faculty. Full time faculty complete a four year tenure process prior to being granted long-term employment (SCFA Evaluations). Although the interview process is less formal for part-time faculty, all adjuncts are interviewed and then evaluated within their first year of hire and every six semesters thereafter. Through the curriculum process, faculty evaluate breath, depth, rigor, synthesis and sequencing taking into consideration imposition of prerequisites and course advisories. The WedCMS program assists faculty members align SLOs with teaching methods, assignments, and assessment. Course outlines are public documents accessible through the college website. A distance education coordinator provides support to online, TV, and hybrid courses. A distance education committee ensures the quality of instruction (II A 2.c).

Assessment of student learning styles occurs in classes under the direction of faculty who have been trained in a variety of staff development activities and workshops. A student readiness questionnaire for students enrolling in online classes has several questions.
related to learning styles so that students can self assess their readiness for online classes (II.A.2.d-e).

The college meets the needs and learning styles of its students by offering classes in a variety of ways that appeal to different kinds of learners. It offers classes online, through instructional television, with web-enhancements, in laboratory (hands-on) as well as lecture settings, with project-based assignments, and in cohort-based learning communities. It also offers classes through its study abroad program. All courses approved by the curriculum committee require those submitting them to indicate what kinds of methods of assessing student learning they will use. The identified choices are essay exams, objective exams, projects, classroom discussion, reports, problem-solving exams, skill demonstrations, and other methods the faculty member may identify (IIA.2.d.)

The college identifies eight teaching methodologies: television, online, directed study, field experience, laboratory, lecture, lecture/laboratory, and work experience. Lecture classes have the most enrollments (34,845 in fall 2006) followed by lecture/laboratory classes (10,353 in fall 2006). Teaching methodologies are selected by faculty, depending on student needs, their own skill levels, and on the requirements of the disciplines they teach. Considerable discussion takes place in staff development activities and workshops, particularly in the Learner Outcome Institute and the New Faculty Academy, about appropriate delivery methods. Faculty may also be referred to staff development activities in these areas as a result of their performance evaluations.

The college has investigated the effectiveness of its delivery modes and has published those results in the Factbook 2007. Those results show that students who enroll in television and/or online classes succeed and are retained at a lower rate than other students. The Distance Learning and Educational Technology Committee piloted a number of recent efforts that will hopefully improve student success and retention rates. Directed Study and Work Experience have the highest success and retention rates while television and online classes have the lowest success and retention rates. (IIA.2.d)

The college evaluates the effectiveness of its courses and programs through curriculum review, Program Assessment Reports, and faculty evaluation procedures. Courses are reviewed at least every six years by the Curriculum Committee. Program Assessment Review (PAR) occurs annually for all programs. Faculty evaluation occurs annually for non-tenured, full-time faculty, every three years for tenured full-time faculty, and every sixth semester for part-time faculty. (IIA.2.e.) The Program Assessment Reports do not require programs to include relevancy, appropriateness, and currency, but they do have sections for information on the achievement of student learning outcomes and on plans for the future which are tied to program mission and goals. The Program Assessment Report appears to be consistent for all programs (IIA.2.e.).

The PAR reports include data on Full-Time Equivalent Student (FTES), Weekly Student Contact Hours (WSCH), Full-Time Equivalent Faculty (FTEF), and student success and retention. Student success is measured by students earning a passing grade in courses in
the program. The evaluation does not yet include a curricular review, nor does the evaluation include a comprehensive review of the role of the program in the overall college curriculum. Curriculum review is a separate process that occurs on a six-year cycle through the curriculum committee. (IIA.2.e)

Curriculum review addresses issues of course and program relevancy in a general way. The new Program Outcomes Review (POR) process has not yet been implemented to any degree that would enable Sierra College to know if program outcomes have been met. Some Career and Technical education programs have data on student outcomes because of external accrediting agency requirements, but most programs at Sierra appear not to have student outcomes data as yet. (IIA.2.e)

The PAR process may result in staffing requests, budget increase requests, capital outlay requests, facilities improvement requests, and/or technology requests. A general complaint heard by the team from those who submit such requests is that they rarely find out why their requests for additional resources have not been approved. There appears to be no consistent, systematic gathering of data about program improvements other than the success, i.e., grade, and retention data that is distributed to program leaders. While programs can track overall improvements in student success and retention, it is not clear that they can be correlated with program changes and/or improvements. (IIA.2.e)

The PAR process, curriculum review cycle, program outcome review process, curriculum committee and the web-based program, WebCMS, provide the ongoing, systematic approach to evaluation. Resource allocation requests are included in the PAR process from each department or program. The PAR process uses data from the college to support department analysis and resource allocation. The program outcome review process is newly established, and the curriculum review cycle will complete its first sequence of all programs in spring 2008. The faculty evaluation process only vaguely addresses whether or not course student learning outcome standards are adhered to by individual instructors (II.A.2.f).

The college has identified departments that use common course examinations and has defined how each department will conduct the testing and validation. Except for the English department that uses holistic grading, nationally recognized tests are used to measure academic achievement. The survey question neglected to ask how department minimized test biases. When evaluated instructors are asked to explain how they incorporate department standards into their courses, however, there is no formal college process to assess whether or not this is done (II.A.2.g).

The college states that credit is awarded based “on the achievement of student learning outcomes as stated in the course outline of record.” They also state that “instructors are expected to include in their syllabi the student learning outcomes for each course.” Students that were interviewed indicated that learning outcomes were on their course syllabus and that instruction met the stated outcomes in the course (II.A.2.g-h)
Program stated learning outcomes and a program outcome review process has just been started. It is designed to develop learning outcomes for all degrees and certificates, as well as other identifiable programs. In spring 2007, English and Biology went through the program with pilot projects. All disciplines are scheduled with a full-college completion target goal of 2013. As part of the process, the program outcomes committee will review outcomes regularly, but the process does not fully start until fall 2007. No information was available to determine early results. Vocational programs that required outside exams or assessment are designed to ensure that student achievement standards are met (II.A.2.i).

The college has made progress by implementing the PAR process and ensuring that the curriculum review cycle is in place. This is the first step toward establishing course level student learning outcomes. The research department supplies regular data and works with departments for specific data requests based on individual department needs. They have also identified the process to establish program outcomes and have examined a process to identify institutional outcomes, but no steps have been taken to establish institutional outcomes. There is substantial work yet to be done in the area of measuring student learning outcomes and implementing institutional improvements and ensuring that the student learning outcomes of record are on each course syllabus (II.A.2.f-i).

Although the institution has rationale for inclusion of courses in the GE pattern, there is no evidence of this process aside from the traditional curriculum process. SLOs are included in the majority of classes, but the college has not transitioned to the assessment aspect of the process (II.A.3).

Sierra College offers a wide range of courses within the humanities and fine arts, natural sciences and the social sciences. According to their “Philosophy for General Education,” the GE program offers opportunities for students to develop intellectual skills, information technology skills, affective and creative capabilities, social attitudes, and appreciation for cultural diversify. The college offers 130 courses in humanities, 89 courses in natural sciences and 981 courses in social/behavioral science. To complete the GE requirements, students must complete at least three units in each area. All courses must go through the curriculum process. The catalog lists the courses in the major areas of study. The Program and Curriculum Handbook has outlines and course materials for all GE courses. Faculty submit new curriculum through WebCMS using a template that requires information required for curriculum (II.A.3a).

Students completing GE requirements at Sierra must complete courses in oral and written communication, computer literacy, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and a variety of methodologies to attain this skill set. The college is preparing to raise its math requirement for an AA degree in response to the newly proposed California Academic Senate initiative. Although most of the required areas are met, Sierra does not have an information technology requirement for an Associate of Arts degree. This does not imply students cannot attain this skill at Sierra. They can. There are many course offerings listed in the catalog that provide this knowledge base. Technology is woven throughout the curriculum and within the classroom (II.A. 3b).
The college mission statement addresses the promotion of leadership and civic responsibility. The GE pattern requires students to have an understanding of diversity. There are campus clubs on campus supporting various interests and new/revised Board policies address student participation in campus life, free speech, student rights and grievance and student conduct. The team could not find specific SLOs addressing ethics and effective citizenship although sited Sierra’s institutional goal of critical thinking as supporting the concepts of this standard. The college offers multicultural studies and evidences a growing international program. There are a number of student life opportunities on the campus, including residential living. The college offers 64 campus clubs that include hobbies, cultural, religious and various intellectual interests (II.A 3.c).

All degree programs include a focused study in at least one established area or interdisciplinary core. Sierra offers 108 vocational and occupational programs preparing students for the workforce. The Program and Curriculum Handbook outlines the program approval and review process. This handbook supports the requirements set forth by the Chancellor’s Office Program and Course Approval Handbook. Although there is evidence that the vocational programs meet the licensing and certification criteria for the various programs, there does not appear to be information related to passing rates by external agencies (II.A.4 and 5).

The catalog contains clear and accurate information, course requirements, transfer credit, related college information about programs and is published and available. It is provided to all California community colleges, CSUs, UCs, high schools and private universities. Transfer policies are stated in the catalog, and copies of articulation agreements are available in the counseling office and transfer center. Articulation agreements are updated as approval for general education transfer courses are approved or when requested by the transfer institutions. In addition, high school 2+2 articulation agreements are developed and maintained. For transfer credit, official transcripts are required and evaluated, including foreign degrees that have been evaluated. All transfer credit requests from regionally accredited institutions, degree-applicable, lower-division courses are accepted. Other transfer credit requests are evaluated individually for comparability to Sierra College courses (II.A.6.a).

Elimination of programs or program requirements follows a process to minimize disruption for students. The catalog rights policy allows students to use their “exit” catalog for completion of a degree or certificate. Students are counseled on completion when changes occur (II.A.6.b).

The college catalog is reviewed annually and updated and follows a schedule for academic division offices and educational programs and services offices to participate. The curriculum process is in place for new programs and new, approved, and revised courses. The catalog is available in print and on the website as well as the class schedule and related information. Course outlines, which include student learning outcomes, are available by accessing WebCMS through the college website, which is available to students and the public. There is no formal redress for faculty if they do not include the
student learning outcomes on the syllabus for each course. It is indicated that the Academic Senate and the faculty bargaining unit will address this situation (II.A.6.c).

Board Policy 4030 on academic freedom was updated in May 2006. The policy was written by the college’s academic senate and includes a distinction between personal convictions and the commitments of the college. Flex activities for staff and faculty are offered by the academic senate on the academic freedom policy. The catalog and student handbook provide information about the student grievance policy. All policies are available to the public (II.A.7.a).

The policy on student academic honesty appears in both the Student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook and the college catalog, and is posted on the college website. The student handbook is given to all new students at orientation (II.A.7.b).

The college represents itself to students, the public and college personnel through the college catalog, class schedule, and college website. The college regularly reviews its policies and procedures, and course outlines with student learning outcomes are posted on WedCMS. Policies for transfer credit, procedures for degrees and certificates are contained in the college catalog (II.A.6 and 7).

Conclusions:
Sierra College has made much progress ensuring SLOs are placed at the course level. There is little evidence of SLOs at the program or institutional level. In addition, although SLOs are available at the course level, it is important they are now assessed to determine effectiveness. Once the assessment is complete, areas evidencing deficit can be amended for improvement (II.A.1). The college has addressed the issue of course SLOs, has a strong curriculum committee, and offers a variety of degree/certificate programs and courses. The college needs to address how the evaluation of the PAR results has led to improvement (II.A.2.a).

The college has very thoroughly explained the PAR process for program assessment and review and has in place a curriculum review cycle every six years. The PAR process should be reviewed to evaluate its integration into the planning and assessment process. The next step is to complete the program outcome review process, establish institutional outcomes and use the results for the ongoing systematic evaluation and integrated planning to ensure currency and to measure achievement of learning outcomes.

The College has diverse course offerings and requires all courses to be reviewed every six years through the PAR process and all new curricula are developed through the WebCMS template (II.A.3a).

The college has made changes since the last accreditation visit and has put in place new and revised policies and procedures. They now need to move forward to complete the cycle for student learning outcomes on all courses and programs, complete the assessment cycle, collect the data from the assessment cycle, and use the results of the assessment for continuing and systematic improvement of programs and services.
The college partially meets the requirements of Standard II.A. The team makes the following recommendations for improvement:

**Recommendations:**

**Recommendation # 3 (2007)**
The team recommends that the college identify assessment methods and establish dates for completing student learning outcomes assessments at the institutional level and for all of its courses, programs and services. This process should also include the development of performance measures to assess and improve institutional effectiveness of all programs and services. The college should disseminate the outcomes widely and use these results in the strategic planning and resource allocation process. It is further recommended that the college include effectiveness in producing student learning outcomes as part of its faculty evaluation process. (II.A.1.a, c; II.A.2.a, h, II.B.4, II.C.2, III.A.1.c)

See also Recommendation # 2.
B. Student Support Services

General Observations:
Sierra College has a comprehensive program of student support services that are developed and implemented by a team of talented and innovative professionals. Overall, student support services are deeply integrated into the fabric of the institution and work well together to support student success. A highly collaborative environment and strong executive leadership are complemented by a results-centered culture that embraces data and analysis as key tools to strengthen the institution in ways that are measured by student success. A substantial effort to create and measure Student learning Outcomes across all student services programs has created some excellent models for the college to build upon as all units continue to reshape their planning and thinking around student success outcomes.

Findings and Evidence:
Sierra College has a comprehensive program of student support services including outreach to potential future students throughout the region that it serves, with a strong focus on upward mobility to college from high school, and for career advancement regionally for working adults. Student participation at the college is carefully tracked regionally and by feeder high schools as well as by matriculation status and assessment results. Practices associated with admissions policies and procedures are linked to this information as matriculation protocols are established and enforced. Strategies to ensure that admissions policies and procedures are barrier-free are in place for students whose native language is not English and other students (II.B).

A vast array of college-wide groups including the Strategic Council, the Dean’s Council, the Student Services Council, the Academic and Classified Senates, the Career and Technical Education Committee, the Distance Education Committee, the Education Requirements Committee, and documents from departmental work in progress (ESL, EOPS, English, and Math) reflect substantial institutional engagement in student learning, access, progress and success. Data is organized longitudinally to facilitate a consideration of trends across a wide array of indicators (including primary campus and on-site vs. distance status), and the college’s ATLAS/Factbook, containing a variety of data elements encompassing key college demographic, outcome, and trend data, serves as a resource to all groups, most of whom supplement that foundational data with more specific student success investigations. This data has been applied to policy and practice in student services informing strategic efforts in outreach, the delivery of tutoring services, as well as matriculation policy and practice (II.B).

The institution has multiple strategies for determining that student support services are high quality. All Student Services programs complete the Program Assessment Report (PAR) which is a compendium of planning and analysis items including the goals and objectives of the program, specific challenges which are currently being addressed, program outcomes in terms of the number of students served and/or services delivered, and requests for human, capital, or financial resources. These same programs have also
identified Student Learning Outcomes and strategies to measure them, a cycle that will come full circle when the assessment process is complete and this process completes its migration into the Student Services PARS portfolios, scheduled for 2007-2008 (II.B.1).

In addition, the college has taken meaningful steps to ensure that an appropriate complement of support services are available at branch campuses and is working on ensuring the same for distance education, where a college wide task force has been formed to link Sierra College Distance Education Development work among IT, student services, and academic affairs (II.B.1).

Sierra College provides a clear, accurate, and easy to use catalog for its constituencies with current information concerning all required areas. The catalog is updated annually to reflect changes in offerings, policy and/or practice and is made available in hard copy as well as via the web for prospective and current students (II.B.2). In addition, information regarding student’s rights and responsibilities, the grievance process, and code of conduct are readily accessible through the printed catalog and schedule, in the student handbook, and on the college web site. Copies are also printed for faculty use the first week of class in conjunction with course syllabi (II.B.2.)

Sierra College determines the support needs of its students through multiple means that include analyzing data gathered as part of the matriculation process, tracking services utilization, surveying students directly, engaging in college wide dialogue informed by data as part of formal committees, and in units as part of the PARS process. A broad array of programs and services are available to students at the Rocklin campus and are expanding at the Nevada County Center and Roseville campuses. Plans for further growth in actual and virtual services to address the significant growth in distance education students and the anticipated growth at the Truckee campus as construction gets underway are in progress (II.B.3).

The college does not currently have the capacity to electronically check for compliance with course prerequisites prior to student enrollment. To compensate for this, staff hand check prerequisite compliance in English and math and re-place students as appropriate prior to the first day of instruction. In other courses with prerequisites, all students sign a self-certification that they have completed the required prerequisites on the first day of class. This will be corrected when the college completes migration to its new student information system in 2009 (II.B.3).

The institution has created a Distance Education Task Force with representatives from the college campuses, Instruction, Student Services, Executive Council, and the Information Technology Department. The purpose of the Task Force is to integrate planning and implement actions collegewide in support of student success via distance education. This initiative will include an extensive amount of customized technical support and professional development for faculty and counselors including the creation of a dedicated professional development center and faculty coordinator (II.B.1).
The institution systematically examines key student characteristics and compares those to outcomes (persistence, degree/certificate/transfer completion, etc.). It complements quantitative data with student surveys, which are administered at both college wide and program-specific levels, often disaggregated by campus. Overall, the college appears to do an excellent job of meeting the support needs of its on-campus students, with continued focused planning needed to ensure the same at its growing branch campuses and with Distance Education students, who have grown substantially in number over the last five years. The college regularly surveys students overall and disaggregates data to closely examine key factors such as campus location, ESL status, distance education status, ethnicity, full or part-time status, matriculation status, and gender to examine trend differences and consider the implications for college programs and services. Evidence that the institution responds to those needs is found mostly in the structure and staffing of support services and instructional programs overall and by location. Comprehensive support services are in place at the Rocklin and Nevada County campus sites and continue to be expanded as the student population grows at the Truckee Center. (II.B.3, II.B.3.a).

The Sierra College environment offers a variety of opportunities to develop leadership skills that encourage civic responsibility, personal, and social development. This work is centered in the Campus Life office which is led by a faculty member who teaches Leadership Development classes and facilitates student participation on councils and committees college-wide. The scope of student organizations at Sierra College has expanded dramatically over the past two program years from 37 in 2005 to nearly 60 this year. This work is complemented by the Residential Life program which incorporates a set of cultural and recreational activities into the college that expands the scope of programming available to all students. Leadership opportunities for students to participate on the Board of Trustees and on the college’s Strategic Council accentuates the prominence of the student voice and adds power and stature to the student leadership program at the college. Dialogues about what constitutes a good learning environment occur as part of college committees as well as in individual departments that have framed student learning outcomes and are presently assessing them (II.B.3.b).

Counseling is evaluated by students as part of the college’s student satisfaction survey process and as part of individual counselor evaluations for one-to-one and small-group services. The Counseling Department prepares an annual PAR which is considered across the division and college in conjunction with other planning tools. Branch campus counselors are included in Sierra College meetings via remote technology and periodic business and professional development meetings at their sites. A unique program of intensive counseling as a condition of re-enrollment has been created to help students who would otherwise be dismissed, continue their studies at Sierra College. This intervention creates a final opportunity for students experiencing academic challenges to connect to critical support services and remain enrolled.

This is a program that has organized an intensive array of services in support of students who have not been successful thus far at Sierra College and reflects a strong commitment to student access and success (II.B.3.c).
Counseling professionals all meet state minimum qualifications for professional service as counselors in the California community colleges and also receive on-going professional development through participation in statewide conferences and meetings, through on-campus training workshops and, through departmentally-specific workshops (II.B.3.c).

The Sierra College Self Study notes that the lack of critical mass in a number of non-white student ethnic categories requires the institution to approach the issue more broadly and to incorporate multiculturalism into the curriculum overall and to seek nontraditional strategies for making the campus environment diverse and multicultural. Examples of these strategies include accommodations that are provided for International Students in the student housing units, the extensive annual People and Culture Day, the Travel Abroad program, and variety of cultural activities sponsored year-round by the Office of Campus Life. The effectiveness of these programs and services are evaluated by student surveys, through PARS portfolios and through the tracking of college participation in activities (II.B.3.b, II.B.3.d).

Sierra College systematically evaluates placement instruments in accordance with California state regulations and conducts rigorous periodic reviews of cut score validation, test bias/disproportionate impact, and reliability to ensure that students are appropriately placed in college courses. A set of weighted multiple measures have also been created by the college to ensure that all relevant information about a student is taken into consideration before a course placement is recommended. This work is organized under the auspices of the college’s Matriculation Committee, which is comprised of experts in assessment, counseling, English, ESL, and Math (II.B.3.e).

A detailed and comprehensive plan for the maintenance and security of student records has been provided, included back-up protocols for the electronic storage of such data. The institution has a policy governing the release of student records and other information, which is contained in the appropriate publications (II.B.3.f).

Extensive research associated with the college’s matriculation process has been undertaken in relation to student success and translated into practice in the form of requiring a minimum of two of the three key matriculation elements be completed prior to course registration (Assessment, Orientation, and the creation of a Student Educational Plan). Progression through the cycle of establishing and assessing Student Learning Outcomes will add another opportunity to understand and respond to the impact of counseling and advisement services on student success, but the college requires at least one more program year of SLO work to achieve this (II.B.3.b, II.B.4).

Sierra College has a robust research enterprise that encompasses the acquisition of data through student surveys and the compilation and analysis of data available through programs and MIS. Much of this data is compiled into an annual ATLAS (now Factbook), which is available to all members of the Sierra College community for use in program and service planning. Data from this research and analysis migrates into the
work of Sierra College leaders on committees and task forces and informs decision making as well as program planning. While the college has developed Student Learning Outcomes and strategies for assessing them in Student Services, the cycle has not yet completed its course so evidence about how evaluation of student support services contributes to the achievement of Student Learning Outcomes and how the information can be used to improve programs and services is not yet available (IIB.4.)

Conclusions:
The college partially meets the requirements of Standard II.B. The team makes the following recommendations for improvement:

Recommendations:

Recommendation # 4 (2007)
On-line Support Services for Students
The team recommends that a more robust set of on-line support services be developed for students at Sierra College to effectively serve students in distance education classes as well as students enrolled in traditional classes at developing Sierra College campus sites. These services might include but are not limited to tutoring, financial aid advisement, and library services. (II.B.3.a, II.C.1, II.C.1.c).

See also Recommendations # 2 and # 3
C. Library and Learning Support Services

General Observations:
The college provides instructional support through library and tutoring services on its Rocklin and Nevada County campuses. At the Roseville Gateway Center, the Rocklin information services librarian supplies reference service and bibliographic instruction in a small Learning Resource Center (LRC) room containing dedicated computers. Online library support is provided to the Tahoe-Truckee campus through access to databases, and instructors on that campus often include library usage instruction as part of their classes. Distance education students also have access to the online databases provided through the library web site (II.C.1).

Findings and Evidence:
The college’s self study indicates that although faculty members are encouraged to recommend new databases and materials, the final decision for purchases is made by librarians and the Learning Resource Staff. Librarians are responsible for using the Collection Development Policy as a guideline for adding to the library collection. Selection of materials is made to: support the curriculum of the college; to provide basic information in all fields of human knowledge; to provide basic information on current events, local, national, and international issues; and to provide recreational reading when funds permit. The libraries encourage requests for books and other educational materials from faculty, staff and students. Faculty members recommend materials that support student assignments and suggest purchases in their subject matter areas. The college uses student and faculty surveys to evaluate student and faculty satisfaction with the collection. More than half of the students and faculty surveyed found the book collection to be adequate to their needs (II.C.1.a).

Bibliographic instruction programs are taught by full and part-time special service faculty librarians at both the Rocklin and Nevada County Campus Learning Centers. Reference librarians provide customized research orientations to instructor’s classes as requested. Research on the Run workshops are 10-15 minute demonstrations of specific databases for any student’s use and are sometimes required by class instructors or included for extra credit. Two courses in information competency, LIB.SCI 010A, Information Literacy and Lifelong Learning and LIB.SCI 010B, Library Research Process, are offered in the library science program on the Rocklin Campus, one in the classroom and one online. The online class can be taken by students at other campuses. There is also a learning assistance computer lab, staffed by a full-time classified employee assisted by student employees, available for additional assistance. The Academic Foundations Program (formerly the Student Success Program) includes both LIB.SCI010A and 010B. The institution relies on survey information to measure the usage of and satisfaction with online resources, which provide instruction. According to recent survey results, 66% of the Rocklin students and 71% of the Nevada County Campus students found the library orientation sessions useful (II.C.1.b).

The Rocklin campus is open six days: Monday through Thursday from 7:30 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.; Friday 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.; and Saturday 9 A.M. to 1 P.M. for a total of 67 hours...
per week. There are no Saturday hours during the summer. The reference desk opens at 8:00 A.M. The Nevada County Campus Learning Resource Center is open during the academic year 5 days per week: Monday through Thursday 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. and Friday from 9 A.M. to 1 P.M. for a total of 48 hours per week. The Learning Resource Center is open from 10 A.M. to 7 P.M. Monday through Thursday for the summer session, but there are no Friday hours during the summer. The college’s full-text electronic resources are available through internet access twenty-four hours a day, 365 days a year. With online accessibility, there is equal access to all students. However, the self study noted that lack of staff has affected the lower level of the Nevada County LRC, and there is not full coverage at the reference desk. The high school program that is conducted at the school requires more supervision of its students so that time is taken away from staff time available to college students. The Nevada County Campus Learning Resource Center coordinator does provide some orientations at this campus, and part-time faculty librarians conduct additional sessions in the facility, although there is no dedicated room for these activities (II.C.1.c).

The self-study indicated that despite the growing complexities of the services provided on this campus, the staffing level has not increased since the campus opened. The Planning Agenda indicates that the college was attempting to find more creative ways to address staffing issues, but it is unknown if that has been accomplished at this time. There are currently no onsite library services at the Tahoe-Truckee campus, but there are library/tutoring facilities included in the plan for the new facility. In addition, the dean at that location is considering offering onsite orientation sessions when there is space at the new campus. There are no onsite services at Roseville Gateway, but both campuses are served by online library services. Tutoring services are offered both on a drop-in basis and by appointment in many subject matter areas. Instructors are informed of the tutoring time schedules at the beginning of the semester so that they may recommend or require their students’ attendance (II.C.1.c).

Although the college considers the current maintenance and security activities “adequate,” lack of staff is still a concern. The lower level of the Nevada County Campus Learning Resource Center is unattended, and the reference desk is not always covered leaving the area vulnerable. The future planning agenda requires that the college find creative ways to address staffing issues in order to remedy this situation (II.C.1.d).

The college maintains a contract with the Endeavor Information System for the provision of a database for student access to catalog records for library materials. The contract includes training for library staff who will be supervising use of the system, and a Customer Service Center is available during business hours (Central Time). A variety of modules that are upgraded annually are utilized for circulation, cataloging, and statistical reporting. The college has another contract with the City of Lincoln and Western Placer Unified School District for a new joint use library that was due to be completed by summer of 2007. The new library will also use the Endeavor system as well. To evaluate their contracted services, the college uses the statistical reporting module of the Endeavor system and also relies on student and faculty surveys. The college also
maintains a contract with the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) for use in cataloging new acquisitions (II.C.1.e).

Again, the college relies heavily on surveys, both printed and online, to analyze student and faculty usage and satisfaction. After orientations, guided exercises are used to reinforce students’ learning and to help librarians determine where problem areas may exist. In the LIB.SCI 010A and 010B classes, Student Performance Outcomes are measured by student performance in related out of class assignments. Evaluations of student tutors by students and an evaluation by the tutors of how the session went are required after every session. Evaluations of student workshops are analyzed to determine if the session met student needs and where improvements may be made. In addition, both libraries complete the PAR process annually to determine how well the library and their resources contribute to student learning, persistence, and success. The LRC’s use the Sierra College Research office to measure the effectiveness of the Student Success Program based on the specific program outcomes and assessments. In conjunction with the Advisory Board, the Student Success Program’s subcommittee, Student Equity, won the UC Berkeley sponsored Dale Tillery Award for Education Leadership in the summer of 2006 (II.C. 2).

Conclusions:
The self-study and the Library/Learning Resource Center PAR reports both consider the lack of staff and appropriate space as obstacles to fulfilling the mission of the department. Further expansion of the Nevada County Center and Tahoe-Truckee campuses will exacerbate this situation, with security at the Nevada County Center campus already a concern. This will also have an impact on personnel resources since much of distance education falls under the purview of the Library/Learning Resource Center. Alternate ways of meeting perceived needs through reclassification of current positions has been proposed, but has not yet been approved.

It appears from the self-study that students, faculty, and staff are, for the large part, satisfied with library services and information availability based on the responses to surveys. While staffing of vacancies is a concern, the L/LRC is attempting to be as flexible as possible with what resources are available. The facilities are pleasant, well-maintained, and used frequently by students and faculty. The cycle of assessment of student learning outcomes and improvement based on those assessments for library science classes and workshops has been started and continues to be refined.

The college partially meets this standard. The team makes the following recommendation and offers one commendation:

Recommendations:

See Recommendation #2 and # 4 (2007)

Commendations:

Commendation # 4
The college is to be commended on the success of its Academic Foundation Program for basic skills students.
STANDARD III
Resources

A. Human Resources

General Observations:
Sierra College has a dedicated, qualified staff that is widely viewed as collegial and supportive of student learning. It has longstanding hiring processes that lead to the employment of excellent staff. The college has evaluation procedures delineated in its collective bargaining agreements that detail how evaluations of each employee group take place. Ethics statements are in place for classified staff, faculty and managers.

The college administers the personnel policies and procedures through established hiring practices which are consistently followed and equitably applied by trained hiring committee members for filling vacancies in positions approved by the President/Superintendent and the Board. An Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Advisory Committee serves as a resource in conjunction with the EEO Manager to ensure compliance with equity and diversity matters included in Board Policy Chapter 7, Human Resources. The college continues to work on its established broad goal to achieve greater ethnic diversity among employees.

Findings and Evidence:
Sierra College has effective hiring procedures, delineated in Board Policy and Administrative Procedure 7120, as well as in the Hiring Cycle Handbook, which result in the employment of qualified personnel. The Hiring Cycle Handbook has not been revised in over 12 years. College personnel stated that the college intends to update this handbook. Job announcements are publicly posted on the college website and the job descriptions explain the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for each position, including required minimum qualifications for education and experience. Faculty is heavily involved in all parts of the selection of new faculty. They are active members of the reading panel and the interviewing panel. One faculty member is also present during the final selection interviews. The Academic Senate initially approves two faculty members to sit on each faculty hiring committee, but the committee may request—and often does—more faculty members for the committee. These faculty members are also approved by the Academic Senate (III.A.1.a). The college meets the requirements of Standard III.A.1.a.

When reviewing job applicants for a position, the college conduct an examination of candidates’ qualifications, using predetermined rating rubrics at the application stage, the first interview stage, and, if appropriate for the position, the final interview stage. The college confirms that perspective faculty members have knowledge of subject matter by degree confirmation, evaluation of a teaching demonstration, and assessment of candidates’ answers to interview questions related to subject matter. The college evaluates effective teaching by asking candidates for a teaching demonstration as part of the interview process. The interview panel uses an agreed upon scoring rubric for the teaching demonstration as part of its overall evaluation of the candidate in the interview.
Degrees held by faculty and administrators are from institutions accredited by recognized U.S. accrediting agencies as verified by the Human Resources office from official transcripts and are published in the college catalogue. Evidence that hiring processes result in highly qualified employees is found in the high number of faculty members who receive tenure and the large number of classified personnel and managers who pass probationary evaluations to become permanent employees (III.A.1.a).

To ensure that hiring policies and procedures are applied consistently, the college’s Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) guidelines are presented to hiring committee members in training workshops before they serve on such committees. An EEO representative monitors the hiring process at each level to further ensure that hiring procedures are consistently applied (III.A.1.a).

Sierra College systematically and regularly evaluates its personnel as delineated in Administrative Procedure 7150. Evaluation processes for faculty and classified staff are determined through collective bargaining and are reflected in the negotiated agreements (SCFA Contract, Article 19; FUSE Contract, Article 17). Evaluation procedures for managers are delineated in the Management Handbook (Section VII). Appropriate institutional responsibilities for college personnel are decided through collective bargaining agreements, reflected in job announcements, and assessed through regular evaluation processes. For example, evaluation criteria for faculty include “demonstration of a breadth and depth of knowledge in their discipline, demonstration of effective delivery of teaching or special services, demonstration of a respect of students’ rights and needs, demonstration of a commitment to participation in the shared governance process, demonstration of a commitment to professional growth, and a demonstration of a sensitivity to individual differences and cultural and ethnic diversity.” Faculty who receive less than satisfactory performance evaluations are placed on an improvement plan until their performance reaches satisfactory status through a subsequent evaluation (III.A.1.b).

Because the evaluation criteria are so voluminous and specific, they are largely connected to institutional effectiveness and improvement and generally measure the effectiveness of personnel in performing their duties. However, the faculty evaluation process does not yet have, as a component of that evaluation, effectiveness in producing learning outcomes (III.A.1.b, II.A.1.c).

The college has written codes of ethics for faculty and classified staff, adopted by their respective senates. A management code of ethics was recently approved (June 11, 2007) and is now in place (III.A.1.d).

Full-time faculty at Sierra College represent 42% of all faculty with the other 58% being part-time, according to Spring 2007 data published in Factbook 2007, the college’s annual data book. These percentages appear not to have changed significantly in the last five years. Full-time faculty were 43% of the total in fall 2002 and 42% of the total in
spring 2007. The low number and percentage of full time faculty versus part time faculty had previously been cited as a recommendation in the college’s last accreditation report.

According to college administration, Sierra College has one of the lowest full-time to part-time faculty ratios in the state. A fall 2005 survey revealed that 70.4% of respondents felt that the college employed insufficient full-time faculty. The college does not use any measure other than the percentage of full time versus part time faculty to determine whether there is appropriate staffing at the college. Additionally, there were no measurement methods in place to determine the appropriate number of administrative and support staff positions that are needed to support the college (III.A.2).

In spite of a lack of a measurement methodology that could be used to gauge the appropriateness of the number of full-time faculty members, the percentage of full-time faculty does not appear to have negatively affected student learning. A recent study of student success rates indicated there was no significant difference in student success rates between classes taught by full-time and part-time faculty. No other criteria to determine the impact of full-time versus part-time faculty was available from the college, and the team could not find sufficient evidence to make a determination on whether there was sufficient full-time faculty to meet the requirements of Standard II.A.2. The team did note that no vital processes appear to have been impeded because of a lack of full-time faculty. At a public forum, the team did hear comments about “governance fatigue” caused by the few number of full-time faculty members who are required to shoulder shared governance work (III.A.2 and III.A.6).

Sierra College has personnel policies and procedures that are contained in the Hiring Cycle Employment Manual that was approved in January 1992 and revised in July 1995. The team was informed that the manual is being revised once again. The manual is available to the college personnel for review and procedural implementation. The manual can be accessed through the college website (III.A.3).

The written policies ensure fairness in all employment procedures through a formal training process conducted by the Personnel Department and monitored for consistency through the Equal Employment Office. Fairness in all employment procedures are monitored through a trained equal employment representative that has been given a casting vote in the hiring decisions. All the hiring committee members are also trained in EEO, equity and fairness methods and procedures outlined in the hiring manual. This training is repeated every two years. No one is allowed to be a part of the hiring process unless they have gone through the training. Considerable effort is expended towards attracting a diverse applicant pool for filling vacancies, but this has not resulted in any significant gains in employment for ethnically diverse employees and remains a stated concern of the college (III.A.3.a).

Personnel records are securely locked in filing steel cabinets housed within the Human Resource Office to ensure confidentiality. Employees are given access to their own personal records by prior arrangement with the staff, and are allowed monitored access to their personal files. Two sets of files are maintained which were personally inspected by
a team member who was able to evaluate the security, safety and confidential maintenance of these records, both general and the Health Information Protection Act (HIPA) files. Electronic copies of these files are stored in a different location for safekeeping as part of the college’s disaster recovery procedure (III.A.3.b).

The Equal Employment Opportunity Office designs programs and services to benefit the diverse population of the College. One example is defined in Administrative Procedure (AP) 7114 – Faculty Internship Program for Staff Diversity approved in November 2004. This procedure provides an opportunity for a person interested in becoming a faculty member the ability acquire practical skills necessary to facilitate learning in an educational environment. The program is available to qualified graduate students who are interested in teaching in the community college. AP 7114 states in part: “the faculty intern positions shall be based on the principles of equal employment opportunity in accordance with the Sierra Joint Community College District’s Faculty and Staff EEO Plan” (III.A.4).

The college prepares ethnic distribution studies like the Student Profile- End of course Headcount Fall 2001 – Fall 2005 as a record of equity and diversity. The college mission statement lists as a guiding principle: “Support Diversity.” AP 7114 establishes the foundation for the college to provide opportunities to perspective faculty members with an opportunity to gain teaching experience and potentially qualify for a full-time assignment. Some organizational changes to address concerns for issues of equity and diversity have been made at the college. The responsibility for complying with the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) lies with the Human Resources Department. But to ensure greater compliance with this important aspect, a new EEO Manager position was created that reports directly to the president. The EEO Manager ensures and monitors compliance on equity and diversity issues for hiring. The EEO Manager communicates diversity plans and advertises vacancies through special ethnically diverse publications and periodicals, and by attending employment fairs throughout the state, and by organizing cultural events (III.A.4).

The college also monitors its external community data and demographics with ethnicity breakdown for each location served by the college. Brochures distributed by the EEO Office list six goals to work towards achieving a more diverse workforce. Another brochure entitled: “Faculty Diversity through Mentorship” is intended to encourage a more diverse workforce. The college maintains records on employment equity and diversity and uses the information to devise measures for attracting a diverse applicant pool. The EEO Office considers the ethnic composition of each department and uses that to bring diversity within that department through hiring ethnically diverse personnel. The college meets the requirements of Standard III.A.4.a.

The EEO officer keeps detailed records of equity and diversity employment (Atlas 2006, page 18 and 88). The State Chancellor’s Office advisories are closely followed regarding equity and diversity aspects with periodic training and the representation of this trained staff on hiring committees with oversight through the representation of trained EEO staff on hiring committees. The college is in compliance for maintaining records of all ethnic
representation for all personnel, classified, management, faculty and students. This information is used to monitor its progress towards their goal of achieving greater diversity (III.A.4.b).

The college subscribes to, advocates, and demonstrates integrity in the treatment of all employees. Administrative Procedure 3050 – Institutional Code of Ethics defines the expected behavior of college personnel. There was no evidence to indicate that the practice was not being followed (III.A.4.c).

Sierra College has an extensive number of courses and training opportunities for faculty and staff. The department mission statement is:

“to strengthen and support a dynamic learning and working environment enriched by diversity that promotes personal, professional and organizational development for all staff. To promote and support life-long learning, leadership, innovative and effective teaching methodology, technology and an understanding of the needs of the student population in the college “learning” community.”

In achieving its mission, the Staff and Organizational Development Department is open from 7:30 AM to 6:30 PM Monday through Thursday and 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM on Friday. The center offers training, workshops, conferences and access to books and periodical references ranging from developing a class syllabus to technology training. A monthly calendar of available professional development activities are posted on the college’s web site. Some of the topics for the month of October included interviewing techniques, training and assessment for instructors to determine if they are ready to teach an on-line instruction course, and word problems made easy. The courses are available mostly at the Rocklin campus location (III.A.5.a).

A staff development committee consisting of six management personnel and six faculty members develops and distributes a needs survey each year. The survey is used to determine the goals and objectives of the Staff and Organizational Development Department. The committee’s responsibilities include overseeing funding for staff development, suggesting planned activities for flex and convocation days, advising the college on technology training issues, and developing goals and objectives for the direction of training offered by the Staff Development Office (III.A.5.b).

As noted in several areas in this report, each department prepares a unit plan as part of the PAR. Requests for additional personnel are included in the PAR. The team did not find a comprehensive plan to address the long-standing college concerns to increase the number of full time faculty and staff in support of student learning programs. The PAR channels information requests to the highest levels of the administration. There is no dialogue at Strategic Council about resource allocation priorities, and it does not appear that the broader college community has a say in funding decisions. The team was informed of a funding formula methodology that provides a stated percentage of the college budget to address compensation of employee groups. In one interview, the team was told that any new positions have to be paid for out of any enrollment growth revenue that the college earns for the year. While this may avoid internal conflicts and promote the overall...
collegial atmosphere at the college, the team could not find evidence on how this methodology directly addresses the need to increase the number of employees in all areas of the college. The college does not use the PAR requests as a basis for compilation of a comprehensive human resources staffing plan (III.A.6).

Conclusions:
The college employs qualified personnel to support student learning programs and services. There remain questions about the appropriate level of staffing especially in regards to full-time faculty members although the team found no compelling information that would indicate the low number of full-time faculty has directly affected instructional quality. In light of the college’s on-going concerns about this issue for a number of years, the team concluded that the college needs to develop methods and assessment tools to determine to appropriate number of qualified faculty with full-time responsibility to the institution. The team concluded the college does not meet the requirements of III.A.2 in part because of its continuing expression of concern about the need for more full-time faculty and staff. Moreover, even though the college has commented on this issue in its Self-Study and in its previous accreditation report, the college did not act to resolve this issue. The college has an excellent program to promote diversity The training programs seeks feedback from the trainees to gauge their effectiveness. The college partially meets the requirements of Standard III.A.

Over the course of the team’s evaluation, it noted that the professional development activities established by the college to provide faculty and staff with opportunities for skill development were noteworthy. The team offers a commendation for the college’s professional development program.

The team makes the following recommendations for improvement.

Recommendations:

See Recommendation # 2 and # 3 (2007)

Commendations:

Commendation # 2
The team commends the college on the establishment of a rich array of staff development activities and workshops on curriculum review, student learning outcomes, and program outcomes. The team acknowledges these activities are in the development stage although if successful will be important for improving faculty capabilities and student success.
B. Physical Resources

**General Observations:**
Sierra College has worked closely with its communities to anticipate future educational facilities requirements and to create a structure for addressing them through the acquisition of land for branch campuses, as well as the development of a Facilities Master Plan that is supported in two key regions by successful bond acts. The aggressive positioning of the Rocklin campus for state construction funding has made some key campus projects possible, and judicious use of additional local and scheduled maintenance funding has created a strong foundation for student academic success at the institution.

**Findings and Evidence:**
Sierra College has a Safety Committee with representation from all campuses and divisional areas of the college including Security, unions, Risk Management, Maintenance, and Operations. The committee serves as a hub for coordinating all college safety-related matters ranging from the management of staff-initiated requests for maintenance and safety planning from a preventative and crisis response perspective (III.B.1).

The college has a Facilities Master Plan that was developed in 2003 as a foundational facilities planning tool for all educational sites and campuses within the district. The plan is currently being updated and was framed through 2015. Data that informed the original development of the Facilities Master Plan includes demographic and economic forecasts as well as division and campus-specific trends, goals, and needs. This big-picture work is operationally complemented by on-going dialogue and coordination efforts under the auspices of the Dean’s Council and the Strategic Enrollment Task Force, groups that link unit level PARs to facility allocation planning and carefully manage available facilities college-wide to ensure that classes are optimally situated for the number of enrolled students and the type of instruction (III.B.1).

To ensure that facilities are maximized, a new concept of facilities sharing has been introduced whereby a division or program retains primary rights to scheduling specific classrooms until a certain calendar date and then relinquishes the room to any interested academic program for class scheduling. This helps to ensure that facilities are first scheduled according to the instructional purposes for which they were designed while maximizing room utilization at the college (III.B.1).

In addition, the college surveys faculty and staff periodically to obtain their assessment of the adequacy of facilities. The majority of respondents indicated that they were either somewhat or very involved in facilities implementation, with an additional 36% aware but not engaged in the work (III.B.1).

The college’s Information Technology team interacts with operational services leaders to chart and prioritize technology upgrades needed in classrooms and related infrastructure
support for current and future operations. A set of standards that smart classrooms should meet has been drafted for the college to use as a facilities planning and upgrading tool. All new construction is incorporating that standard, and classrooms are being converted as funding allows. The college’s technology infrastructure is outdated and the district has borrowed funds in order to proceed with the acquisition of an integrated software system for Human Resources, Fiscal Services, and student information that is scheduled to be phased in beginning in July 2008 (III.B.1).

The institution works effectively to meet its facility needs by coordinating facility development work across a vast district with four educational sites. The district was successful in passing two bonds for development of the Nevada County and Truckee campus sites in November 2004 for $18 and $20 million dollars, respectively. These resources have enabled the newer Sierra college educational facilities to develop and maintain high standards of excellence beyond the level that has been possible at the Rocklin campus, where no bond funds are available. The college notes this significant concern in its self-study and commits to focusing on strategic facilities solutions in the immediate future that will require clear priorities that have begun to be addressed in a reorganization of the unit that is advancing through a consultation process at the college (III.B.1).

In compliance with Proposition 39, the district has created two Bond Oversight Committees to ensure that all resources are appropriated according to the provisions of the two November 2005 ballot measures. The Board of Trustees regularly approves related reports, contracts, and other facilities-centered contracts, studies, and agreements. It is critical to note that although the four sites blend owned facilities with leased facilities, for purposes of addressing safety issues, all assessment and response is channeled through the main campus at Rocklin to expedite response time and ensure as much collegewide involvement as the different sites allow (III.B.1).

Sierra College conducts regular facilities evaluations and has a process through which college programs can request improvement ranging from requesting new construction to minor facilities remodeling. These priorities move from the unit to the division to the Executive and Strategic Council levels where priorities are established and resources allocated on an annual basis. The safety of equipment is monitored at the program or unit level and a similar request process advances to the division level and is reconciled at the college’s Executive Council (III.B.1).

Sierra College has experienced significant growth in distance education enrollment and is mobilizing substantial resources to ensure the success of this growing cohort of students, including but not limited to creating a dedicated distance education training center and staff experts to support faculty mastery of distance education teaching skills. The college is making progress in addressing the equipment needs of distance education and campus-based education, but lacks the funding needed to fully address equipment needs collegewide at the present time. The college has secured permission from the Board to borrow up to $9 million dollars for technology improvements at the college and has committed $7.7 million to date for an enterprise system, with the remainder available to
nourish the academic computing infrastructure of the college. In the meantime, instructional equipment grant funds received from the state are matched 1:1 to incrementally address a portion of the college’s instructional equipment needs (III.B.1).

In addition to its Facilities Master Plan, the institution has a number of planning documents that chronicle priority projects collegewide and document the allocation of state and local resources to those priorities. The first is the Five Year Maintenance Plan, encompassing the period from 2006-2010 which details projects funded and anticipated throughout the district utilizing dollar for dollar matching resources for scheduled maintenance, instructional equipment, and library materials. The second is the Master Project List, a historical document chronicling capital outlay, scheduled maintenance, hazardous materials efforts, and repair/remodel projects that were completed during the decade from 1996 through 2006. This document helps to create a public record of completed work against which future priorities can be considered. A formal request process is in place at the program level, and each vice president prioritizes requests for equipment at the Executive Council level.

The institution is constructing new facilities with bond funding at two of the four Sierra College campus locations. Leased facilities generally meet the same standards as on-campus locations although more temporary equipment is utilized at off-campus sites and all emergency facility situations are handled directly by Sierra College staff regardless of the facility’s ownership status. The institution ensures access to its facilities by meeting all federal accessibility regulations and by making additional improvements as scheduled maintenance funding allows (III.B.1.b).

All major campus sites have lead administrators on site that collaborate with the Rocklin campus to plan and coordinate facilities usage and maintain quality. Regular on-campus and virtual meetings connect leaders for continuity of program planning within college divisions and sectors. Supplemental attention to facility issues in leased space helps to ensure that all college facilities meet a reasonable standard of comparability in terms of quality (III.B.1).

The institution assesses the use of its facilities on a semester basis, with a process for prioritizing room assignments that is designed to maximize their effectiveness. This process is grounded in the academic and student services divisions and centered on the type of instruction or services planned. A consultant was retained by the college to conduct a fresh analysis of classroom utilization data to maximize the college’s eligibility for state facilities construction subsidies (III.B.2).

Sierra College presently uses a combination of internal planning mechanisms at the program and unit level combined with demographic forecasting data and consultant analyses of opportunities to acquire, renovate, update, and construct facilities to create long-range capital improvement plans for the college. These plans encompass the strategic assessment of assets as well as regional needs across an extremely large district with pockets of high population growth (III.B.2.a).
The physical resources development process begins at the department level. Regional demographic and economic analyses are evaluated along with the department-specific requests to formulate the plans included in the Facilities Master Plan. The college is in the process of updating its 2003 Facilities Master Plan.

Through the PAR process, all college units have the opportunity to identify space needs as part of the planning process. These requests are aggregated at the unit and division level and are prioritized by the vice presidents in conjunction with program leaders in their units. Final determinations for space allocation, renovation, and other physical resource needs are made at the executive level through dialogue among the vice presidents and presidents (III.B.2.b).

Planning processes are strong at the unit and division levels, where they are tied to PARs and informed by institutional data, but weaken as they advance for final consideration at the Executive Council level since there is not a process through which they are visibly tied to the institution’s strategic priorities (III.B.2.b).

**Conclusions:**
This area meets all accreditation standards except for requirements associated with planning (III.B.2.b). The team makes the following recommendations:

**Recommendations:**
See Recommendation # 2 (2007)
C. Technology Resources

**General Observations:**
Sierra College has created two advisory task forces: the Educational Technology Advisory Taskforce (Ed Tech) and the Administrative Systems Advisory Taskforce (ASAT). The purpose of these taskforces is to address the need for technology at the college and its off campus centers. The Educational Technology Committee identifies the need for new technology. Every year the manager of technology support meets with key instructional personnel to identify a plan to address the upcoming needs of the various constituent groups. The technology department conducts an annual program assessment and also reviews other departmental plans to determine technology needs. The college provides technology support Monday- Friday from 7:30 AM-6:00 PM.

The college uses several software systems that were developed by commercial vendors. These systems are referred to as third party service. In addition to maintaining the district website, wireless access, network, and audio visual as well as other services, the technology personnel are responsible for ensuring the third party services are also performing properly. Until fall 2001 the distance learning program consisted of televised classes broadcast on a local TV channel. The college increased online offerings and now provides online courses to over 3,000 students. The college uses Blackboard for educational course management. In December 2006 support for online instruction was moved to a hosted environment.

**Findings and Evidence:**
The college believes the current arrangement for Instruction and Information Technology (IIT) department facilities are insufficient for future technology needs. The college has experienced disruptive power outages. There is a need for reconfiguration of wiring closets, a new PBX, and for cabling expansion. The dialing system is exhausted, and there are no more campus extensions. Voice mail is limited, and a new phone system is needed. The college has hired a contractor for assistance in assessing the condition of the technology infrastructure. College personnel interviewed by the team all agreed the current infrastructure is insufficient to support the needs of the college. Sierra College requested community support for facility improvement bonds at the Rocklin main campus. The voters did not approve the bonds. This has left the college few options to replace its antiquated and insufficient infrastructure (III.C.1).

IIT department staff attend training on a regular basis. Due to the number of third party software programs, college personnel frequently receive training developed by the software manufacturer. The college’s off-site areas are staffed with permanent technical personnel and student assistants. Faculty teaching online courses must complete Blackboard training prior to being assigned to an online class. The college has identified a need for additional training through the PARS, Ed Tech and ASAT advisory task forces. (III.C.1.b)

Technology needs are requested through the PAR. The college has a Technology Master Plan although the team found the plan was not comprehensive. The college staff
commented that they are developing a comprehensive plan to identify and prioritize needs for the immediate five year period. There are staff available to maintain the technological infrastructure as well as stand by rotation of an off duty administrator (III.C.2, III.C.1.c).

The college has a cascading policy that ensures high end computers are in areas requiring advanced technology while older computers are passed down to areas needing less comprehensive systems. Each campus has a percentage of smart classrooms. Technology is integrated into planning through the PARS program and reviewed on an annual basis. Unfunded requests at the conclusion of the cycle are reprioritized for the following year. The technology plan is linked to institutional planning through the facilities master plan and technology master plan although no comprehensive Strategic Plan and Educational Master Plan showing the integration of needs for each operational unit to include facilities, technology, human resources, educational programming, and finances exists. The technology planning activities appear to be directed more toward specific projects, for example the new Enterprise Resource Program (ERP) and enhancements to reduce power outages and other limited infrastructure repairs (III.C.1.d).

The convocation survey from spring 2006 evidences that fact that 83% of the faculty are aware of technology improvements across the campus and at the off site locations. There are minutes of the Ed Tech and ASAT meetings. The primary purpose of these committees is to prioritize requests for modifications and enhancements. The Information Technology division participates in the PAR development process and has stated its view that there is a need to improve the college’s technology infrastructure. Internal assistance is provided by a help desk that tracks calls to see if there are trends or areas requiring additional assistance and support. The IIT department has developed a variety of online applications to provide assistance to other user groups (III.C.2).

Conclusions:
The constituents we spoke with believe the infrastructure of the campus can only be improved if there is a campus commitment to make it a priority. As the students are becoming more interested in alternative pedagogy, the demand for reliable and consistent technology has increased. The increase in online teaching evidences there is a need for alternative delivery modes. In addition, the staff and faculty would benefit from assistance provided by a more advanced technology infrastructure. The staff in IIT department are conscientious and interested in assisting the college move ahead but are limited, not by their knowledge base, but by limited fiscal resources. The college is substantially in compliance with Standard III.C. However the team makes the following recommendation for improvement:

Recommendations:

See Recommendation # 2 (2007)
D. Financial Resources

General Observations:
The institution’s adopted budget for 2007-08 is $90,863,335 in revenues. This amount includes a beginning fund balance of $10,442,055. Total expenses amount to $92,920,004 which also includes the projected ending fund balance. Adjustment to this total expense amount is $2,145,658, due to settlement of funds reserved in prior year. The adopted budget includes all formula directed compensation increases and transfers to annualized debt service for 2004 and 2007 Certificate of Participation (COP). The college has an estimated unfunded liability of $60 million associated with Other Post Employment Benefits offered to eligible employees who meet specific vesting requirements.

The residence hall fund is a self-supporting service auxiliary. Revenue is generated through fees to students in the dormitory. The estimated ending fund balance for 2006-07 is $92,733. Two voter-approved bond measures have augmented the college’s resources to allow it to add or enhance facilities at the Tahoe-TRuckee and Nevada County educational sites.

Findings and Evidence:
The self study states that through the PAR process financial planning is integrated with and supports all institutional planning. The PAR protocol has been implemented college wide across all departments and campuses. These requests follow two parallel tracks: through the Deans Council and through the Operations Council. Final review, prioritization, and resource allocation are ultimately made in the Executive Council. In interviews with college staff, it is not clear what criteria are used in allocating funds. There is also a lack of communication back through the process as to what items were funded (III.D.1.a).

The college’s institutional planning foundation is the PAR process. The self study (p 147) states that the PAR process is used to set planning priorities which are funded using only those resources that are available. This statement is in conflict with what occurs in reality. Though the PAR protocol has been implemented college wide across all departments and campuses, it is not clear what happens after the requests go through the Deans Council and Operations Council. As these requests are reviewed, prioritized, and funded at the Executive Council, it is not clear how the college establishes its funding priorities (III.D.1.b).

The self study (p 147) identified the following long-term debt: a 2004 COP, 1998 COP, 1968 US Department of HUD bond, and a California Energy Commissions Loan. Here is a summary of the outstanding college supported debt according to the June 30, 2006 audit report:

- 1968 Certificate of Participation in the amount of $6,005,000 with an average interest rate of 4.68%. Proceeds were used to advance refund $2,390,000 of outstanding 1991 COPs to fund the residence hall renovation project. Annual payment for 2007 is $535,947.
- 2004 Certificate of Participation in the amount of $7,400,000 with an average interest rate of 3.93%. Funds were used to finance gymnasium improvements, purchase chemistry fume hoods, finance swimming pool upgrades, athletic fields, water heating system repairs and relocatable educational facilities. The annual payment for 2007 is $536,562.
- US HUD dormitory bond—original issue was in the aggregate principal amount of $1,409,000. The annual payment for 2007 is $29,030.
- California Energy Commission contract to receive money for energy conservation projects. The outstanding principal is about $879,316. The annual payment for this loan in 2007 is $199,694.
- 2007 Certificate of Participation in the amount of $7,785,000 to finance an integrated administrative system and a telephone switching station. The annual payment for 2007 is about $790,000.
- The institution also leases computer and office equipment under long-term lease purchase agreements. The payment amount for 2007 is $43,040.

In addition to the college locally supported debt service, the college also received voter approval for two bond measures in November 2004. The bonds were area specific and provided funds for the Tahoe-Truckee Extension Center and Nevada County Campuses. With tax revenue available from the bond measures, the college, on April 21, 2005, issued $20 million of General Obligation Bonds to finance the construction of a campus in the Tahoe-Truckee area. The bonds will mature in 2029. The second bond measure was used to support debt service on a second $18 million of GO Bonds that were used to pay for facility improvements at the Nevada County Campus (III.D.1.c).

The institution provides lifetime post-retirement health care benefits to eligible employees who retire from the institution. As of June 30, 2006, 170 employees meet those eligibility requirements. Approximately $2,042,005 was paid for retired employee health benefits. The unfunded actuarial determined liability for benefits to retired employees is valued at approximately $60 million. Meeting Government Accounting Standards Board (GASB) pronouncement # 45 will result in the college reporting $5.5 million per year as an expenditure or liability in order to meet the Annual Required Contribution (ARC). If the college does not pay $5.5 million per year into an irrevocable trust fund, it will accumulate an unfunded liability that will be reported on the college’s financial statements. At the time of the team’s visit the college had not established a long-term financial plan to address this obligation (III.D.1.c).

The budget process is based on the PAR process. This process is documented fully in the institution’s PAR Handbook. The PAR protocol has been implemented college wide across all departments and campuses. However, it is not clear what happens after the requests are processed through the Deans Council and Operations Council. The Executive Council is the level at which the PAR requests are prioritized for funding. It is not clear, though, how this group establishes its funding priorities. The PAR handbook provides guidance for articulation program mission statements, goals, assessment criteria, analysis of current performance as well as staffing and budget requests. The self study states that the PAR timeline is out of sync with the budget development timeline (III.D.1.d).
The Independent Auditor’s Report for the year ended June 30, 2006 reported on the previous year’s finding that addressed instructional materials fees. The finding was that the institution was unable to support the justification for assessing students an instructional materials fee. The current status as of June 30, 2006 was that it was partially implemented. The institution’s corrective action is that it has implemented a policy and procedure to ensure compliance with Instructional Materials fees regulations effective with the fall 2006 semester. A draft revision of Board Policy 5030 that addresses fees authorized by the Board was developed on October 9, 2006 but has not yet been finalized or approved by the Board (III.D.2.a).

The audit report is submitted to the board for acceptance. Copies of the audit report are sent to bargaining unit managers and to individuals upon request. Budget updates are provided to Strategic Council during the year. Strategic Council is not involved in establishing budget priorities for the college. Quarterly financial activity reports are sent to managers during the course of the year (III.D.2b).

The college targets an unrestricted general fund end-of-the-year balance at a minimum of 8% and a maximum of 12%. (Reference BP 6310) The self study (p 149) identifies three primary uses for reserves: to protect the college in cases of sudden shortfalls in revenue, to cover unanticipated expenses, and to provide for extraordinary, one-time investments (III.D.2c).

The college issues Tax Revenue Anticipation Notes (TRANS) using the funding program established through the Community College League of California. TRANS are short term (less than one year) debt that allows the college to borrow against expected tax receipts which are collected in different amounts over the course of a year. The college entered into a new TRANs agreement for $11,975,000 payable on June 29, 2007 to meet its immediate cash flow requirements. The college has paid the TRANS debt when due, typically the end of the fiscal year (III.D.2.c).

The college has joined two Joint Power Authority (JPA) organizations to manage its risk. The Alliance of Schools for Cooperative Insurance Programs (ASCIIP) is used for property, liability and workers’ compensation claims. The Schools Excess Liability Fund (SELF) is used to manage the common risk management and insurance programs of the college. These JPAs are not component units of the institution for financial reporting purposes. The JPAs are governed by boards consisting of a representative from each member district (III.D.2.c).

The Sierra College Foundation is governed by a Board of Directors and is a legal entity separate from the college. The foundation was formed in 1972 and became incorporated in 1973. The foundation is independently audited annually by an external auditing firm (Perry-Smith LLP). The foundation has consistently received an unqualified opinion (Reference audit reports). The foundation’s total assets as of June 30, 2006 are $2,896,752 (III.D.2.d).
The Associated Students of Sierra College (ASSC) is an agency of the college. ASSC financial activity is maintained in a separate fund held at Placer County Office of Education. The fund is independently audited each year and is included in the college’s financial statements and annual audit report (III.D.2d).

Auxiliary organizations at the college include the residence halls, bookstore, and food services. Sodexho America manages and operates the institution’s food services through a management agreement entered into on August 14, 2006. Barnes and Noble College Bookstores operates and provides services for the institution’s bookstore through an Agreement for Bookstore Services entered into on April 29, 2003. The residence halls are owned and operated by the college through an auxiliary organization. At the end of June 30, 2007, the residence halls ended the year with a positive ending balance of approximately $90,000 (111D.2.e and 2.f).

The college relies primarily on the financial software provided by the Placer County Office of Education. This software, while adequate, is primarily for K-12 institutions. The system does not provide the necessary analytical tools. In September 2007, the institution issued a COP to finance the administrative software to provide the college with greater control over its financial transaction processing system (III.D.2.g).

The self study states that the institution uses the PAR process, compensation agreement formula, and the collaborative process to ensure that the use of financial resources effectively supports the institution’s educational mission. In interviews with the institution’s staff, the development and submission of PAR is well understood. The documentation for the PAR process has been fully developed. However, there is a breakdown in the PAR process. Granted, the PAR’s are processed through two parallel tracks: through the Deans Council and Operations Council. Each prioritizes the input from its areas. The results are then reviewed, prioritized and funded by the Executive Council. However, it is not clear what criteria are used in resource allocation decisions. In interviews with the college’s staff, it is not clear that what is funded is communicated collegewide. No assessment of previously allocated expenditures has been conducted to determine if the resource allocations have achieved the desired objectives. Additionally, there is no indication how resources were evaluated and then whether any evaluations were used as a basis for improvement (III.D.3).

The institution, in its self evaluation states that the PAR process is out of sync with the budget development process and collective bargaining negotiations. The expectation is that the operational needs be funded from the current year’s budget as opposed to the following year (III.D.3).

**Conclusions:**
The college is financially sound. It operates with a balanced budget and has adequate reserves to absorb unanticipated financial events should they occur. As stated in other parts of this report, the college does not have a strategic plan or operational goals. The PAR process works well up to the point where it leaves the unit or department, but the impact on resource allocation decisions is not known to those who develop the PAR and
related funding requests. There is no collaborative decision-making process used to allocate resources in support of the college’s stated priorities. The lack of an integrated planning process hinders the team’s ability to draw conclusions on how well resource decisions influence resource allocation decisions. The college partially meets the requirements of Standard III.D. The team makes the following recommendations for improvement:

**Recommendations:**

**Recommendation # 5 (2007)**
The team recommends that the college develop a long term debt financing plan to address the costs associated with implementation of GASB 45 requirements. (Standard III.D.1.C)

See also **Recommendation # 2 (2007)**
STANDARD IV
Leadership and Governance

A. Decision-Making Roles and Processes

General Observations:
The college established a governance body known as the Strategic Council. All constituency groups are represented at Strategic Council and are involved in the decision making process. The representatives are well aware of their roles on the Strategic Council. Communication among constituency groups members is adequate in ensuring wide dissemination of the conversations and proposed changes that are discussed at Strategic Council.

Goals were established through Board Policy 2900 “Vision 2020”, approved by the Board of Trustees in January 2006. The goals were established for the period 2004-2007. The college does not have a strategic plan or long-range planning goals and objectives. Recently, under the leadership of the new president, the college identified 13 major issues of concern in order to refocus the college on achievement of specific outcomes. The mission, vision, and core values were being discussed by college personnel at the time of the team visit. The college is again moving to achieve identified objectives. Shortly, it expects to establish goals that will assist in setting the direction for the college.

The PAR process generates resource requests that are routed through the Dean’s Council and then on to the Executive Council. The Strategic Council is not involved in the assessment of PAR resource allocation requests or in the decision-making process related to resource allocation decisions. Although the college has an effective decision-making process, the team found that it is not involved in decision-making related to resource allocations.

Findings and Evidence:
Board Policy 2900 “Vision 2020” approved January 25, 2006 describes broad goals of the college. The policy has goals for the areas of:

- Academic excellence
  - Student access
  - Quality of Service
- Workforce Preparation
- Articulation and Transfer
- Human Resources
- Comprehensive Planning
- Fiscal Efficiencies

The goals include a number of comments that indicate the college has a strong commitment to achieve institutional excellence. Board Policy (BP) 2900 includes institutional goals for the three year period 2004-2007. Those goals identify three areas
for improvement and concentrated effort. The goals are broad and not stated in a way that allows measurement of achievement towards the goals. The stated goals are: student success, dynamic educational environment, and partnering with the community. Related to student excellence the college states: “Sierra College takes a student-centered approach that focuses on increasing access and success…” (IV.A.1)

During interviews members of the Strategic Council described their roles when representing their constituency groups. Information is disseminated to various constituency groups through reports, e-mailed documents, and general meetings of constituencies. Members of Strategic Council are able to bring forward items for discussion at the Council. There have been a number of changes in the personnel who serve on Strategic Council. As a result of the change over, some representatives are unsure about their roles and how the process works (IV.A.1).

Annually, the college compiles and publishes statistical data in a document entitled Factbook. This publication serves as a source of facts and information about students. It includes information about enrollment trends, student profiles, program enrollment information, learning outcomes, and student activity for each operating location. The Factbook is available to the general public via access to the college’s web site (IV.A.1).

The Factbook provides the college with an abundance of information for statistical data related to demographics of students and enrollment activity. The document does not include an analysis of the data. The research department has prepared specific reports useful for decision-making purposes (IV.A.1).

The PAR process is used to provide an opportunity for all members of the college community to become involved in planning efforts. The PAR activities are on-going. Annually, each department provides updated planning information. This annual PAR update process is commendable. Every department participates in the process, and all employees are encouraged to engage in the planning efforts. Additionally, for cross department recommendations or ideas that affect the college as a whole, employees are provided the opportunity to raise issues to the Strategic Council either in the public comment segment of the meeting or through use of their representatives on the Strategic Council (IV.A.1).

The president has identified 13 areas of focus that the college is working on as an interim set of priorities while a formal update of the mission, goals, core values, and educational master plan are developed. The college currently does not have a strategic plan or a comprehensive set of goals that can be used to guide the efforts of the college. Unit or department goals and plans exist. What is missing is the overarching college wide strategic plan and goals. Board members have identified individual goals they want to pursue as the governing body. In interviews with college personnel, many were familiar with the president's concern about 13 areas that need additional attention and focus. The team did not find evidence about broad participation in the development of college goals or strategic directions (IV.A.1).
The roles of constituency groups are defined in BP 2510 – Participation in Local Decision Making and Administrative Procedure (AP) 2510. BP 2510 refers to the appropriate sections of California Code of Regulations that define the role of students, faculty and staff in decision-making processes of colleges. AP 2510 more clearly defines the representation of constituency groups on the Strategic Council. AP 2510 was last revised on July 10, 2006. The structure and membership along with the roles of the constituency group representatives are described in AP 2510 (IV.A.1). Members of Strategic Council know the role they play as members of the Council and bring information back to their constituency groups (IV.A.1, IV.A.2a).

The Factbook does not include interpretations, assessments or identification of emerging trends or report conclusions about the college’s performance. Discussions about the relevance of the data may be occurring although minutes of meetings and other methods used to memorialize conversations that occur do not include evaluative information or conclusions about what the data means (I.V.A.1).

Evaluative information is reportedly provided to members of the Strategic Council. Minutes of those meetings reflect a discussion of information; however, there is no evidence to determine what information was provided or the nature of the discussion that occurred. There is no indication that the college has confirmed its goals or strategies or that it decided to pursue new goals and strategies as a result of discussions about data. College personnel have commented that there is now more focus on use of data to support its decision-making processes. Individual ideas may be brought forward to Strategic Council by providing comments during the “public comment” segment of the meeting (I.V.A.1).

Evaluative information focused on enhancement of student learning is not yet prepared by the college. Student performance has been defined in terms of degrees awarded and in the number of students transferred to universities (I.V.A.1).

Sierra College has a PAR Handbook that describes the planning process and the responsibilities of individuals to assist in improving the departments where they work. There is no formal or informal orientation process for members who are newly assigned to Strategic Council (IV.A.1).

BP 2510 includes the following provisions in relation to each college constituency group:

- **Academic Senate(s) -** The Board or its designees will consult collegially with the Sierra College Faculty Senate, as duly constituted with respect to academic and professional matters, as defined by law.
- **Staff -** Staff shall be provided with opportunities to participate in the formulation and development of District policies and procedures that have a significant effect on staff. The opinions and recommendations of the Classified Senate and the Management Senate will be given every reasonable consideration.
- **Students -** Students shall be given an opportunity to participate effectively in the formulation and development of District policies and procedures that have a significant effect on students.

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significant effect on students, as defined by law. The recommendations and positions of the Associated Students will be given every reasonable consideration.

The board’s commitment to inclusion of all constituency groups in the decision-making is evident by the statement in BP 2510 that, with the exception of emergency situations, it will not act on matters subject to policy until the appropriate constituent group or groups have been provided the opportunity to participate (IV.A.2.a).

The Academic Senate is responsible for development of curriculum and professional matters related to the faculty. The Board has agreed to consult collegially with the Academic Senate on academic and professional matters. The Academic Senate Constitution and Bylaws describe the responsibilities of the Academic Senate including its participation in the college’s decision-making processes. BP 4020, approved March 2004, states that there will be “appropriate involvement of the faculty and Academic Senate in all processes.” Additionally, BP 4020 states that there will be “regular review and justification of programs and course outlines of record, coordinated by the Curriculum Committee.” Administrative Procedure 4020 that is used to implement BP 4020 indicates that curriculum and program development are academic and professional matters initiated by faculty and submitted through the appropriate approval process established by the Curriculum and the Educational Requirements Committees, under the jurisdiction of the Faculty Senate (IV.A.2.b).

AP 2510 makes clear that the actions and recommendations of the Strategic Council are forwarded to the Superintendent/President for consideration. When the president decides to modify a recommendation or to choose a different course of action than that of the Council he/she is to inform the Council of the proposed action and the reasons for not following the advice of the Council (IV.A.3).

In recognition of the responsibility of the Academic Senate to advise the Board of Trustees on academic and professional matters, the Academic Senate brings recommendations to the Strategic Council for discussion and information prior to presenting those recommendations to the Board of Trustees. Standing committees, Task Forces, Advisory Committees, and Bargaining Committees are used to promote communication among college employees on issues related to operational aspects or situations of importance to a constituency group (IV.A.3).

Academic Standing Committees consider matters pertaining to educational programs and services. These committees report to Academic Senate regularly. Administrative Standing Committees discuss and act on administrative and operational issues. These committees report to the Superintendent/President through the Executive Committee or to the appropriate administrator. Classified Standing Committees are concerned with issues affecting the classified staff. College Standing Committees are committees concerned with college-wide matters. In total the standing committees, task forces and advisory committees provide numerous opportunities to communicate information throughout the college. There are number of communication vehicles used at the college. The college president holds open forum fireside chats with employees and publishes a monthly news
bulletin. Constituency group representatives send e-mails to its membership and conduct meetings on a regular basis. (IV.A.3)

A public complaint was forwarded to the team by the college just prior to the team’s visit. The complaint received questioned the accuracy of information presented to the public. In one comment in the Self Study the college stated that it had expended all available state allocations for hazardous substances material funds. The team confirmed that the college returned $32,917 of the $196,295 in scheduled maintenance funds provided to it at the end of June 2005. A second reversion of funds occurred on that same date in the amount of $46,370 for unused scheduled maintenance funds. The team prepared a separate analysis of the public member complaint (IV.A.4).

The Board of Trustees approved the submission of a Focused Midterm Report on September 9, 2003. The college submitted the Focused Midterm Report on October 16, 2003. The Commission accepted the report which it determined to be incomplete and required a Progress Report be submitted by November 1, 2004. That Progress Report was rejected by the Commission in January 2005, and a subsequent Progress Report was submitted in March 2005 and accepted by the Commission in June 2005. Since that time, the college has met all of the required submission timelines. The Board of Trustees reviewed the status on the development of the Self Study for the 2007 accreditation team visit. The board received reports and participated in discussions in on March 8, 2005, October 11, 2005, and again on September 12, 2006. (IV.A.4)

The team could not verify one piece of information on Student Learning Outcomes included in the annual report to the commission. The college reported that it had general education course outcomes listed as being 90% updated. The team could not verify that 90% of the general education courses had SLOs. The Team suggests that the college prepare supporting documentation that can be used as a reference to others who may have a need to verify information on the annual report. There is no evidence to indicate that there is anything other than a positive history with the Department of Education. No information came to light regarding concerns over any information provided to the U.S. Department of Education. (IV.A.4)

The college has not established a process or procedures to regularly evaluate its governance and decision-making processes (IV.A5).

Conclusions:
The college has an environment for empowerment, innovation, and institutional excellence. It encourages faculty, staff and students to participate in activities to improve the practices and programs of the college. There is ample evidence to conclude that staff are participating in the college’s governance processes and are encouraged to work to improve the college. (IV.A.1)

Evaluative information focused on enhancement of student learning is not yet prepared by the college. Analysis of data and evaluations that result in improvements of the
institutions performance is not occurring throughout the college. The college partially meets Standard IV.A.1.

AP 2510 establishes a written policy that provides faculty, staff and students with the ability to participate in the decision-making processes of the college. Staff are aware of their respective roles on the Strategic Council. Several new members have joined the Council and are a little less sure as to their role at this time. However, each member interviewed indicated that information is brought back to their constituency group for comment and discussion. The various groups work collaboratively on behalf of institutional improvements. As a result of a lack of analysis of performance data, it is difficult to measure changes and institutional performance (IV.A.2.a, b). The college meets the requirements of Standard IV.A.2.a and IV.A.2.b.

The goals of the college are included in Board Policy 2900 Vision 2020 and cover the period 2004-2007. The goals identified in Board Policy 2900 are not used to guide the institution. As a result of the change in the president the college has begun its focus on development of a mission statement and core values. The Strategic Council is an established governance structure that has worked well for the college for a number of years. The college faculty, staff, and members of the Board of Trustees all comment about a period of time in the college’s history when there was conflict between the staff and the governing board. However, in spite of this difficulty the college community continued to work for the best interests of the college (IV.A.3). The college meets Standard IV.A.3.

The college had not accurately reported one item in the Self Study Report. The inaccurate comment was a general statement that the college used all available from the state. Recognizing the overall accuracy of the Self Study Report as well as other documents publicly disseminated the team concludes that the college meets the requirements of Standard IV.A.4.

The college has not established a process or procedures to regularly evaluate its governance and decision-making processes (IV.A.5). The college does not meet the requirement of Standard IV.A.5.

The college partially meets the requirements of Standard IV.A. The team makes the following recommendations for improvement:

**Recommendations:**

See Recommendation # 2 (2007)
B. Board and Administrative Organization

General Observations:
The district underwent significant turmoil with the sudden retirement in 2005 of its long-serving president. The Board of Trustees hired a new president in 2006 which presented the district with the opportunity to improve internal dynamics and re-establish effective leadership and strategic planning. The change of presidents and the circumstances leading up to the retirement of the former president is widely acknowledged to have been a troubling period of time for the college. Under the leadership of its new president, the Board of Trustees and college personnel have united for the good of students and the community served by the college. The college community and members of the Board of Trustees agree that the college needs to focus on the future and to place the needs of the students at the forefront of its efforts.

The governing board regularly updates its board policies. The district does not possess comprehensive strategic planning documents to connect institutional mission and goals with internal activity which supports student learning and performance assessment. The college has developed the foundation for planning and has an extensive data collection to assist in decision-making.

Findings and Evidence:
The board maintains policies outlining the board’s role in establishing policy. The college subscribes to a state policy and procedures service which provides semiannual updates. Board Policy 2900 includes statements regarding the quality of programs, integrity of institutional actions, and about effectiveness of student learning programs and services. Board Policy 2431 states the board shall establish a fair and open search process to fill the President/Superintendent vacancy; however, the policy language does not clearly define the selection process. Board Policy 2435 adequately defines an annual evaluation process (IV.B.1).

In 2005-06, the district experienced a period of conflict between the board and the college staff as a result of circumstances leading up to the unanticipated retirement of the former president. According to various interviews with college staff, it appears public disagreement between members of the Board of Trustees and the president led to tension, negative publicity, and staff morale issues. The board and district personnel have since united around the new president. The new president’s leadership has resulted in a focus on the future. Interviews with employees from all constituency groups revealed the board operates well as a governing body and is focused on policy issues leaving operational details to the college president. The board operates well together, in the public’s interest, and without conflict of interest. The board is invested in the success of the district and collective support for the president (IV.B.1a.).

Board Policy 2900 outlines the mission, vision, and institutional goals for the district. Specifically, the board policy communicates their expectation that Sierra will “model excellence in education,” and defines through district goals academic excellence, student access, quality of service, student success, and student learning. However, the district did
not present a comprehensive approach to achieving the goals outlined in policy (IV.B.1.b).

Board interviews indicated their actions are independent, the actions of the board are final, and Board Policy 2900 adequately defines the board’s role. A review of policy revealed the board has approved policies regarding budget, finance, legal matters, and employee disciplinary actions (IV.B.1.c).

The board maintains and publishes their policies on the Sierra College website. Board Policies 2010, 2100, 2209, 2310, and 2330 define board size, duties, responsibilities, structure, and operating procedures. The board is a seven-member, elected board representing four trustee areas spanning the boundaries of the district. The policy defines broad duties, responsibilities, and provides meeting operating procedures for board meetings along with voting requirements for board actions (IV.B.1.d).

A review of 2006 and 2007 board minutes revealed the board maintains, evaluates, and updates policies on a regular basis. By utilizing a state policy and procedures service, the board receives semiannual updates. The team found that the board did not follow its policy regarding board evaluation. The policy requires annual evaluations, but the last evaluation occurred in June of 2005 (IV.B.1.e).

Board Policy (BP) 2100 formalizes a staggered election process and BP 2110 addresses vacancies mid-term to ensure continuing board membership. Board members receive orientation when they are first elected. Board interviews revealed board members define the training they desire and work with the college president to receive appropriate orientation information. Board minutes show that staff provided the board with updates regarding the accreditation standards and process. Staff provided a presentation to the board regarding standards and process at a September 12, 2006 meeting (IV.B.1.f).

BP 2745 adequately defines the board’s annual self-evaluation process. The board has not conducted a self-evaluation for the past two years. According to board interviews, the board did not have time to implement the self-evaluations (IV.B.1.g).

BP 2715 defines a code of ethics which includes a clear policy for dealing with behavior that violates the code. The board revised the ethics policy in August 2007 to add the process for addressing behavior violating the code. The board has not had a situation where it was necessary to discuss any violations of the code of ethics (IV.B.1.h).

Board minutes show the board received presentations and reports from staff regarding the accreditation process. Additionally, the president of the accreditation commission conducted a presentation on the role of the board in the accreditation process. One member of the board sat on the steering committee for the self-study and was co-chair of the leadership and governance standard. This trustee provided reports to the board. The board appears knowledgeable with accreditation standards and accreditation process. The board’s actions do not show a connection of institutional planning, resource allocation with institutional self-evaluation and accreditation processes (IV.B.1.i).
The board utilized an outside search firm to conduct the President/Superintendent search. During the selection process, the board formed a committee representing constituent groups and developed selection guidelines. BP 2431 provides the Board’s delegation of authority to the President/Superintendent specifying authority for implementation of board policies and holding the President/Superintendent accountable for the operation of the district. Based on interviews with college personnel, the team concluded that the board remains focused on policy and allows the president to lead district operations. The board recently evaluated the president. Board policy defines the evaluation criteria (IV.B.1.j).

The president is responsible for planning, overseeing, and evaluating an administrative structure organized and staffed to reflect the institution’s purposes, size, and complexity. The district does not have a comprehensive strategic or educational plan which connects district goals with administrative structure and staffing. The lack of these plans violates BP 3250 which requires long-range educational and academic master plans.

The president uses several methods to communicate information about what he considers to be the most important areas for the college to address. Information about values, goals, and direction is provided through regular Fireside meetings, President’s Bulletin, and through the Strategic Council. The Factbook 2007 reports data on institutional statistics that can be used to analyze institutional performance. The college president is encouraging processes that use data to drive the decision-making process. Planning efforts up to the time of the evaluation team visit had not used data in planning efforts, and the team did not find examples to show that the data was analyzed or interpreted in support of planning efforts. The president conveys a focus on student learning through the institutional goals approved by the Board. The district uses the PAR process to request resource allocations. However, there is little connection between goals and institutional planning. Further, there is no link between research on student learning, institutional planning processes and resource allocation (IV.B.2.b).

The president is responsible for implementation of statutes, regulations, and board policies and assures that institutional practices are consistent with institutional mission and policies. As an experienced administrator, the president is aware of the responsibilities required to ensure compliance with statutes, regulations, and policies. The district participates in the state’s policy and procedures service which provides semiannual policy updates. The district does not ensure institutional practices are consistent with institutional mission and policies (IV.B.2.c).

Quarterly revenue and expenditure reports that provided comparisons between budget to actual expenditure information are reviewed regularly by the president to maintain control over college expenditures. The president receives weekly updates regarding part-time expenditures, enrollment, and revenue projections. The district audits show clean, unqualified audit opinions from its outside auditors (IV.B.2.d).
The president provides the campus community with a monthly President’s Bulletin newsletter which offers updated information on areas throughout the campus including budget information, facilities updates, awards to staff, partnerships with businesses, and new or restructured programs. The president meets with groups such as the Chambers of Commerce, Rotary Clubs, industry leaders, and area businesses to provide regular updates regarding programs or events at the college (IV.B.2.e).

**Conclusions:**
The board is responsible for establishing and updating policies for the organization. There is evidence indicating the board reviews and updates policies. The board maintains policies over budget, finance, legal matters, ethics, mission statement, board composition, and elections. The board is aware of the accreditation standards and process. However, the board did not complete evaluations for 2006 and 2007. The district maintains a written mission and goals; however, the visiting team observes a disconnect between institutional planning and resource allocation with implementation of board policies. The district partially meets Standard IV.B.1.

The president is responsible for the overall operations and quality of the institution. He communicates institutional values, goals and direction throughout the organization through regular written and oral communications. The president maintains close oversight of the financial well-being of Sierra College. The team did not find evidence of a planning process whereby institutional mission and goals were linked to a comprehensive planning process. There was no regular evaluation of institutional effectiveness. The district partially meets the requirements of Standard IV.B.2.

The team heard a common voice of unity in all of the interviews conducted during the visit. The college experienced a period of significant conflict that challenged all employees and members of the Board of Trustees. There is wide acknowledgement that the college is focused on the future. As a result of the college community’s response in working through a difficult time, the team offers one commendation in recognition of this sense of common purpose.

The college partially meets the requirements of Standard IV.B. The team makes the following recommendation for improvement:

**Recommendations:**

**Recommendation # 6 (2007)**
The Board should implement an annual evaluation process for assessing board performance and ensure evaluation measures reflect the board’s implementation of board policies to promote quality, integrity, and effectiveness of the student learning programs and services. (IV.B.1.g)

See also **Recommendation # 2 (2007)**
Commendations:

Commendation # 3
Sierra College is infused with a sense of common purpose, collegiality, and optimism that reflects a resilient spirit, a pervasive commitment to student success, and an esprit de corps that are among the college’s best assets.