PEER REVIEW TEAM REPORT

Merritt College
12500 Campus Dr.
Oakland, CA 94619

This report represents the findings of the Peer Review Team that conducted a virtual visit to Merritt College from March 1, 2021 to March 4, 2021. The Commission acted on the accredited status of the institution during its June 2021 meeting and this team report must be reviewed in conjunction with the Commission's Action letter.

Dr. Keith Flamer
Team Chair

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Comprehensive Evaluation Visit
Peer Review Team Roster

Dr. Keith Flamer (Chair)
President/Superintendent
College of the Redwoods

Mrs. Cynthia Petrusha, Team Assistant
Executive Assistant to the President
College of the Redwoods

ACADEMIC MEMBERS
Dr. Lee Ballestero
Faculty, Political Science
Moorpark College

Dr. Dave Bazard
Dean of Safety, Health, and Physical Education
College of the Redwoods

Dr. Marie Harris
Vice President of Learning and Student Success
Madera Community College

Ms. Sondra Keckley
Professor; Reference Librarian
Bakersfield College

Dr. Tera Martin
Director, Integrated Learning Center & English Instructor
Cabrillo College

ADMINISTRATIVE MEMBERS
Dr. Valerie Barko
Director of Institutional Effectiveness and University Center/ALO
Kauai Community College

Mr. Lorenze Legaspi
Vice President of Administrative Services
San Diego Mesa College

Mr. Ulises Velasco
Vice President of Student Services
Mendocino College

ACCJC STAFF LIAISON
Dr. Stephanie Droker
President
ACCJC

Dr. Catherine Webb
Vice President
ACCJC

Summary of Evaluation Report

INSTITUTION: Merritt College

DATES OF VISIT: Monday, March 1 -Thursday, March 4, 2021

TEAM CHAIR: Dr. Keith Flamer

A nine-member accreditation Peer Review Team visited Merritt College March 1 to March 4, 2019 for the purpose of determining whether the College continues to meet Accreditation Standards, Eligibility Requirements, Commission Policies, and USDE regulations. The Team evaluated how well the College is achieving its stated purposes, providing recommendations for quality assurance and institutional improvement.

In preparation for the visit, the chair of the Team attended a team chair training workshop on December 1, 2020 and conducted a virtual pre-visit conference with the college on January 29. During this virtual visit, the chair met with the College President and the Accreditation Liaison Officer. The entire Peer Review Team received virtual team training provided by staff from ACCJC on February 3, 2021.

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

Prior to the visit, Peer Review Team members completed their team assignments, identified areas for further investigation, and provided a list of interview requests. On March 1, 2021, the Team members spent the morning discussing their initial observations and their preliminary review of the written materials and evidence provided by the College.

During the visit, Team members met with approximately 150 faculty, administrators, classified staff and students in formal meetings, group interviews and individual interviews. The Team held two open forums, which were well attended. Open forums, held 10:00 am and 4:00 pm on Wednesday March 3, afforded College stakeholders and community members with opportunities to meet with members of the peer review team and provide observations to contribute to the review process. One hundred and twenty five people attended the open forums.

The Team found the College well prepared for the team visit and that all members of the campus community were very accommodating in meeting requests for additional evidence and follow-up interviews. The Team felt welcomed by the entire campus community and was thoroughly supported in all facets of their work.

It was clear to the Team that the College's approach to student support services is to make every student feel valued as an individual and as part of the College family. "The strength of Merritt College is love, but that's not something you can put in [a report]," said a College staff member. Interviews with faculty, staff and students provided insight into the supportive culture of this College. Beyond the standard delivery of services, it is very clear that faculty, staff and administrators at the College are continuously going above and beyond the scope of their responsibilities to meet student needs, support each other, and create a sense community.

Major Findings and Recommendations of the
Peer Review Team Report

<u>Team College Commendations</u>

None.

<u>Team College Recommendations</u>

None.

<u>District Commendations</u>

<u>None.</u>

<u>District Recommendations to Meet Standards</u>

<u>District Recommendation 1</u>: In order to meet the Standards, the team recommends the district have appropriate internal control mechanisms and regularly evaluate its financial management practices and uses the results for improvement to ensure financial documents have a high degree of credibility (III.D.5, III.D.6, III.D.8).

<u>District Recommendation 2</u>**:** In order to meet the Standard, the team recommends the district respond to all external audit findings and such responses are comprehensive, timely, and communicated properly (III.D.7).

<u>District Recommendation 3</u>: In order to meet the Standard, the district must practice effective oversight of its financial aid programs (III.D.10).

<u>District Recommendation 4</u>: In order to meet the Standard, the team recommends that the Board of Trustees assure the academic quality, integrity, and effectiveness of the student learning programs and services and the financial stability of the institution. (IV.C.1)

<u>District Recommendation 5</u>**:** In order to meet the Standard, the team recommends that once the Board of Trustees reach a decision, all board members act in support of board decisions. (IV.C.2)

<u>District Recommendation 6</u>**:** In order to meet the Standard, the team recommends the Board adhere to their clearly defined policy for evaluating the CEO of the district (IV.C.3)

<u>District Recommendation 7</u>**:** (IV.C.4) In order to meet the Standard, the team recommends the governing board is an independent, policy-making body that reflects the public interest in the institution's educational quality. (IV.C.4)

District Recommendation 8: In order to meet the Standard, the team recommends that the Board establish a formal process for regularly assessing its policies for effectiveness in fulfilling the district's mission and revise them as necessary. (IV.C.7)

District Recommendation 9: In order to meet the Standard, the team recommends the Board delegate full responsibility and authority to the Chancellor to implement and administer board policies without Board interference (IV.C.12)

District Recommendation 10: In order to meet the standard the team recommends the District clearly delineate, document and communicate the operational responsibilities and functions of the District from those of the Colleges and consistently adhere to this delineation in practice. (IV.D.2)

District Recommendations to Improve Quality:
District Recommendation 11: In order to increase effectiveness, the team recommends the institution continue its efforts to maintain a sufficient number of administrators with appropriate qualifications in order to provide continuity and effective administrative leadership that support the institution's mission and purposes (III.A.10).

District Recommendation 12: In order to increase effectiveness, the team recommends that the Board regularly review key indicators of student learning and achievement and institutional plans for improving academic quality. (IV.C.8)

Introduction

Merritt College (named for physician Dr. Samuel Merritt) was opened as a general campus in 1954. Merritt College was originally located on Grove Street in North Oakland but later moved to Campus Drive in the hills of East Oakland.

The original Merritt College was located at what is now 5714 Martin Luther King Jr. Way (then called Grove Street) in the flatlands of North Oakland. In 1923, the campus of University High School was built for children of faculty of the University of California in Berkeley. The campus closed during World War II, but was reopened as the Merritt School of Business in 1946. In 1954, the Oakland Unified School District, then operating the Merritt campus and the Laney Trade and Technical School, formed Oakland Junior College (later renamed Oakland City College).[1] In 1960, the same year as the opening of Skyline High School, OUSD decided to relocate Merritt College from Grove Street to the hills of East Oakland.

Although the demographics of North Oakland changed throughout the 1950s and 1960s, it was not until the mid-to-late-1960s that the student and faculty population began to change. After the 1960 California Master Plan for Public Higher Education, more Black students began to attend Merritt. In the early 1960s, the African American Association began recruiting Merritt students. By 1964, students formed the Soul Students Advisory Council, predecessors to the Black Student Union (BSU). Merritt Community College was the meeting place for prominent leaders of the Black Panther Party, Bobby Seale and Huey Newton.

Against numerous protests by students and community members, Merritt was relocated from Grove Street to the hills of East Oakland in 1971. Merritt was renamed North Peralta Community College but was commonly known as Grove Street College. In 1975, a judge ordered the physical plant closed for seismic issues.

This site, now rehabilitated and serving as the north campus of the Children's Hospital and Research Center Oakland, was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1992.

Today, Merritt offers over 100 academic programs culminating in associate degrees, certificates, transfer to four-year colleges or universities, or qualifications for in-demand careers in the workforce. Some of the College's notable programs include Administration of Justice, Child Development, and Landscape Horticulture. The Allied Health programs of Medical Assisting, Nutrition and Dietetics, Nursing, and Radiologic Science are located in the 110,000 square-foot, state-of-the-art Barbara Lee Science and Allied Health Center, which was dedicated in 2015.

Merritt's student services programs are especially designed to guide and support students and direct them to the appropriate resources. The campus has a renovated Library and Learning Center, as well as learning communities geared toward both Latinx students (Puente) and African-American students (Sankofa), and a First-Year Experience program created for first generation college students. The College's Admissions and Records, Counseling, Financial Aid, and Veterans offices and programs provide exceptional service with students' welfare and success as their number one priority.

Eligibility Requirements

1. **Authority**
The Team confirmed that Merritt College is authorized to operate as a post-secondary, degree-granting institution based on continuous accreditation by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). ACCJC is a regional accrediting body recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and granted authority through the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008.

The College meets the Eligibility Requirement.

2. **Operational Status**
The Team confirmed that Merritt College has been in continuous operation as an accredited community college since 1956. During the 2019-2020 academic year, the College enrolled 12,125 unduplicated students (3,996 fulltime equivalent students) and awarded 587 associate degrees.

The College meets the Eligibility Requirement.

3. **Degrees**
The Team confirmed that the majority of courses offered lead to a degree, certificate, or transfer. Approximately 98 percent of students are either enrolled in degree-applicable courses or have an educational plan with the goal of an associate degree.

The College meets the Eligibility Requirement.

4. **Chief Executive Officer**
The Team confirmed that Merritt College President, Dr. David M. Johnson, was appointed by the Peralta Community College District (PCCD) Board of Trustees (BOT) on May 26, 2020. As the chief executive officer, Dr. Johnson's full-time responsibility is to the College, with requisite authority to administer board policies per PCCD Board Policy (BP) and Administrative Procedure (AP) 2430. Neither the PCCD Chancellor nor the Merritt College President serves as the BOT chair. The Commission has been informed of Dr. Johnson's appointment and has acknowledged him as the Merritt College President.

The College meets the Eligibility Requirement.

5. **Financial Accountability**
The Team confirmed that the institution annually undergoes and makes available an external financial audit by a certificated public accountant. The audit includes Title IV federal requirements.

The College meets the Eligibility Requirement.

Checklist for Evaluating Compliance with Federal Regulations and Related Commission Policies

The evaluation items detailed in this Checklist are those which fall specifically under federal regulations and related Commission policies, beyond what is articulated in the Accreditation Standards; other evaluation items under ACCJC standards may address the same or similar subject matter. The peer review team evaluated the institution's compliance with Standards as well as the specific Checklist elements from federal regulations and related Commission policies noted here.

Public Notification of an Peer Review Team Visit and Third Party Comment

Evaluation Items:

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

[Regulation citation: 602.23(b).]

Conclusion Check-Off (mark one):

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

Narrative
The College has provided multiple opportunities for third party comment in advance of the team visit. The College publishes the process for third party comment on its website.

Standards and Performance with Respect to Student Achievement

Evaluation Items:

☒	The institution has defined elements of student achievement performance across the institution, and has identified the expected measure of performance within each defined element. Course completion is included as one of these elements of student achievement. Other elements of student achievement performance for measurement have been determined as appropriate to the institution's mission. (Standard I.B.3 and Section B. Presentation of Student Achievement Data and Institution-set Standards)
☒	The institution has defined elements of student achievement performance within each instructional program, and has identified the expected measure of performance within each defined element. The defined elements include, but are not limited to, job placement rates for program completers, and for programs in fields where licensure is required, the licensure examination passage rates for program completers. (Standard I.B.3 and Section B. Presentation of Student Achievement Data and Institution-set Standards)
☒	The institution-set standards for programs and across the institution are relevant to guide self-evaluation and institutional improvement; the defined elements and expected performance levels are appropriate within higher education; the results are reported regularly across the campus; and the definition of elements and results are used in program-level and institution-wide planning to evaluate how well the institution fulfills its mission, to determine needed changes, to allocating resources, and to make improvements. (Standard I.B.3, Standard I.B.9)
☒	The institution analyzes its performance as to the institution-set standards and as to student achievement, and takes appropriate measures in areas where its performance is not at the expected level. (Standard I.B.4)

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

Conclusion Check-Off (mark one):

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

Narrative:
The College has defined and established Institutional Set Standards (ISSs) student achievement that include: course completion, certificates, degrees, transfer, licensure (CE), and employment (CE).

Credits, Program Length, and Tuition

Evaluation Items:

☒	Credit hour assignments and degree program lengths are within the range of good practice in higher education (in policy and procedure). (Standard II.A.9)
☒	The assignment of credit hours and degree program lengths is verified by the institution, and is reliable and accurate across classroom based courses, laboratory classes, distance education classes, and for courses that involve clinical practice (if applicable to the institution). (Standard II.A.9)
☒	Tuition is consistent across degree programs (or there is a rational basis for any program-specific tuition). (Standard I.C.2)
☒	Any clock hour conversions to credit hours adhere to the Department of Education's conversion formula, both in policy and procedure, and in practice. (Standard II.A.9)
☒	The institution demonstrates compliance with the Commission *Policy on Institutional Degrees and Credits*.

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

Conclusion Check-Off (mark one):

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

Narrative:
The College awards academic credits based on generally accepted practices for degree-granting institutions of higher education.

Transfer Policies

Evaluation Items:

☒	Transfer policies are appropriately disclosed to students and to the public. (Standard II.A.10)
☒	Policies contain information about the criteria the institution uses to accept credits for transfer. (Standard II.A.10)
☒	The institution complies with the Commission *Policy on Transfer of Credit*.

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

Conclusion Check-Off (mark one):

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

Narrative:

Transfer policies for the College are appropriately disclosed and available to students on the College website and other locations. The information contained in the policies explains transfer requirements to 4-year public and private colleges and universities. The transfer policies comply with the Commission Policy on Transfer of Credit.

Distance Education and Correspondence Education

Evaluation Items:

For Distance Education:	
☒	The institution demonstrates regular and substantive interaction between students and the instructor.
☒	The institution demonstrates comparable learning support services and student support services for distance education students. (Standards II.B.1, II.C.1)
☒	The institution verifies that the student who registers in a distance education program is the same person who participates every time and completes the course or program and receives the academic credit.
For Correspondence Education:	
☐	The institution demonstrates comparable learning support services and student support services for correspondence education students. (Standards II.B.1, II.C.1)
☐	The institution verifies that the student who registers in a correspondence education program is the same person who participates every time and completes the course or program and receives the academic credit.
Overall:	
☒	The technology infrastructure is sufficient to maintain and sustain the distance education and correspondence education offerings. (Standard III.C.1)
☒	The institution demonstrates compliance with the Commission *Policy on Distance Education and Correspondence Education*.

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

Conclusion Check-Off (mark one):

☒	The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.
☐	The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements, but that follow-up is recommended.
☐	The team has reviewed the elements of this component and found the Institution does not meet the Commission's requirements.
☐	The college does not offer Distance Education or Correspondence Education.

Narrative:
The College follows PCCD AP 4105 (Distance Education) which has been established in accordance with federal and state regulations. The college does not offer correspondence education. The College has policies and procedures for classifying courses as distance education courses.

Student Complaints

Evaluation Items:

☒	The institution has clear policies and procedures for handling student complaints, and the current policies and procedures are accessible to students in the college catalog and online.
☒	The student complaint files for the previous seven years (since the last comprehensive evaluation) are available; the files demonstrate accurate implementation of the complaint policies and procedures.
☒	The team analysis of the student complaint files identifies any issues that may be indicative of the institution's noncompliance with any Accreditation Standards.
☒	The institution posts on its website the names of associations, agencies and governmental bodies that accredit, approve, or license the institution and any of its programs, and provides contact information for filing complaints with such entities. (Standard I.C.1)
☒	The institution demonstrates compliance with the Commission *Policy on Representation of Accredited Status* and the *Policy on Student and Public Complaints Against Institutions*.

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

Conclusion Check-Off (mark one):

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

Narrative:
The College has a clear process for handling student complaints. The process is available to students through the College Catalog and online. The institution maintains student complaints in a secure manner for the requisite number of years.

Institutional Disclosure and Advertising and Recruitment Materials

Evaluation Items:

☒	The institution provides accurate, timely (current), and appropriately detailed information to students and the public about its programs, locations, and policies. (Standard I.C.2)
☒	The institution complies with the Commission *Policy on Institutional Advertising, Student Recruitment*, and *Policy on Representation of Accredited Status*.
☒	The institution provides required information concerning its accredited status.(Standard I.C.12)

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

Conclusion Check-Off (mark one):

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

Narrative:
The College provides accurate and current information to the students and public in its print and online catalog, website, and other materials such as course schedules. The College's accredited status is posted on its website and catalog; specialized program accreditations are also included on the College website.

Title IV Compliance

Evaluation Items:

☒	The institution has presented evidence on the required components of the Title IV Program, including findings from any audits and program or other review activities by the USDE. (Standard III.D.15)
☒	If applicable, the institution has addressed any issues raised by the USDE as to financial responsibility requirements, program record-keeping, etc. If issues were not timely addressed, the institution demonstrates it has the fiscal and administrative capacity to timely address issues in the future and to retain compliance with Title IV program requirements. (Standard III.D.15)
☒	If applicable, the institution's student loan default rates are within the acceptable range defined by the USDE. Remedial efforts have been undertaken when default rates near or meet a level outside the acceptable range. (Standard III.D.15)
☒	If applicable, contractual relationships of the institution to offer or receive educational, library, and support services meet the Accreditation Standards and have been approved by the Commission through substantive change if required. (Standard III.D.16)
☒	The institution demonstrates compliance with the Commission *Policy on Contractual Relationships with Non-Regionally Accredited Organizations* and the *Policy on Institutional Compliance with Title IV*.

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

Conclusion Check-Off:

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

Narrative:

Standard I

Mission, Academic Quality and Institutional Effectiveness

I.A. Mission

General Observations:

Merritt College demonstrates a commitment to student learning and achievement through its Mission, Vision and Values. The self-evaluation indicates the Mission is reviewed and revised in an inclusive, transparent, and collaborative process every five-years aligned to educational master planning. The mission is widely disseminated throughout college publications including the webpage, catalog and campus.

Findings and Evidence:

The College mission was approved by the Board of Trustees (BOT) on June 24, 2014. The mission is disseminated throughout college publications including the College catalog and College website. Merritt College's mission statement addresses the College's educational purpose "helping students to attain knowledge, master skills, and develop their appreciation, attitudes and values." The ISER states, "As a public community college, Merritt realizes this purpose by providing students with accessible and affordable certificate and degree programs." The mission defines the student population it serves—"communities we serve." The types of degrees and other credentials Merritt College offers are listed in the College catalog and in the course schedule. The mission demonstrates the College's commitment to student learning via its Institutional Learning Outcomes: Communication, Critical Thinking, Quantitative Reasoning, Cultural Awareness, Civic Engagement and Ethics, and Information and Computer Literacy. The mission demonstrates the College's commitment to student achievement "in a democratic society and a global economy." The mission also describes student achievement as success and participation "in a democratic society and a global economy." (I.A.1)

The College reports and analyzes data that are directly related to its mission and uses the data to set institutional priorities. The College established administrative procedures to ensure that the College collects, disseminates, analyzes, and discusses data to determine how effectively it is accomplishing its mission and whether the mission directs institutional priorities in meeting the educational needs of students. Board Policy 3250 Institutional Planning and Board Policy 5300 Student Equity supports the College's planning for the Educational Master Plan (EMP), Integrated Planning and Budgeting, Equity Plan and Program Review. The College implemented a 10-step review process for the mission statement, adopted in 2016. The mission statement is reviewed in a five-year cycle aligned to educational master planning. The process includes the collection and analysis of pertinent data to inform reaffirmation or revision of the mission. The use of data has been applied to areas such as the EMP. The College's Institutional Set Standards (ISS) and strategic goals exemplify the key performance indicators the College employs to establish minimum thresholds and aspirational targets for student achievement in support of its mission. (I.A.2)

The College's programs and services are aligned with its mission which is demonstrated in Program Review and the Annual Program Update. An example is the Strategic Plan that includes Accelerated Basic Skills, Guided Student Pathways, and Student Validation and Engagement. The Program and Course Approval Handbook also refers to the mission as a guide for decision-making through "Appropriateness to mission." The Program Review template requires addressing how a program contributes to the college mission. The College demonstrated how planning and decisions are linked to the mission and how decision-making bodies demonstrate alignment. (I.A.3)

The College's mission was approved by the BOT on June 24, 2014. The College publishes its mission in the College catalog, college website, planning documents and other publications in addition to posting throughout the campus. The College follows its 10-step review process every five-years aligned with educational master planning. (I.A.4)

Conclusions:

The College meets the Standard.

I.B. Assuring Academic Quality and Institutional Effectiveness

General Observations:

Based on evidence presented in the ISER, interviews, and additional documents reviewed during the site visit, Merritt College is actively engaged in facilitating rich dialog around student outcomes, student equity, and institutional effectiveness. The College uses data to define and assess student learning and achievement and continues to strengthen its processes and review cycles in order to make campus-wide improvements based on outcomes assessment. Its own Improvement Plan affirms its commitment to the effective use of institutional research by campus constituencies in order to better serve the College's students, compassionately tell the College's stories, and meet the College Mission. The Team was impressed with college-wide efforts to center equity at the heart of institutional review and culture, as well as its commitment to create on-going systemic dialog around student outcomes and achievement and to empower its staff and faculty to collaborate in the accomplishment of the College's Institutional Set Standards, Educational Master Plan, and Mission.

Findings and Evidence:

The College has implemented on-going dialog around student outcomes, student equity, academic quality, and institutional effectiveness. A review of meeting minutes from the Institutional Effectiveness Committee (IEC), Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment Committee (SLOAC), and the Student Success and Equity Committee, as well as evidence from Flex Day trainings, the College's bi-annual Strategic Summits, and Team visit interviews, indicate the College is engaged in meaningful and sustained dialog across constituencies regarding student outcomes, student equity, and continuous improvement of student learning and achievement. The dialog is grounded in the consistent analysis of evidence, disaggregated data,

and research in the evaluation of student learning. During the visit, the Team observed numerous examples of the College's revitalization of dialogue, collaboration, and improvement across campus constituencies. For example, the College enlisted the help of the Institutional Effectiveness Partnership Initiative to develop integrated planning and outcomes assessment; the College hired a full-time Director of Research and Planning to provide research and training on the use of data for continuous institutional improvement; and the College has adhered to internal institutional processes such as the College's Integrated Planning and Budgeting Model and the Annual Program Update and comprehensive Program Review cycles. The Team supports the transformational work underway at the College. (I.B.1)

The Team reviewed sample course syllabi, Course and Program Outlines, Service Area Outcomes (SAO), Student Learning Outcome (SLO) assessments, Program Learning Outcomes (PLO) assessments, Service Area Outcomes (SAO), as well as the 2020-21 Annual Program Update (APU) templates and determined that the College defines and assesses Student Learning Outcomes for its instructional programs and student and learning support services. The College highlights the Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment Committee (SLOAC), a standing committee of the Academic Senate, as the center of SLO assessment, responsible for facilitating the development and assessment of learning outcomes for courses, programs, service areas, and the College. The College has developed a three-year assessment cycle for all SLOs, PLOs, SAOs and ILOs, paralleled by a two-year assessment cycle for Career Education (CE) programs, which constitute 60 percent of the College's programs. Student Learning Outcomes and assessments are established for instructional programs, learning support services, and student support services. During the visit, the Team noted the collaborative work the College has completed to ensure the rubrics and cycles work for both instructional and student support services and for both CE and non-CE programs. (I.B.2)

The College has defined and established six Institutional Set Standards (ISS) for student achievement, appropriate to its mission, that are published on the Institutional Effectiveness, Planning and Research website: course completion, certificates, degrees, transfer, licensure exams, and employment rates in CE. The current ISSs were originally developed during the 2015-16 academic year, based on standard deviation methodologies of five-year averages of student performance data. The College's ISS include both floor and stretch goals. According to the College's ISER, since 2016, the College has worked to develop a more robust comprehensive review process and Annual Program Update template that requires all college programs and units to include strategies to meet or exceed the College's ISS. The Team confirmed during its visit that during the 2020-21 APU process, college programs and units must incorporate strategies to assist the College in meeting or exceeding ISS goals. The College has created a system to review the previous year's ISS and data at its Fall Strategic Summits and to create change for the next academic year based on these conversations. These findings as well as the ISS are updated on the College website. (I.B.3)

Assessment data drives college planning to improve student learning and student achievement. Institutional processes are organized and implemented to support student learning and student achievement. Based on review of meeting minutes, the College's governance committees routinely analyze data from a variety of sources to improve practices for student learning and achievement. The Team was impressed with specific examples of institutional change brought

about by the cycles of review and assessment of data and outcomes. During the site visit and from the ISER, the Team learned of plans to improve Black and Brown male students' participation and achievement in STEM—plans that came to fruition based on critical dialog around institutional data. Similarly, the Nursing Program examined its retention data in order to make a strong program even stronger. Data is effectively driving College planning processes and helping staff and faculty to better understand the students and communities they serve. (I.B.4)

The College uses comprehensive Program Review processes that incorporate systematic, ongoing evaluation of programs and services using data on student learning and student achievement. The Team reviewed the College's Program Review process and Annual Program Update (APU) cycle and found that the College mission, the achievement of District and College Strategic goals, and equity drive these cyclical processes. Qualitative and quantitative data appropriate to the program or service area are disaggregated for analysis. All instructional, learning support, student services, and administrative units are required to complete comprehensive Program Review every 3 years along with annual APUs (2 years for Career Education Program review). Program Review and APU's drive the College's Integrated Planning and Budget model, and prioritization of resource requests from the Annual Program Plans occurs in various participatory governance committees, including the Budget, Facilities, and Technology Committees and the College Council, which follow an established rubric to ensure conformity and alignment with the College mission and strategic goals. (I.B.5)

The Team reviewed the College's Data, Planning and Decision Making Administrative Procedures outline, the Educational Master Plan, the Power BI Data Dashboard, and the Institutional Effectiveness, Planning, and Research website and found that the College disaggregates data across a variety of student performance indicators. As a result of student data analysis and disproportionate impact information, the College has implemented strategies for identifying areas of improvement and taking steps to improve outcomes. Analysis of disaggregated data has been integrated into cycles of Program Review and resource allocation requests. The College's Improvement Plan focuses on ensuring College constituents continue to have access to disaggregated student assessment and achievement data, as well as the training needed to apply them, and to use such data to inform continuous improvements of equity in achievement. The Team applauds these efforts. (I.B.6)

The College regularly evaluates its policies and practices across all areas of the institution; the College continues to integrate and streamline its planning and evaluation processes in support of equity-minded practices. An example of these efforts is illustrated by the College's work with an Institutional Effectiveness Partnership Initiative (IEPI) Resource Team and an Innovation and Effectiveness Grant. This work has resulted in regular and consistent evaluation processes of instruction, student and learning support services, resource management and participatory government. (I.B.7)

The College's Institutional Effectiveness, Planning, and Research webpage houses the results of assessment, the Chancellor's Scorecard data, student surveys, career trends, as well as the 2019-22 Equity Report Executive Summary. This website clearly makes such important data available to all College constituencies as well as the public. The College's semi-annual Strategic Summits ground the College in a cycle of discussion and planning around institution-set standards and learning outcomes. (I.B.8)

As demonstrated by the College's strategic planning and Integrated Planning and Budgeting (IPB) Model cycle, the College engages in continuous, broad-based evaluation and planning. Program Review, planning, and resource allocation are a part of a comprehensive process. As shown by its 2018 Strategic Update to its Educational Master Plan and Equity Plan, the College addresses short- and long-term needs for its educational programs and services. The IPB Model shows how Program Review and annual program updates are integrated into the annual integrated planning cycle. (I.B.9)

Conclusions:

The College meets the Standard.

I.C. Institutional Integrity

General Observations:

The College provides clear and accurate information to all college stakeholders and organizations related to its mission statement, learning outcomes, educational programs, and student support service in its College catalog and website. The College's catalog--printed and online--contains precise, accurate, and current information about the College's requirements, policies, and procedures. The College has recently updated its website in order to provide more timely information, organize for Guided Pathways transitions, and allow public access to archives of data, presentations, and shared governance meetings minutes. Student success reports are easy to find and navigate on the College website. The College also publishes its accreditation status and relevant accreditation information on the College website.

Findings and Evidence:

The Team found clear and accurate information in the College catalog and class schedules, printed and online, that includes the mission statement and learning outcomes. The College's catalog clearly lists career opportunities, descriptions, and Program Learning Outcomes for each program, and catalog addendums update services to students and prospective students, as well as courses recently approved. Information is laid out consistently in a way that is easy to navigate. The College's website offers public search access through CurriQunet to locate Student and Program Learning Outcomes. After visiting with the Curriculum Committee on the site visit, the Team confirmed that two years ago, the College transitioned from a two-year catalog to a one-year catalog, which created the need to streamline its current catalog review process. The catalog is now updated annually through the Curriculum Specialist and the Curriculum Committee with an eye toward accuracy, equity, and collaboration across instructional and student service components. Further growth may include the formation of a catalog committee, which would strengthen and formalize the annual review process of the catalog and related documents. Current accreditation status can be found on the website, including the accreditation of specialized programs, and is one click away from the home page. (I.C.1)

The College includes its mission statement, core values, vision, and institutional learning objectives in the catalog. Information about the College's associate degree programs, certificates, and policies is detailed accurately in the College catalog. The College's ISER describes where

print copies are distributed on campus, as well as how employees may request a copy. Specialized programs' accreditations are additionally provided online. The Team visit confirmed that the online catalog is made available first in the spring, to ensure adequate time for fall student planning, with print and other updates following. (I.C.2)

The College's Institutional Effectiveness, Planning, and Research (IEPR) Office documents college-level research findings on the College website, including data dashboards (Microsoft Power BI data dashboard) and the USDE College Scorecard. Data on course success, course retention, certificate and degree completion, Program Review, student equity, learning outcomes, and other institutional research is publicly available on the IEPR website. The same site houses the College Education Master Plan, Integrated BSI-Student Equity-SSSP Plan, Student Equity Plan, APUs, and the ISS. Data is provided to and discussed at various college constituencies at bi-annual planning summits and numerous governance committee meetings in order to make determinations. Data review is also an integrated part of the annual Program Planning Review cycles. (I.C.3)

The College catalog as well as the College's Degrees and Certificate Programs website lists all degrees (Associate Degree and Associate Degrees for Transfer), Certificates of Achievement and Proficiency. The catalog is effectively organized by program offerings which clearly identify program descriptions, requirements, and expected learning outcomes. (I.C.4)

The College Curriculum Specialist and Curriculum Committee facilitate an annual cycle of review and updates to the College catalog. The College has worked successfully to create and implement an efficient process for annual review of the College catalog, including collaboration with the College's Office of Research to create an online submission process so that the system of catalog updating (and any training required to do so) is uniform, accessible to all institutional components, and formalized. It should also be noted that COVID-19 required very quick adaptation of online curriculum and information, and the Curriculum Committee completed such work adeptly and collaboratively, while keeping equity and completion of the College mission grounded at the forefront of their work. (I.C.5)

The 2020-21 College Catalog clearly lists the total cost of education including tuition, fees, and other expenses. The College's financial aid website also provides additional tools for students to estimate total cost of attendance, such as the Net Price Calculator. The Team found evidence of how the College prepares students to make choices that fit their needs; the Peralta Community College District (PCCD) 9-month student budget worksheet is one such helpful tool. The District course enrollment tool also allows students to search classes by zero-textbook cost. (I.C.6)

The ISER describes PCCD BP 4030, accessible via the District website, which documents the District's commitment to academic freedom and responsibility. First approved in 2012 and last updated in 2015, this information is also included in the 2020-21 catalog. The College's commitment to academic freedom is also included in the collective bargaining agreement between PCCD and the Peralta Federation of Teachers. (I.C.7)

The College and District document standards of student conduct, discipline procedures and due process, as well as discipline and dismissal procedures for academic and classified employees.

Furthermore, the College catalog communicates AP 5500 to College constituents (last revision in 2016). The College ISER cites Board Policies of academic and classified employee discipline and dismissal, last updated in 2017 and 2013, respectively. The District gives each student a specific login ID and password to access Canvas (LMS). With Canvas access, comes student acknowledgement of College policies and expectations around academic honesty. The District has just updated a new Peralta Canvas portal for students to sign in. (I.C.8)

District Board Policy 4030 describes the expectation of faculty to distinguish between personal conviction and professionally accepted views in a discipline. The District Faculty Evaluation Handbook additionally includes these responsibilities as criterion. (I.C.9)

The College follows its core values of student success, caring spirit, teamwork, inclusion, student-centered campus climate, and diversity in order to ground College practices. These values are articulated in various Board Policies, in addition to the College website, catalog, faculty and student handbooks. (I.C.10)

The College does not operate in a foreign location. (I.C.11)

The College has provided evidence of their willingness to comply with Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, Commission policies, and guidelines by submitting annual reports to the ACCJC and responding to required reports in a timely manner. PCCD BP 3200 and AP 3200 ensure the College's compliance with accreditation policies and standards as part of the District. The College accreditation website includes annual reports, ISERs, mid-term reports, and any follow-up or special reports. The accreditation website also includes information for the public relative to Peer Review Visits and a form for third-party comments. (I.C.12)

The College, through its accreditation webpage, has been transparent with its ongoing relationship with ACCJC and other external agencies. (I.C.13)

Merritt College is a college within a publicly funded district and is a not-for-profit institution. The College mission does not support generating financial returns or contributions to an external interest. (I.C.14)

Conclusions:

The College meets the Standard.

Standard II

Student Learning Programs and Support Services

II.A. Instructional Programs

General Observations:

The College utilizes several processes in order to ensure that the mission drives the creation, implementation and evaluation of all instructional programs. The Annual Program Update (APU) and Institutional Learning Outcomes clearly link programs to the mission. The Student Learning Outcome Assessment Committee (SLOAC) oversees the Student Learning Outcome (SLO) assessment process, ensuring that all courses, regardless of mode of delivery, are regularly evaluating course and program SLOs. Both the Curriculum Committee and the SLOAC ensure the regular evaluation of courses and programs and verify that all courses and programs meet the rigor and standards of higher education.

Findings and Evidence:

The College relies on established policies, procedures, and practices to ensure that all instructional programs are consistent with the College's mission and norms of higher education, and result in student achievement of learning outcomes, as well as degrees, certificates, transfer, or employment. Processes for curriculum development and review (PCCD Course and Program Approval Handbook) ensure academic programs meet the standards of higher education including general education and graduation requirements. The criteria mandated by Peralta Community College District (PCCD) BP/AP 4020 require regular review and justification of programs and courses, approval processes for courses and programs (including distance education), and District approval through the Council on Instruction, Planning, and Development (CIPD). These review and approval processes are consistent with the College mission. The course outlines of record (COR) and the College catalog include listings of course and PLOs. Regular program review (annual and comprehensive reviews 2-3 years) and regular outcome assessment (3-year cycle) are used to document student achievement of outcomes. The Annual Program Update documents include processes and data (e.g., enrollment trends, course completion/retention, degree and certificate completions) that allows for analysis and review leading to continuous quality improvement. Institution-set standards are used to evaluate the quality of the College with respect to the College's mission. AP 4020 and the Course and Program Approval Handbook include a general education philosophy that is aligned with, and includes elements of the College mission, demographics and economics of the community it serves. Distance Education (DE) courses and programs are reviewed for quality standards, faculty contact, student interaction and authentication to ensure that programs meet the same mission, higher education, and SLO achievement standards as all other courses and programs. Advisory committees are in place for career education programs to plan and review programs and to ensure programs meet the job needs of the community with up-to-date industry practices.

Additionally, gainful employment requirements for career education are consistent with federal requirements and are reviewed through this same process. (II.A.1)

Faculty-driven curriculum development and approval processes (as stated in the Course and Program Approval Handbook) and the program review process provide accountability for review of all courses and programs within the College. The use of regular updates and review, and program review analyses of student achievement data, lead to a process of continuous improvement of courses and programs. A separate DE addendum and approval process is used to ensure the same standards are met regardless of mode. The College uses a regular and systematic process of curricular review to ensure the quality of courses and programs. This is in accordance with state standards. Non-Career Education (CE) courses are reviewed every three years in alignment with comprehensive Program Reviews and CE curriculum is reviewed every two years in alignment with regular Program Reviews. This faculty driven process includes review of course and program learning outcomes (PLOs) by discipline faculty, the Curriculum Committee, and members of the SLOAC. SLOAC members participate in the approval workflow of SLOs in the curricular process for both courses and programs. Once approved and implemented, all curricula are documented in official CORs and program summaries in CurriQunet, in addition to being published in the college catalog. Faculty, including part time faculty, reference these outline requirements as they engage in delivering courses in a manner that meets professional standards and expectations. The program review process is used to review and reflect upon student achievement data and development of plans to ensure program currency, planning for the future, continuous improvement, and student success. (II.A.2)

PCCD's AP 4210 *Student Learning Outcomes* mandates the processes and components used for development, implementation and use of SLOs. The College's faculty use the process documented in the PCCD Program and Course Approval Handbook to determine appropriate learning outcomes for all courses and programs during the curriculum development, review, and approval processes coordinated by the Curriculum Committee. SLOs are included in the course outlines of record (CORs) and program outlines. Course outcomes are listed in course syllabi and program outcomes are listed under each program contained in the College catalog. The College has a system to verify that all students receive a course syllabus. The College's SLOAC is responsible for tracking assessment work, reviewing data, educating the College, and determining ILOs. The SLOAC has a documented charge to establish a regular cycle for SLO, PLO, and ILO assessments. The SLOAC has established a regular three-year assessment cycle for SLOs, PLOs, and ILOs, along with a detailed annual calendar highlighting when pertinent assessment activities and tasks are due. Furthermore, the SLOAC maintains a spreadsheet of outcomes assessment to show the status for assessment by discipline. The Course Proposal and associated DE Addendum require that SLOs remain consistent for a course, regardless of mode of delivery. (II.A.3)

The College offers a pre-collegiate-level curriculum designed to provide skills for students to succeed in college-level courses. These include courses to address basic skills in mathematics and English. The College uses the criteria and processes listed in its Program Course Approval Handbook to identify non-degree applicable and non-transferable courses and distinguishes these courses through a numbering system that differs from those used for degree-applicable and transferable courses. The handbook also provides the basis of determining appropriate credit type

for courses. The College catalog provides an additional description of the College's course numbering system and distinguishes degree applicable and non-degree applicable courses. The College implemented an AB705 compliant set of pathways and courses to provide an alignment between basic-skills (pre-collegiate) and college-level mathematics and English curriculum. This provides students with an efficient progression for completing college-level mathematics and English requirements. Admissions and counseling documents are used by the Counseling, English, and Mathematics departments (also available to students) to advise students on appropriate placement and pathways to achieve their college-level requirements. (II.A.4)

The College follows PCCD procedures outlined in BP/AP 4025 (Philosophy and Criteria for Associate Degrees and General Education) and BP/AP 4100 (Graduation Requirements for Degrees and Certificates), which adhere to common higher education practices to ensure breadth, depth, rigor, sequencing, time to completion and learning. These policies define the requirements for satisfying general education and degree requirements, including applicable proficiencies and/or competencies, and applicable units. The Program and Course Approval Handbook provides additional detail regarding requirements for general education, course hours, and minimum degree requirements, and is the basis of the College's curricular review. The Handbook outlines the requirements for degrees to meet or exceed a 60 semester-credit (or equivalent) standard for the associates degree. These requirements also meet the standards of California Code of regulations, Title 5, ensuring practices common to American higher education. (II.A.5)

The College schedules classes in a manner to allow students to complete all degrees and certificates in a timely manner. The College employs a block-scheduling pattern designed to allow students to take a full-load each semester at days and times consistent with diverse student schedules. The posted blocks provide a consistent pattern of class schedules that can be relied on for planning for a timely completion. Published (online) pathways information allows students to plan each semester to achieve their degree or certificate within the two-year timeline common in community colleges. The College catalog also includes recommended two-year course sequences for programs. The Program Review process, including review of DataDashboard, is used to review time-to-completion data and help the College devise plans to improve completion rates. (II.A.6)

The College offers a variety of delivery modes (face-to-face, hybrid, distance education) to meet the diverse needs of students. The College uses the Peralta Equity Rubric to evaluate the needs of instructional modes and specifically to ensure that there is equity within the online teaching format. This rubric process institutionalizes practices that support online equity and inclusion and provides guidelines and assessment criteria for online instruction. The College also provides The Merritt Online Teaching Certificate program that prepares instructors to teach and improve online courses using best practices and recognized online teaching standards. Additionally, the College offers flex day professional development activities to help faculty improve online teaching skills. PCCD AP 4105 (Administrative Procedure for Distance Education) mandates procedures to ensure DE courses and programs comply with federal definitions and the requirements of the American with Disabilities Act. These mandates include certification that courses meet the same quality standards as traditional classroom courses, including regular and substantive interaction with the instructor and student authentication, and are approved through

the regular Curriculum Committee process using a COR DE Addendum. A DE Specialist sits on the Curriculum Committee and reviews proposed course outlines for appropriate justification, instructor-student contact, and quality standards. Furthermore, student achievement data, disaggregated by delivery mode, is used to evaluate the effectiveness of delivery modes and to train faculty in pedagogy to address performance gaps noted in the data. Available student services include programs targeted at specific equity groups, such as Veterans Services, EOPS, NextUP (Foster Youth), Street Scholars Peer Mentoring (for formerly incarcerated students), Centro Latino, Student Accessibility Services, CalWORKs, First Year Experience Impact program, a Puente Program, and the Umoja/Sankofa initiative focused on the achievement of African-American students. These are in addition to the student services provided by dedicated counselors, financial support specialists, academic counseling and other academic supports available through the Student Learning Center. The Student Learning Center provides both face-to-face and remote services, tutoring, and assistance options. This array of student services and programs is evidence of the College supporting a vibrant campus culture and the needs of the community, thereby supporting the mission. (II.A.7)

The College does not use department-wide course or program examinations. However, professional programs in Radiologic Science, Nursing, and EMT prepare students for external state and/or national certification exams to achieve external licensure and/or to meet national standards for employment. Clinical-performance data and program effectiveness are regularly analyzed to evaluate future performance in these exams and skills expectations. These validations are direct assessments of learning within the programmatic courses. (II.A.8)

The College awards course credit, degrees and certificates based on student attainment of course and program outcomes. PCCD AP 4020 mandates required course credit and clock hours consistent with federal regulation and financial aid eligibility. Each program is designated as either a "credit hour" program or a "clock hour" program and PCCD policies conform to federal guidelines for clock-to-credit-hour conversion. The Course and Program Approval Handbook (CPAH) describes the role of awarding course credit, degrees and certificates based on achievement of learning outcomes, and the process for approving and reviewing outcomes (including review by the Learning Assessment Coordinator). Examples of CORs show that the SLOs are required to be listed and that the CORs also includes examples of possible assessment tools to measure achievement of the outcomes. Additionally, the program learning outcomes for each degree or certificate program are listed within the College catalog. The catalog also includes a description of programs and the total units required for completion of degrees and certificates consistent with AP 4020 and federal guidelines. The College creates and maintains program-mapping documents to indicate how course outcomes are mapped to programs and how PLOs are mapped to each of the institutional learning outcomes. (II.A.9)

The College uses approved and regularly reviewed PCCD board policies and administrative procedures (BP/AP 4050 – Articulation) to ensure transfer-of-credit that allows mobility of students without penalty. These policies are clearly communicated to students through online postings and listings in the College catalog (Admissions, Enrollment and Fee Policies, Academic Policies and Procedures Transfer Information). The PCCD Admissions and Records website provides well-documented procedures for transfer with clear descriptions of transcript evaluation and credit transfer, and the processes required for transfer. Course work is accepted from

accredited colleges and universities with clearly stated course outcomes and standard assessments that are similar to those of the College. The College listing of C-ID approved courses (under Transfer Information) shows courses that are comparable in content and scope to a similar course offered by participating California colleges and universities. These courses have been verified in terms of comparable learning outcomes as transferable between participating California colleges and universities. Additionally, department chairs and division deans regularly review courses to ensure that transferable courses fulfill certificate or degree requirements have similar learning outcomes to comparable Merritt courses. The College develops, maintains, and documents articulation agreements with four-year institutions of higher education in ASSIST.org. Additionally, College articulation documents and CORs indicate courses that are transferable to common transfer institutions. The College has developed and maintains articulation agreements with all ten of the University of California (UC) campuses, all 23 California State University (CSU) campuses, and over 53 independent colleges and universities in the United States. This is consistent with the mission of the College to attain knowledge needed to succeed in a democratic society and global economy. (II.A.10)

The College has six distinct Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs). All other learning outcomes (course, program and service area) are mapped to one or more of the institutional outcomes. The ILOs include areas of Communication, Critical Thinking, Quantitative Reasoning, Cultural Awareness, Civic Engagement and Ethics, Information and Computer Literacy. BP/AP4025 (Philosophy and Criteria for Associate Degree and General Education) requires that courses proposed for general education are reviewed annually to ensure alignment with these ILOs. This is done by the General Education Subcommittee of the Council on Instruction, Planning and Development (CIPD) and recommendations are forwarded to CIPD for action. Additionally, the Curriculum Committee evaluates the content of every new and revised course, certificate, program, or major submitted for consideration to ensure compliance with these policies. Course SLOs are mapped to program-level learning outcomes, as documented in program alignment sheets and PLOs are mapped to ILOs. This scaffolding provides alignment of course and PLOs with the ILOs and ensures that the ILOs are achieved through the outcomes present for each program. Alignment of learning outcomes occurs during the curriculum development and review processes and is documented in CurriQunet. Regular ILO assessments (3-year cycle) are conducted using the processes outlined in the College's guide: Institutional Learning Outcomes Assessment, Creating Meaningful Conversations. A common rubric aligned with each ILO is used for this process. (II.A.11)

PCCD AP 4100 requires that associate degrees include completion of 19 units of GE courses in five areas: Natural Sciences, Social and Behavioral Sciences, Humanities, Language and Rationality, and Ethnic Studies. An Associate Degree for Transfer (ADT) requires certified completion of the CSU GE Breadth pattern or Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum (IGETC). These GE requirements are clearly stated in the "Associate Degrees and Certificates" and "Transfer Information" sections of the 2020-2021 College catalog. BP/AP 4025 outlines the criteria for establishing the GE curriculum, which is then implemented through the College's curricular process. All degree programs include a GE pattern developed through an established faculty driven curricular review process. Discipline faculty propose new GE courses and GE course modifications using the College's curriculum development and approval process (as outlined in the CPAH). The Articulation Officer conducts a technical review for course

inclusion in the GE pattern based on course content and faculty-developed SLOs. Additionally, local AA/AS GE courses are reviewed annually by the General Education Subcommittee of the Council on Instruction, Planning and Development (CIPD), and recommendations on additions and deletions are forwarded to CIPD for consideration and, ultimately, to the Board of Trustees for approval. Development of the local GE courses and required pattern are done in compliance with the GE philosophy and criteria stated in AP 4025. (II.A.12)

The College follows BP/AP 4100 for Graduation Requirements for Degrees and Certificates that mandates all degree and certificate programs include a focused study of at least one area of inquiry or established interdisciplinary core. AP 4100 requires that an Associate Degree requires at least 18 semester units of study in a discipline or from related disciplines, and that Certificates of Achievement require a minimum of 16 units in the major. These requirements of an area of study or interdisciplinary core based upon SLOs are listed in the College catalog with each degree or certificate program. The curricular development process, review, and approval ensure that the PLOs (degree and certificate) are based on appropriate degree level and practices within the field of study. (II.A.13)

The College complies with the PCCD administrative procedures for program, curriculum, and course development (AP4020) to ensure that criteria of labor market information, advisory committee recommendations, and regional consortium recommendations are used as the basis of approving all CE programs. More specifically, AP 4102 (Career and Technical Education) mandates the formation and use of advisory committees to help define technical and professional competencies that meet employment standards, certification, and/or preparation for external licensure. AP 4102 also requires that CE programs monitor, document, and update their advisory committee regarding student progression toward competencies, objectives, and the SLOs of the program. The program requirements, career opportunities, and PLOs listed in the College catalog are reflective of the technical and professional competencies developed through the advisory committee and curricular processes. The College uses a regular and systematic process of program review to ensure the quality of courses and programs. CE curriculum is reviewed every two years in alignment with annual program reviews, and course and PLOs are reviewed as part of the three-year cycle of assessment. In this manner, the College regularly assesses student achievement of technical and professional competencies. The program review process for CE programs also includes a regular analysis of job placement rates for the past three years (using CCC LaunchBoard), and discipline or program responses with regard to changes in labor market demand. The college maintains an extensive set of web pages with current information about the CE degree and certificate programs, including employment opportunities, and internal and external requirements for application and program completion and any required external licensure or certification. (II.A.14)

The College follows the PCCD AP on program discontinuance and consolidation (AP 4021) when programs are being considered for discontinuance or consolidation. These procedures are incorporated into the District's Program and Certificate Approval Handbook, the College catalog, and the District's Program Continuance Appraisal Manual. These processes can be initiated by the administration or affected divisions/departments and include provisions for conducting research and stating reasons for possible program actions. The faculty Academic Senate and associated Curriculum Committee take a fundamental role in these discussions based

on their primary role in decisions regarding academic matters. If a decision is made for discontinuance, a plan and a timeline for phasing out the program is considered, including provisions that allow currently enrolled students to complete their programs of study. A separate PCCD AP (4100) defines student catalog rights for completing the Associate degree, the Associates Degree for Transfer, Certificate of Achievement, Certificate of Proficiency, Certificate of Completion, and Certificate of Competency. Students enrolled in discontinued programs can use the catalog rights described in AP 4100 to satisfy requirements as published in the College catalog at the time of college matriculation, program re-enrollment, or petition for a certificate/degree. (II.A.15)

All courses and instructional programs, along with their associated learning outcomes, are reviewed and assessed on a regular, comprehensive, three-year cycle. Annual updates are conducted in non-comprehensive review years. Effectiveness of all programs and courses are evaluated regardless of delivery mode or location. In the case of CE courses and programs, the College follows a California Education Code mandate that programs are reviewed every two years. The currency of all course outlines of records (CORs), including DE addendums, are evaluated as part of this process to ensure that CORs have been updated in the past three years, or inactivated if no longer scheduled. The objectives of the Program Review process are to align department and program missions to the college mission, provide continuous improvement of outcomes and achievement, provide data-driven planning and resource allocation, and to meet the college's strategic goals. Program Reviews are evaluated for completeness and adherence through a validation process that includes instructional deans, the Curriculum Committee, the Institutional Effectiveness Committee and SLOAC. The resource request portion of program plans are evaluated through a rubric process by instructional administrators and vetted for prioritization by a process that includes the Budget, Facilities and Technology Committees. These groups make a final recommendation to the President for funding. Completed Program Reviews and APUs are posted on the College's Institutional Effectiveness, Planning, and Research website, where they are available for additional institutional planning. (II.A.16)

Conclusions:

The College meets the Standard.

II.B. Library and Learning Support Services

General Observations:

The Library and Learning Center (LC) provide learning support services to the College. The infrastructure of the Library and LC provide a sufficient amount of space for students and specific student services such as a Math Lab and Science Lab. The Library and LC regularly evaluate their resources and data through the Annual Program Update (APU) and Program Review.

Findings and Evidence:

The College supports student learning and achievement by providing library services and a LC, which are sufficient in quantity, currency, depth, and variety, regardless of location or means of delivery, with the exception of some deficiencies in the Library's quantity of services and currency of print resources. The LC has sufficient quantity and variety of services, with a Writing & Reading Across the Curriculum Lab, General Study Lab, Math Study Lab, Science Study Lab, and two computer labs, one for faculty to reserve as a smart classroom, and one open lab for students. The open lab in the LC provides supplemental learning support for Career Education (CE) classes with CE tutors, and technical support for online learning and Canvas. Students are also supported by NetTutor, which is an online 24-hour tutoring service, and for Spring 2021, there are 29 tutors in 38 different subject or class areas, plus 11 general writing tutors, all of whom have taken LRNRE 30 for instruction on how to be a tutor. In response to the COVID-19 campus closure, tutors are available virtually through the online Tutoring Hub, and there is an effort to embed more tutors in classes to ensure services are provided regardless of location or means of delivery. A FLEX Day workshop on embedding tutors was well attended by faculty in Fall 2020. Based on the 2019 APU for the LC, they are also in the process of developing a non-credit Distance Education (DE) tutoring course (LRNRE 502) to replace LRNRE 30 with an in-depth, 3-level course that will culminate in certification for tutoring in-person and online. As of the visitation, this course is still in development. The LC has current facilities and resources, as the first floor of the Library building was renovated in 2011-2014 to create the LC. The LC faculty, staff, and tutors strive to create a welcoming, supportive, and inclusive environment, with the mantra of the "student being more important than the work." This is evidenced by studies showing higher success rates and completion for students receiving tutoring, feedback surveys, and overall, students have expressed numerous times in the Open Forums the overwhelming feeling of support and community when using the LC.

The College relies on the expertise of faculty librarians and other learning support services professionals to select and maintain educational equipment and materials to support student learning and enhance the achievement of the mission. Both the Library and LC support the College mission by helping students attain knowledge and master skills. The Library has a Library Collection Development Policy, and uses its Program Review and APU to evaluate needs and request needed technology, equipment, and materials. The librarians, including seven adjunct librarians, serve as subject liaisons to all academic departments in an effort to ensure library materials support the curriculum and instruction. A librarian also sits on the Curriculum Committee as a reviewer of new classes or curriculum proposals to verify whether the Library has materials to support those programs or classes, or what needs to be purchased in order to ensure that support. The Library and LC have maintenance agreements with some outside providers, such as stated in a Ricoh Order Agreement for the copy machines and printers, and rely on the IT department to service computer hardware and software. (II.B.2)

The College evaluates library and other learning support services to assure that their adequacy contributes to the attainment of SAOs and SLOs, and uses the results of those evaluations as a basis for improvement. The Library regularly evaluates its SAOs with a three-year-cycle assessment plan, evaluating one SAO per year. The three Library SAOs are mapped to the College's ILO for Information and Computer Literacy. These SAO assessments are answered by students, with one faculty survey in 2015-16, assessing faculty use of periodicals. Results of this

survey show faculty do not appear to know what databases are, as evidenced by only one person saying they prefer students use databases for periodical articles, and feel there are not enough periodicals in the library to support the curriculum. Results also show faculty do not value orientations, LIS classes, eBooks, periodicals, or databases. The faculty seem to value access to textbooks the most. In an effort to educate faculty, seven Library workshops have been offered and well attended since Fall 2020. The LIS 85 library class has four SLOs, which are mapped to the College's ILOs for Communication, Critical Thinking, and Information and Computer Literacy. These SLOs are evaluated on a three-year-cycle, with SLOs 2 and 4 last assessed in Fall 2017, and SLOs 1 and 3 in Fall 2018. Currently, assessment of SLOs 2 and 4 are planned for Spring 2021.

The LC evaluates its services through student satisfaction surveys. Based on student responses to a 2018 LC Satisfaction Survey, 51% use the LC more than 10 times a semester, with study areas, math tutoring, and computer labs getting the most use, and the biggest result of using the LC was improved grades. Both SLOs for the LRNRE 30 class for tutors were assessed in Fall 2019. The LRNRE 501 class for being tutored has one SLO, to use tutoring services to improve performance in coursework, as listed in its Course Outline of Record (COR). An Institutional Research Report in October 2020 compared student success rates and course completion in five subject areas between those students who received tutoring services and those who did not. Results show consistently higher rates for students receiving tutoring services. The LC also did a 2018 survey on embedded tutoring, showing most students were helped by a tutor more than eight times in the semester, and that the tutor was extremely knowledgeable, enthusiastic, easy to approach, and made the assignments easier. The SLOs and assessment methods for the LRNRE 280 Study Skills class are included in the COR. (II.B.3)

The College documents formal agreements with other institutions or sources for Library and other learning support services, assuring the resources and services are adequate, easily accessible, utilized, secure, maintained, and reliable by regularly evaluating the services to ensure their effectiveness. (II.B.4)

Conclusions:

The College meets the Standard.

II.C. Student Support Services

General Observations:

The College provides a wide variety of student support services that are appropriate to its mission. It uses the Annual Program Update (APU) and three-year Comprehensive Review process to ensure that it is regularly evaluating all of its support services. All student support service areas have identified Service Area Outcomes (SAOs). The SAOs are regularly evaluated and the information is used to identify opportunities and challenges. This robust process for self-improvement ensures a link to the College's mission. All student support services achieved the monumental task of transitioning all their services remotely in order to ensure that students continue to receive the support they need.

Findings and Evidence:

The College ensures that its student support services are tied to the College's mission through the use of SAOs, which are aligned with the College's Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs). The APU process and the three-year comprehensive review provides one venue where student support service areas can assess the quality of the services it offers and identify gaps. The College also utilizes external assessment tools such as those developed by Ruffalo Noel Levitz and the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) survey. In addition to the data provided by the Institutional Researcher for the APU, individual programs utilize surveys in order to measure the quality of support services. Through the results of these surveys several programs noted areas for improvement and were able to implement change. For instance, Counseling was able to add an online booking appointment system and Zoom counseling sessions. The Financial Aid office added a Chatbox to its website in order to better serve students. The Team applauds the work done by the student support services areas in transitioning every service to the online environment and recommends that they continue to do so post-pandemic. Furthermore, evaluating the effectiveness of remote services should continue once the College resumes in-person services. (II.C.1)

The College assesses SAOs for all student support services and uses the results of these assessments in program planning and resource requests. Specific programs use additional sources of data to ensure their services are effective. Many student support service programs use internal surveys to assess student needs. The College's Institutional Researcher provides usage and productivity reports and programs utilize external data sources such as the Chancellor's Office Datamart. The data gathered helped programs respond to gaps in the needs of students by offering additional hours, workshops and other intervention methods. Discussion of the data happens regularly through the APU validation process. (II.C.2)

Student support services are provided to all students, both on-ground and online. In addition to Counseling and Financial Aid, the College supports the following student services: Admissions and Records, Adelante Summer Bridge, Associated Students, Athletics, Career Center, First Year Experience (FYE), Health Services, Merritt Promise, Orientation, Outreach, Phi Theta Kappa, Puetne, Student Activities and Campus Life, Transfer Center, Tutoring, Umoja/Sankofa, Veterans Services and the Welcome Center. The Fruitvale Center provided 3 hours per week of face-to-face support until June 2019. After that, students were referred to the Resource Center at the Merritt campus. When in-person support was offered, the Center evaluated the effectiveness of its in-person services and the data was combined with the main campus Resource Center data. Since COVID the Center operates remotely and is supported by online/remote student services. The College also supports several categorical programs such as EOPS/CARE and CalWorks. In order to meet the needs of students in-person, prior to COVID, all student support services provided extended Thursday evening hours. To support students who study remotely, the College provides online tutoring, phone counseling, scholarship support and outreach. The College has upgraded its technology infrastructure to support additional online services since COVID and to support the increasing use of cell phones by students. It has also addressed the needs of disproportionately impacted groups by providing interpreters to support the ESOL program. All student support services are provided in person, via telephone and/or through Zoom appointments with additional information available on the College's updated

website. In order to continue providing multiple modules of delivery for students, it is encouraged that expanded remote/online options continue post-COVID. In the future, the College will continue to evaluate services by mode of delivery once there is more than one mode of delivery possible. **(II.C.3)**

The College has several co-curricular programs that support the development of a campus social life outside of the classroom. These programs include Athletics and Associated Students of Merritt College (ASMC). The College ensures that these programs are appropriate to the mission through the APU and three-year comprehensive review which requires that programs link to ILOs.   This process also ensures that the regular evaluation of both programs occur. The program plans for both programs demonstrate they are evaluating data in order to ensure the quality and effectiveness of the programs. The College ensures that its Athletics program adheres to a set of policies and regulations under the supervision of the Athletics Director and Vice-President of Student Affairs. The College offers eight athletic programs for both men and women, including cross-country, track and field, soccer and basketball. Athletics is regulated by internal policies such as BP 5700 (Intercollegiate Athletics) and the Athletics Coaches Handbook as well as external organizations and policies such as the California Community College Athletic Association (CCCAA) and Title IX. Associated Students of Merritt College (ASMC) falls under the Office of Student Activities and Campus Life. Operational and financial oversight of the athletic programs fall under the Vice President of Student Services and the Athletic Director. The District has BPs/APs that govern ASMC including AP 5400 (Associated Students Organizations), BP 5400 (Associated Student Organizations) and Management Policy (MP) 6200 (Join ASMC Inc. Council Policy).   ASMC and the InterClub Council are responsible for following a set of bylaws and constitution. As part of the approval process, new clubs must show how they support the mission of the College. (II.C.4)

The Counseling Department is composed of 11 full-time faculty and 15 part-time faculty. Part of the role of the full-time counselors is to provide coordinator support for specific programs to which they are assigned such as EOPS/CARE, SAS, NextUp etc. The Department ensures all students receive timely, accurate and relevant information to support their educational goals. Prior to COVID, the College offered Counseling appointments in person, via phone and email. Since COVID, the College has a new online process for booking appointments (eSARS) and counselors conduct both phone appointments and Zoom appointments.   The department tracks the number of counseling appointments, analyzes retention and success data and evaluates SLO data in the APU. All SLOs are evaluated every year.   In addition to counseling appointments, the program is responsible for providing a series of events including Transfer Day, Express Enrollment Day, as well as participating in outreach to local high schools. In order to ensure that students receive accurate and timely information, the College updates the catalog, class schedule and student planner annually. The College recently went through a website inventory to ensure all career information and program requirements are up-to-date. More recently, counseling has focused on providing students with timely information on AB 705/placement and Guided Pathways. The department ensures that counselors receive professional development training by encouraging counselors to attend relevant conferences and workshops and supports them in timely training such as responding to staff training needs because of COVID. (II.C.5)

The College's admission policies are consistent with its mission of open enrollment. BP 5510 (Admissions, Special Admissions and Enrollment) and AP 5011 (Admission: Special Admission and Enrollment of High School and Other Students) ensure that admissions policies support the mission. The College is open to all students over the age of 18 both residents and non-residents. In addition, Board policy explains the procedures for the admittance of special populations such as high school students. This information is published in the college catalog.   The Counseling Department engages in outreach and advisement regarding pathways and other routes available to students to meet their educational goals. The College catalog contains information on pathways for students to complete Associate Degrees for Transfer (ADT) as well as additional resources to ensure timely completion. The College currently offers 10 ADTs and is in the process of creating more. (II.C.6)

In order to ensure the effectiveness of its admissions and placement practices, the College adheres to BPs 5510 and AP 5011 to ensure consistency in admissions and regularly evaluates its policies and procedures. Guided by AB 705 the College adheres to a process for placement of students in English and Math classes that follows the law's guidelines. Most remedial English and Math classes have been eliminated and replaced by support classes. Students enroll in support classes based on self-placement guidelines developed to meet AB 705 expectations.   The English Department utilizes a self-placement tool.   The Math Department uses course sequencing in order to ensure students are placed in the correct class. The College collected data regarding the effectiveness of its placement tools for student success and presented the data at a college wide forum in Fall 2020. (II.C.7)

The College follows established Board policy regarding the maintenance of student records. BP 5040 (Student Records, Directory Information and Privacy), AP 5035 (Withholding of Student Records) and AP 5045 (Student Records: Challenging Content and Access Logs) detail the procedures. The College complies with both Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) protocols regarding the privacy and confidentiality of student records. Information on all policies regarding student records can be found in the College catalog. The College uses an online repository to store student data. For student records that have not been scanned, hard copies are stored in a secure room on campus. Access to the room is limited to authorized full-time personnel with a key. (II.C.8)

Conclusions:

The College meets the Standard.

Standard III

Resources

III.A Human Resources

General Observations:

There is a shared responsibility between the Peralta Community College District (District) and Merritt College for Human Resources functions. The District's role consists of setting policy and procedures. It is the responsibility of Merritt College to adhere to the policies and procedures to meet the requirement of the standard. The District Human Resources Office verifies the

qualifications of applicants through an established process in accordance with California Community Colleges minimum qualifications for faculty and administrators. The District reviews transcripts to ensure they are from accredited institutions recognized by U.S. accrediting agencies, per AP 7211. The Vice Chancellor of Human Resources and Senior Human Resource Analyst confirmed that the District follows the equivalency review process outlined in AP 7211 that is used to verify equivalency to minimum qualifications for faculty and administrators. The College's personnel policies and procedures are published and available on the website of the Board of Trustees. Board Policies and procedures ensure compliance with employment practices, and the Human Resources office acts as the subject-matter expert for all the personnel-related policies. Over the past two years, Human Resources (HR) posted all the procedures in the HR web page and they are also available on the Board of Trustees web page. The college and the District work together to ensure that personnel policies are applied consistently and equitably. Fairness, equity, and consistency of policies are further supported through the collective bargaining process and agreements. The College provides for the security and confidentiality of personnel records, in accordance with Human Resources Policy and bargaining unit contracts.

Findings and Evidence:

The College employs administrators, faculty, and staff who are qualified by appropriate education, training, and experience to provide and support these programs and services. AP 7122, Hiring Procedures for Regular Academic Administrators and Classified Managers states, "All applications received on or before the closing date and meeting the published minimum qualification or having qualifications that are at least equivalent, will be made available to members of the hiring committee."

Criteria, qualifications, and procedures for selection are clearly and publicly stated. AP 7122 AP 7123, and BP 2431 publically state procedures for selection.

Though job descriptions are not directly related to institutional mission, the mission and vision are listed on job postings. Thus, the College meets the requirements. (III.A.1)

AP 7121 states that, "Position descriptions and announcements shall be jointly prepared and reviewed by the Dean and the faculty of the hiring discipline, and shall include job related skills requirements, minimum qualifications and desirable qualifications." AP 7121 also includes processes for selection committees including, subject area knowledge and competency, Educational background/history; teaching or service experience; commitment to professional growth and service; potential for overall professional effectiveness; sensitivity to and understanding of the diverse academic socioeconomic, cultural, disability and ethnic background of the students, as well as the special needs of the disabled; teaching or skill demonstrations; and written and oral communication skills.

Evidence provided included a job posting for a Mental Health Specialist, which includes standard elements for appropriate degrees, professional experience, and discipline expertise, level of assignment, teaching skills, scholar activities, and potential to contribute to the College mission, as well as "curriculum development, evaluation and revision." The Team confirmed that the Faculty Evaluation Handbook contains processes to ensure an assessment of learning. (III.A.2)

College administrative and managerial job descriptions state the purpose of the positions, essential responsibilities, and the minimum and desirable qualifications. AP 7122 denotes procedures for screening and interviewing processes to identify qualified candidates who have the required skills and experience. (III.A.3)

Peralta Community College District follows Title 5 regulations to ensure all employee positions meet minimum qualifications and associated degrees. These policies require that degrees must be from institutions that are fully accredited by federally recognized agencies. The process of accessing minimum qualifications and degree requirements of faculty service areas are outlined in AP 7211. Foreign transcripts must be translated and evaluated by a U.S.-based credentials evaluation service and must be evaluated by an official foreign credentials/transcripts evaluation and translation service. (III.A.4)

The College has established written criteria for evaluating all personnel which includes performance of assigned duties and participation in institutional processes and other activities appropriate to their expertise. Evaluation forms for each employee type were provided as evidence. Additionally, criteria and assessment of effectiveness of personnel are listed and processes outlined in individual bargaining agreements. International Union of Operating Engineers (IUOE) Local 39 and Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 1021 have bargaining agreements. Policies and Procedures for faculty evaluations are detailed in the PFT's *Faculty Evaluation Handbook.* Management performance evaluations are conducted per AP 7124 and are documented on the designated forms. The Team reviewed evaluation schedules for Management, Classified, and Faculty and encourages the College to continue to ensure that all employees are evaluated at stated intervals. (III A.5)

Standard III.A.6 no longer applies.

The College states that, "The District maintains a sufficient number of full-time faculty to fulfill its institutional goals and to serve its students." In an interview with the Vice President of Instruction, it was noted that the College meets its FTES targets, thus has sufficient number of faculty, which is evidence that the College has adequate faculty. Additionally, an agreement with the PFT creates and maintains a pool of part-time faculty. (III.A.7)

The PCCD Guide for Hiring Part-Time Faculty and Faculty Employee Checklist provide an orientation and lists responsible parties for oversight. Part-time faculty are evaluated during the first semester of employment according to the process delineated in the Faculty Evaluations Policies and Procedures Handbook. All faculty are required to attend flex day activities, the evidence includes the statement "Part-time temporary faculty shall participate in flex-day activity on the same basis as their weekly teaching assignments." To provide opportunities for integration of part time faculty into the life of the institution, professional development activities are posted on the Staff Development website and featured in the Staff Development Office Newsletter. (III.A.8)

The College has a sufficient number of administrators, staff and faculty to support the effective operations of the institution. Evidence provided included the 2020-21 Participatory Governance President Appointments, the College's explanation of the full-time obligation number (FON), and the Administrative Services Organizational Chart to demonstrate sufficient operational staff and appropriate staffing on Shared Governance committees. (III.A.9)

In the Administrative Organizational Chart, the College demonstrated a sufficient number of administrators and the College notes, "By May 2020, all of the administrative vacancies were filled and the management team grew to include eleven administrators. The Team confirmed that currently four administrative hires are in progress and are due to be filled by January 2021. They include the Vice President of Administrative Services (VPAS), Vice President of Instruction, Dean of Enrollment Services, and Dean of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences." The Team encourages the College to appoint a VPAS to provide fiscal oversight and leadership, specifically to support matters related to findings and recommendations included in this report as quickly as possible. The colleges and District have had historical challenges maintaining enough administrators to ensure appropriate expertise to provide continuity and effective administrative leadership and services to support the institution's mission due to administrative turnover. The District and colleges have developed recommendations to retain executive level staff, developed Board Training Sessions, and convened a participatory group to analyze administrative turnover.

The team reviewed the management turnover rate and noted the rate has improved, reducing from 33% in 2017-18 to 23% in 2019-20. While the District and Board have committed to mitigating the high administrative turnover, the team could not identify evidence of activities related to the goals that are listed in the PCCD Institutional Five Year plan to improve these outcomes. While turnover is starting to slow down, the administrative, turnover at the District Office particularly in finance is contributing to the lack of adequate financial oversight. (III.A.10)

The District's website publishes its Human Resources policies and procedures for the public to review. New employees receive this information during orientation. The District's shared governance structure regularly reviews and revises, when necessary, policies and procedures in accordance with Board Policy 2059 to ensure that they are fair and equitably and consistently administered. The College follows the district's established policies and procedures, which are posted on both the Board of Trustees and Human Resources web page. The College helps ensure equitable application of policy through a complaint procedure, per state and federal regulations. The colleges rely upon the District's 2019-2022 Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Plan (approved by the Board of Trustees on June 14, 2016) to help guide decisions regarding equal employment opportunities. (III.A.11)

The District, thus Merritt College, creates and maintains appropriate programs that support its diverse personnel through the implementation of the following policies, plans and programs. The College provides the following as evidence. Board Policy 7100 Commitment to Diversity, Board Policy 3420 Equal Employment Opportunity, Administrative Procedure 3420 Equal Employment Opportunity, Administrative Procedure 7102 Faculty Diversity Internship Program, and 'The HUB Newsletter' which includes programs from the District Diversity Committee. The Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Plan is a district-wide plan that implements the District's EEO Program. AP 3420 specifies the requirements of the EEO plan. The Plan is approved by the Board of Trustees and posted on the HR website. The Plan also provides district-wide demographics by employee category. (III.A.12)

Board Policy 2715 Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice, Board Policy 7380 Ethics, Civility and Mutual Respect, and Administrative Procedure 7380 Ethics, Civility, and Mutual Respect serve as the written code of professional ethics. The College, through District policies has written consequences for violation, as evidenced by Board Policy 7365 Discipline and Dismissal –

Classified Employees, Board Policy 7360 Discipline and Dismissal Academic Employees, Administrative Procedure 3430 Prohibition of Unlawful Harassment, Administrative Procedure 3435 Discrimination and Harassment Complaints and Investigations, and strengthened by Administrative Procedure 7700 Whistleblower Protection. (III.A.13)

The College through the District provides opportunities for professional development and encourages employee participation. Per BP 7160, the goal of professional development is to enhance employee performance and service to students and to assist employees to meet the changing needs in education. The PFT bargaining agreement contains negotiated requirements for professional development of full-time and part-time faculty. Additionally, the District provides for reimbursements for continued learning for employees using the Enrollment Fee Waiver Form. Additionally, Merritt Professional Development Committee (PDC) chairs have FLEX Days debriefing meetings with the Staff District Officer (SDO). The SDO meets once a month with the chairs of the other colleges and assess their professional development activities. The team reviewed Flex Day Feedback Form as evidence of assessments used for improvement. (III.A.14)

The District follows administrative procedures, AP 3300, AP 3310 both of which describe the storage, treatment, and security of confidential information. The collective bargaining agreements with faculty and classified employees address the confidential treatment of personal records, and processes are in place for employees to access to personnel files in a secure setting as required. (III.A.15)

Conclusions:

The College meets the Standard.

Recommendations to Improve Quality:

District Recommendation 11: In order to increase effectiveness, the team recommends the District continue maintain a sufficient number of administrators with appropriate qualifications in order to provide continuity and effective administrative leadership that support the District's mission and purposes. (III.A.10)

III.B Physical Resources

General Observations:

The College assures its facilities are safe and sufficient and they are constructed and maintained to assure access, safety, and security. The College plans, acquires or builds, maintains, and upgrades or replaces its physical resources which includes facilities, equipment, land, and other assets, in a manner that assures effective utilization and continuing quality necessary to support its programs and services. The College has security services through three separate units that work together to create a comprehensive system of security. The College has a Facilities and Technology Master Plan that articulates a set of facilities and technology projects needed to meet the goals set forth in the Education Master Plan (EMP). There are two local bonds that support the district wide capital project needs. The College regularly evaluates whether it has sufficient physical resources as demonstrated.

The College ensures a safe and secure environment for its students, staff and visitors. A safe environment is promoted through three separate units that work together to create a comprehensive system of security. Safety and security are detailed in the Personal Safety Handbook and the College provides an annual security report. The College ensured access by funding a comprehensive ADA transition plan. The program will provide a complete assessment of each of the District's four campuses, with a comprehensive list of mitigation measures to bring each campus into full compliance addressing many site and internal issues. The institution ensures that all facilities are safe using a digital work order system that reports issues to the Department of General Services (DGS). Significant progress has been made towards resolving many longstanding safety issues, including elevators, fire alarm system, emergency blue light phones, and security camera upgrades. The District Safety and Risk Manager, the Vice Chancellor of General Services, and the Business Managers of each of the four Colleges meet monthly and there are three committees formed to address security and safety issues. The College regularly evaluates whether it has sufficient physical resources as demonstrated in the College Health and Safety Committee meeting minutes. DGS will provide a student specific process for students to report unsafe physical facilities. Currently, the DGS Bond Website has a monitored "Contact Us" link that can be utilized for students to report unsafe conditions on the District facilities. (III.B.1)

The College created plans and frameworks for building, maintaining, and upgrading or replacing its physical resources to ensure that the needs of programs and services are considered when planning its buildings. The Five-Year Capital Outlay Plan focuses on space inventory, proposed projects, and enrollment. The College's Executive Leadership Team discusses planning for the provision of safe and sufficient physical resources to support programs and services and the planning is encompassed within the College EMP. The EMP goals were aligned to the Bond Spending Plan. The 2017 Facilities and Technology Master Plan (FTMP) articulates a set of facilities and technology projects needed to meet the goals set forth in the EMP created by the College. Updates to both the EMP and FMP are tied to instructional needs, as demonstrated by facilities projects affecting nearly every discipline. Program and service needs determine equipment replacement and maintenance using the rolling five-year Scheduled Maintenance and Special Repairs (SMSR) Plan identified by the campus-based facility directors. (III.B.2)

The College regularly assesses the use of its facilities and uses the results of the evaluation to improve facilities or equipment. Using the space utilization data and projected programmatic needs, the Five-Year Capital Outlay Plan outlines plans for new and replacement buildings, including state-funded projects and those funded by the Measures A and G local bonds. All building plans include numerous assessments analyzing and planning for impacts on noise, traffic, and other considerations. The District has been successful in obtaining State capital outlay funding for the College. New projects include Merritt College Child Development Center ($19.726M) and Merritt College Horticulture Center ($22.256M). (III.B.3)

The passage of facilities bonds has supported the construction of new facilities at Merritt such as Measure A funded the construction of the Barbara Lee Science and Allied Health Center. The District maintains a Five-Year Capital Outlay Plan. This plan includes educational plan statements, inventory of existing space, enrollments, FTE instructional staff and proposed facility projects. The Five-Year Capital Outlay Plan identifies and prioritizes projects that may be

eligible for additional State funding and is correlated with the static FTMP. Long-range capital projects are linked to various institutional planning including: the PCCD Facilities and Technology Master Plan 2017, Information Technology Strategy, Strategic Plan and the Bond Spending Plan (BSP). Part of implementing the Measure G Bond was to create the BSP. The emphasis will be placed on health and safety projects, energy projects, infrastructure upgrades, and building replacement projects. In the area of sustainability, funding was established from Proposition 39.

The District established total cost of ownership (TCO) guidelines, which were developed in consultation with each of the four Colleges and reviewed by the PBIM District Facilities Committee. Although the College developed a plan to ensure that long-range capital plans support institutional improvement goals and reflect projections of the TCO of new facilities and equipment, the plan was not fully implemented. The schedule called for the continued development of the guidelines, suggested multiple surveys to gain constituent input, and sought additional collaboration between DGS and the four colleges. (III.B.4)

Conclusions:

The College meets the Standard.

III.C. Technology Resources

General Observations:

The College provides appropriate and adequate technology resources and professional expertise to support the College's management and operational functions, academic programs, and student support services. Through continuous review and planning, the College updates its technology infrastructure in a manner that supports its mission. The PCCD Information Technology Strategy Plan is informed by the Educational and Facilities Master Plans to provide the basis for immediate and longer term needs. The District Information Technology department coordinates with the Merritt College IT group to maintain reliable, safe, and secure technological resources at all locations. The College Technology Committee meets monthly and collaborates with other college entities on creating procedures to address any additional needs related to technology use.

Findings and Evidence:

PCCD in collaboration with the College provides technology services, support, and facilities that are adequate to support the operational functions of the College and its academic programs. These are provided through the College's adherence to PCCD standards and procedures and through regular meetings between the District IT Department and the Merritt Technology Committee (MTC). The College works with the District to identify specific technology needs of the campus, and to participate in decision making to ensure a cohesive system of IT and support throughout the District. The District maintains vendor support for hardware systems and works with the MTC through a District HelpDesk to address regular requests regarding IT issues. The MTC serves as an advisory body to the President and is represented on the College Council to facilitate conversations related to local and District-wide IT issues. (III.C.1)

The College continuously plans for, updates, and replaces technology to ensure the quality and capacity of its technology infrastructure is adequate to support the mission of the college and to meet the three pillars of the PCCD's IT strategy: 1) Rebuild and secure the core, 2) Operational Effectiveness, and 3) Student Success. The PCCD IT Strategic and Information Technology Strategy plans are informed by the Educational and Facilities Master plans as well as industry standards and projections, and trends in higher education. The College employs two full-time IT Specialists who work to provide the College with recommendations for technology as well as support for the technology needs of instruction, student services and administrative services. College planning is also informed by the Program Reviews and Annual Updates of each of the institution's functional areas, as well as through the IT area's regular Program Reviews and Annual Updates. IT needs identified outside of these regular reviews are addressed through the help-ticket system and through recommendations made by the MTC in their capacity as part of College Council. Regular surveys implemented through the College's Institutional Research Office supports this process. (III.C.2)

The District Information Technology Services Department, in coordination with the MTC, maintains reliable, safe, and secure technological resources at all locations. As part of this effort, PCCD has worked with the College to upgrade and make redundant the bandwidth connections to the internet at all campuses and satellite sites. Additionally, modern firewalls were implemented at each instructional site to increase network security, and the District IT group works in collaboration with the Merritt Cyber Security Program to conduct network infrastructure security audits. A disaster recovery plan has been developed by the PCCD IT in collaboration with the Merritt Cybersecurity Program. The disaster recovery plan aligns with both state and federal requirements and ensures that additional technology reliability and security at all locations. (III.C.3)

The PCCD IT Strategic Plan mandates faculty training and technology to encourage improved modes of instruction as one of their core initiatives to support the plan's "pillar" of student success. Training includes DE classes that provide support for a variety of online tools including Learning Tools Interoperability, Canvas, and Zoom. Additionally, training workshops are regularly held on topics such as culturally relevant pedagogy and other DE-related topics. The District transition to Canvas was aided by providing specific Canvas support through PCCD's Helpdesk system. Increased training was implemented as part of the College's response to the pandemic. This included summer and fall 2020 educational technology courses, and assignment of DE coaches to help instructors with support. This includes training with online learning technology such as Turnitin, NetTutor, Ally, Cranium Café, and Labster. The District and College utilize a variety of software such as ONEPeralta, PeopleSoft Finance, GOLive, Power BI to access data and process financial, administrative, and student services actions. Group workshops and Flex days are used to provide technology training to employees across the College. (III.C.4)

PCCD BP/AP 3720 (Telephone, Computer, and Network Use) and BP 3725 (Information and Communication Technology Accessibility and Acceptable Use) ensure the appropriate use of technology in the learning environment. These regulations and procedures refer to all District Network resources whether individually controlled or shared, stand-alone or networked, and include guidance regarding legal parameters, authorized use, computing privileges, user's rights and responsibilities, and prohibited activities. This guidance includes technology uses that are reasonable and necessary for the pursuit of instructional activities. The College Technology

Committee meets monthly and collaborates with other college entities on creating procedures to address needs related to technology use. (III.C.5)

Conclusions:

The College meets the Standard.

III.D Fiscal Resources

General Observations:

There is a shared responsibility between the Peralta Community College District (District) and Merritt College for Fiscal Resources and related functions. The College has a comprehensive Integrated Planning and Budget Model on the campus level as the mechanism for planning and resource allocation. The District sets policy and procedures and is responsible for maintaining functions related to fiscal responsibility and stability as well as liabilities.

Findings and Evidence:

The District allocates resources through the PCCD Budget Allocation Model (BAM), which is calculated on a three-year average FTES for each college, after consideration for districtwide costs, funding liabilities, and instructional costs. This supports a fair and transparent allocation of resources across the four colleges while still funding districtwide operations. The College has sufficient financial resources to support and sustain student learning programs and services and improve institutional effectiveness. The ISER states and provides evidence of high productivity, transfer rates, and completion rates of introductory transfer level math and college composition and reading. The College uses an Integrated Planning and Budget (IPB) Model to distribute resources to support the development, maintenance, allocation, and enhancement of programs which is evidenced by a list of prioritized resource requests. The College plans and manages its financial affairs to ensure financial stability by coming in below their District allocated Full Time Equivalent Faculty (FTEF) for the past two fiscal years. The College's fiscal management processes, in coordination with those of the District, are moving forward with integrity. In June 2019, the FCMAT submitted a report that contained 78 recommendations. The District responded to the FCMAT recommendations with an Integrated Financial Plan 2019-2024 detailing an action plan to resolve the fiscal issues. (III.D.1)

The College's IPB Model includes a rationale that states, "The Merritt College Integrated Planning and Budgeting (IPB) Model and the District Wide Educational Master Plan were developed collaboratively to create an integrated planning framework linking program review, educational planning, facilities improvement and resource allocation. This integrated planning approach achieves one of the major goals of the District Wide Strategic Plan, which is to develop and manage resources to advance our mission." The College adheres to the District's clearly defined guidelines and processes for financial planning and budget development. These practices are codified in the following board policies and administrative procedures: BP 6250 Budget

Management, AP 6250 Budget Management, BP 6300 Fiscal Management and Accounting, AP 6300 General Accounting, BP 6320 Investments, and AP 6320 Investments. The District plans for long-term fiscal health and viability with a Five-Year Integrated Financial Plan and includes budgeted or planned fiscal expenditures that have supported or will support the achievement of institutional plans or goals. The District is making strides in its overall financial standing as evidenced by the tremendous progress it made in moving from having a FCMAT Initial Risk Assessment Rating that was over 60% to a stable FCMAT Risk Assessment Rating in May 2020 of less than 6%. The Vice Chancellor of Finance disseminates regular budget reports to the Board of Trustees, including timely updates that apprise the Board at all stages of the budget planning cycle. This includes the tentative budget, adopted budget, and annual budget reports, as well as the annual external audit. The Board approves the annual budget and external audit reports in a public session. Senior leadership and decision-makers from each College regularly attend Board meetings, and all information presented to the Board is publicly available.

The Merritt College Budget Committee is another venue where financial information is disseminated timely throughout the institution and the minutes of the committee are publicly available for review.

The PCCD Budget Allocation Model is followed annually and assumptions are clearly communicated in their budget documents. With the roll-out of the state's new funding formula, the Student Centered Funding Formula (SCFF), the District created the Planning & Budgeting Integration Model Summit, which provided a venue to discuss, review, critique and support PCCD's Budget Allocation Model. Input from stakeholders' districtwide has been incorporated into their model. The College follows the guidelines for financial planning and budget management, as set forth in District AP 6250. In addition, the College aligns its planning cycle with the District's Annual Integrated Planning Calendar, which includes District-wide committees where all constituencies have appropriate opportunities to participate in the development of institutional plans and budgets. The budget calendar encompasses the whole fiscal year and concludes with the adoption of the final budget. Budget development at the College is completed within the timeline and submitted to the District for review. The College provides additional opportunities for constituencies' participation through the College's Integrated Planning and Budgeting Model. (III.D.3)

The College's institutional planning process reflects a realistic assessment of financial resource availability, expenditure requirements for various revenue sources, and resource development opportunities. Through the annual district-wide integrated planning and budgeting process, individuals involved in institutional planning are presented with accurate information about available funds and the College's fiscal condition and commitments, as well as new and potential funding streams and partnerships. This examination of the organizational budget and budget trends and prospects ensures that the annual plan, at both the College and District level, is based on sound financial planning. The District's BAM uses a three-year FTES average to provide the base allocation to the College. (III.D.4)

The College has internal controls and processes established by the District for the management of fiscal resources. These specifications may be found in the following District Board policies and administrative procedures: BP 6300 Fiscal Management and Accounting, AP 6300 General Accounting, BP/AP 6330 Purchasing. In recent years, and as a result of staffing instability as documented in the districts response to their audits, the district has had a number of significant

audit findings. Two of the District's findings were repeat findings noting weaknesses in District financial and internal controls indicating the District is having challenges improving internal control systems. As further noted in their audit corrective action plans, the district understands the need to improve in this area and are taking steps to remedy the issues. (III.D.5, III.D.8)

The recent audit adjustments have eroded the integrity and reliability of the district's planning assumptions, as significant adjustments to fund balance have occurred in multiple years. It is critical the district reduces the magnitude of audit adjustments to have an accurate understanding of their fund balance prior to mid-year audit adjustments. (III.D.6)

The District had ten findings in the 2020 District Audit, and has had a similarly high number of finding in recent years. Three of the 2020 findings were repeat, and two of the repeat findings were material weaknesses in internal controls over financial reporting. While the district has made efforts to resolve audit findings in recent years, they continue the trend of having multiple repeat audit findings annually. It is critical for the District to correct audit findings in a timelier manner. (III.D.7)

The District improved its position in the last few years to ensure it has sufficient cash flow and reserves to maintain stability. Recently the District updated Board Policy 6250 Budget management to require an ending fund balance to be a minimum of 10% of the unrestricted fund balance. In 2019-20 the District ending fund balance was 14.61% was up from 10.37% the prior year. The increased fund balance has ensured a healthy cash flow, and has eliminated the need for mid-year external borrowing. (III.D.9)

BP 6250 Budget Management requires that the District adheres to title 5 and the CCC Budget and Accounting Manual in budgeting and accounting methods. The District's Fiscal Services Department (which includes accounts payable, payroll, student finance, grants, and special programs, and purchasing) provides financial oversight for the District. The district is lacking effective oversight over their financial aid programs. In review of the district's audit for 2019-20, the team determined that there were three audit findings reflecting lack of effective oversight in the financial aid programs. The district lacked internal controls and compliance by not reporting changes in new presidents and directors of financial aid to the US Department of Education within 10 business days. Additionally, there is no formal documented review process for Return to Title IV (R2T4). Lacking these internal controls results in noncompliance related to effective oversight of financial aid programs and the US Department of Education requirements. (III.D.10)

When making short-range financial plans, the District considers long-range financial priorities. The District looks at multi year projections as part of the annual budget development process and distributes funds through its Budget Allocation Model. Additionally, it recently adopted a board policy requiring a minimum 10% ending fund balance requirement. The District plans for and allocates for the payment of liabilities and future obligations. This includes allocating funds for its OPEB liabilities. The team reviewed the 2020 Actuarial Reports and noted the District has an estimated $230 million total OBEP liability for its Pre-2004 employees, which it funds through a bond. The District has an estimated $16.6 million total OPEB liability for its Post-2004 employees, of which it has funded approximately $1.1 million as of June 30, 2020. The District identified funding sources in the 2020-21 Budget, which includes a budgeted general fund OPEB contribution combined with Trust funds. The College and the District collaborate to ensure

financial solvency of the institution through financial planning, budgeting, revenue and expense monitoring, and reporting. Planning for payment of liabilities and future employee-related obligations are addressed within the District's annual budget development process. The District projects a multiyear budget during the annual budget development cycle which assures fiscal solvency and an adequate amount of reserves per BP 6250 Budget Management. The District uses a debt service fund to account for and pay general long-term debt. The District evaluates the debt service fund annually through the annual financial report to the Board to ensure appropriate resources are allocated for the repayment of any locally incurred debt instruments. The District has procedures in place to ensure that all District/College personnel use financial resources in a manner consistent with the intended purpose of the funding sources. They include: BP 6300 Fiscal Management and Accounting, BP 6320 Investment, AP 6305 Debt, BP 6305 Debt Issuance and Management, AP 6740 Citizen's Bond Oversight Committee, and BP 6740 Citizen's Bond Oversight Committee. (III.D.11, III.D.12, III.D.13, III.D.14)

The College monitors and manages student loan default rates, revenue streams, and assets and works with the District to ensure compliance with federal requirements, including Title IV of the

Higher Education Act.

Contracting practices support the College Mission, Goals, and Priorities, and are in compliance with the Board Policies and Administrative Procedures. The District and College ensure that all contractual agreements are reviewed and approved to minimize undue institutional risk and exposure. The College and District maintain control over all contracts and each contract contains provisions whereby the District can terminate contracts that do not meet required standards of quality.

The College sites the following Board Policies and Administrative Procedures as evidence: AP 6330 Purchasing, BP 6340 Bids and Contracts, AP 6340 Bids and Contracts, AP 6350 Contracts – Construction, AP 6350 Contracts – Accessibility of Information Technology (III.D.16)

Conclusions:

The College meets the Standard, except for III.D.5, III.D.6, III.D.7, III.D.8, and III.D.10.

Recommendations to Meet Standards

District Recommendation 1: In order to meet the Standards, the team recommends the district have appropriate internal control mechanisms and regularly evaluate its financial management practices and uses the results for improvement to ensure financial documents have a high degree of credibility (III.D.5, III.D.6, III.D.8).

District Recommendation 2: In order to meet the Standard, the team recommends the district respond to all external audit findings and such responses are comprehensive, timely, and communicated properly (III.D.7).

District Recommendation 3: In order to meet the Standard, the district must practice effective oversight of its financial aid programs (III.D.10).

Standard IV

Leadership and Governance

IV.A. Decision-Making Roles & Processes

General Observations:

Merritt College uses Peralta Community College District (PCCD) policies, procedures, and campus handbooks that define governance membership, responsibilities and roles to support continuous improvement of the institution. For example, the *Draft* Participatory Governance and Decision-Making Handbook describes the framework for collaboration regarding ideas for improvement and innovation and ensures representation from all constituents. There is also a published participatory governance calendar and scheduled semi-annual summits to "close-the-loop" and discuss process and governance evaluation outcomes. The institution publishes a newsletter to communicate initiatives and outcomes to the campus community and recommendations to the President from the College Council are transcribed and disseminated to the campus by Council representatives. Merritt College self-identified that improvement is needed to better train representatives in student government and assist with communication models.

Findings and Evidence:

The College uses the *Draft* Participatory Governance and Decision-Making Handbook (2020) to ensure that ideas for improvement and innovation occur at all levels, as this handbook defines the participative framework, process, and procedures. These tenants are incorporated into various college plans (i.e., Educational Master, Integrated Budgeting, Facilities Master, and Technology Master Plans) to further ensure participation among the varied constituent groups in planning and improvement. The 2020 *Merritt College Government Assessment Survey* indicated that 41% of respondents thought that governance committees represent all contingency groups in the decision-making process and an additional 43% of respondents thought it occurred sometimes. The Team recognizes that this is a new process at the College and heard in multiple meetings (e.g., Open Forums and interviews) that the College is moving in a positive trajectory, which should be maintained. (IVA.1)

The College follows Peralta Community College District Board Policies (PCCD; BP 2510 and 5400) and Administrative Procedures (AP 2511 and 5400) that require local policy and procedure development and implementation to include input from administrators, faculty, staff, and students in areas that have significant effect on the groups and/or where mandated by shared governance practices. In particular, BP 2510 requires that student membership should occur on all college and district committees, where possible. The College employs the *Draft* Participatory Governance and Decision-Making Handbook (2020) to guide contingency-group collaboration and process. The Team was pleased to see their Improvement Plan regarding student government training and participation as the need for this was expressed in Team meetings. (IV.A.2)

PCCD Board Policies and Administrative Procedures define the roles of administrators and faculty in determining institutional policies, planning, and budgeting, and the *Draft* Participatory Governance and Decision-making Handbook provides further context of these roles within a shared governance framework. The College's Integrated Planning and Budgeting Model (IPB) describes the collaborative planning, budgeting, and decision-making roles of the College's constituents. The IPB Model has been developed collaboratively to create an integrated planning framework linking program review, educational planning, facilities improvement and resource allocation. This includes a timeline for completion of regular program review and annual updates. These programmatic reviews provide a venue for each program to voice needs based on faculty and administrative areas of expertise. Through discussions with the VPI, VPSS and Deans, the Team confirmed that there are policies and procedures in place at Merritt College for faculty and administrators to have a voice in planning and budgeting. (IV.A.3)

PCCD policies recognize and define the College's Academic Senate in making recommendations to the Board of Trustees with respect to "academic and professional matters," including the areas of curriculum, educational program development, and associated areas of student learning. Merritt's College Council Constitution further codifies this by stating that in "academic-professional matters," the Administration will rely primarily on the advice and judgment of the Academic Senate. Development, review and recommendations concerning curriculum and student learning programs and services is overseen by the Academic Senate's Curriculum Committee (CC) and Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment Committee (SLOAC). Both the CC and SLOAC include administration representatives. The SLOAC includes staff representatives, Dean, and administrative ex-officio members, and the CC includes a Student Services professional appointed by the VPI, the Articulation Officer, and the Distance Education Coordinator. Both committees have well-defined structures and processes that allow faculty in coordination with academic administrators to guide the development and review of curriculum and learning programs. Further evidence includes the resolution drafted by the Academic Faculty Senate regarding a course (LANHT 840) that was approved by the Board of Trustees. (IV.A.4)

PCCD Board Policy on institutional planning (BP 3250) combined with local decision making (BP 2510) and coordination with the Merritt College administrative procedures for Educational Master Planning and Integrated Planning and Budgeting ensure that decision making is aligned with areas of expertise and considers the relevant perspectives of the administration, faculty, staff, and student representatives. For example, the Task Force defined for Educational Master Planning includes the College President, Vice Presidents of Instruction and Student Services, Director of Research, Dean, Academic Senate President, Classified Senate President, and Associated Students President. The long-range goals identified by this constituent group guide annual institutional planning efforts as described in the Integrated Planning and Budgeting cycle. This cycle takes place on a fiscal year basis to ensure timely action on institutional plans and policies. After a review of Curricular Committee documents and agendas, the Team verified that timely actions are taken regarding curricular changes based on their established process. Discussion with the VPI and Instructional Deans confirmed institution takes timely action on institution plans and policies. (IV.A.5)

The Institution's College Council Constitution states that all committee meeting agendas and minutes must be posted to the College website in a timely manner and all decision-making committee chairs are required to submit their approved meeting agendas, minutes, reports,

presentations, and any other pertinent materials within 72 hours to the "merrittgovdocs" web address. Additionally, the chairs are also responsible for disseminating meeting agendas in accordance with the California State Brown Act, and committees and senates that report to the College Council must provide written reports for each College Council meeting. The purpose of the College Council is to receive recommendations from review committees (must be done in writing), obtain constituent opinions, and to document decision making and provide a means of communication within the College community. In addition, each College Council representative is responsible for disseminating information to their respective constituents. (IV.A.6)

The College regularly evaluates its governance and decision-making structures, whereas the Peralta Community College District has responsibility for ensuring policies are reviewed at least once every six years (BP and AP 2410). The College's processes are discussed at semi-annual planning summits. The summits provide a mechanism for establishing and evaluating successes and challenges within the participatory governance process. The College engages in a regular assessment week each spring, where college constituents evaluate its integrated planning and budgeting model, collegial decision-making and participatory governance structure, assessment, and program review processes. The Merritt College Governance Assessment Survey was deployed in 2020 and the Team reviewed responses which identified areas for improvement in technological preparedness, participatory governance structure, and commitment to institutional priorities and processes. The Team acknowledged the swift action of the College to respond to the survey and one activity has been completed, updating the Participatory Governance Handbook. The final draft was approved at the February 24, 2021 College Council meeting. (IV.A.7).

Conclusions:

The College meets the Standard.

IV.B. Chief Executive Officer

General Observations:

Merritt College is currently led by a President who was appointed in May 2020, after serving as Acting President since November 2019. Through the reaffirmation of the accreditation process, the Team confirmed that the institution adheres to the administrative structure as outlined on the College organizational chart where roles and responsibilities are clearly delineated and overseen by the President. Of note is the role President Johnson played in filling critical positions at the College, which the CEO prioritized to ensure delivery of high quality instruction and services at the institution.

The President has primary responsibility for the College, instructional quality, and the leadership of planning, organizing, budgeting, personnel, and institutional effectiveness per the position description. The District Chancellor has delegated this authority to the College President through PCCD Board Policy 2430. The President is actively involved in various community groups including the Oakland Black Enterprise Zone, Brotherhood of Elders, and actively collaborates with the Oakland Unified School District.

<u>Findings and Evidence:</u>

The current President's job description states that "The President plans, organizes, and administers the college, develops and recommends goals and objectives and oversees recommendations for the selection of personnel." Furthermore, the PCCD job announcement/description for Merritt College's CEO position (President) is a clear statement of the CEO's responsibility for the quality of the institution. This includes the President's role in planning, organizing and administering the college as well as developing and making recommendations regarding goals. The President of Merritt College issued several communications to the College community regarding efforts to fill positions left vacant at the college and how these new appointments support the institutional values and goals. Administrative procedures are in place to help guide the institution's President regarding their responsibility for planning, budgeting, and decision making. (IV.B.1)

The College's organizational chart and associated duties of the President are evidence that the institution has practices in place to ensure that the President is responsible for the planning, oversight and evaluation of the administrative structure. The President filled five key positions, created two new positions to support counseling and financial aid, and reorganized the College in September 2020. In addition, the President advocated for the hiring of a full-time researcher (appointed March 2020) to improve the quality and availability of institutional data used in decision making. Announcements of these new administrative positions are evidence of the President's delegation of administrative authority in a manner consistent with the CEO duties and the organizational structure of the institution. The President also lists duties in job descriptions indicating delegation of authority (e.g., VP of Student Services) and has appointed administrative positions to participatory governance groups, which adhere to participatory governance policies and procedures. The President has recognized the need for a VP of Administrative Services to serve as the Chief Business Officer (CBO), as Merritt College is one of three colleges in the 10 member Bay Valley conference that does not have a VP of Administrative Services that serves as a CBO. In recognition of budgetary constraints, President Johnson has recommended to the Board of Trustees that the vacant Director of Business Services be reclassified to a Vice President position. (IV.B.2).

The President oversees established processes to ensure institutional improvement, student achievement, and strategic direction to fulfill the College mission. The California Community College Chancellor's "Vision for Success" goals are integrated into the Educational Master Plan for the College. This plan is used to guide the Institutional Effectiveness Committee in its annual recommendations of institutional priorities related to improving student achievement and learning. Additionally, established learning outcomes and assessment procedures are in place, and ultimately overseen by the President, to provide institutional set performance standards for student achievement. Assessment and institutional data are used by the College to produce comprehensive program reviews and annual updates. This process ensures that review and planning are based on research evidence and, where appropriate, external input (e.g., advisory committees, employment data). These processes are overseen through shared governance and administrative appointees who work under the direction of the President. A validation process for annual updates and a resource ranking rubric ensure that resource planning and allocation support student success. The President has a role in the twice-a-year Planning Summits. (IV.B.3)

The duties of the President include oversight and leadership for meeting accreditation standards, policies, and eligibility requirements. The President routinely communicates with the District, Board, and campus community regarding accreditation standards, processes, and compliance. Institution-wide flex days and summits are used to provide accreditation updates and to communicate how meeting the accreditation criteria leads to student success and fulfillment of the college mission. The President hosted an Accreditation Day in 2020 and updated the District Board on submission of the ACCJC Special Report and completion of the ISER. This leadership is evident in College communications and the formation of an accreditation steering committee and self-study team. The Team applauds the College for recognizing the need to institutionalize its commitment to accreditation by developing an on-going Accreditation Standing Committee in January 2020. (IV.B.4)

The President plans, organizes, and administers the College, develops and recommends goals and objectives and oversees recommendations for the selection of personnel. The President works within the limits established by Board policies and Chancellor's directives. Additionally, the President develops and administers the college budget and serves on committees and councils as directed by Board policies or the Chancellor. The President also oversees the College's Integrated Planning and Budgeting Model and is a lead participant in the processes described within the model that lead to effective planning and budgeting and achievement of long-range goals. The Team confirmed that the President attends College Council and College Budget Committee meetings, as these are recommending bodies to his position, and he also reviews hiring recommendations. (IV.B.5).

The President is involved in community events and associations. The President uses a variety of mechanisms to communicate with the institution and the larger community served by the College. The President makes use of a monthly newsletter (*Merritt Connection*) to provide a regular update of College activities and issues facing both the College and the community. The President also participates in regularly scheduled listening sessions and informal "conversation hours." Communication is further enhanced through the College website which provides information regarding the functions of the college and areas where the College serves and partners with the external community in areas such as Adult Education and ESOL. Organizations that the President belongs to include the Brotherhood of Elders and Oakland Black Enterprise Zone. The President actively collaborates with community organizations. Examples include assisting the Oakland City Council with a Safety Forum and leading a Community Town Hall on Policing titled the "Black and Blue Forum." The President is also active in service-learning events such as "Grab and Go" lunches which provide food and supplies to the needy in Oakland. (IV.B.6)

Conclusions:

The College meets the Standard.

IV.C. Governing Board

General Observations:

The Peralta Community College District Board of Trustees is made up of seven members whose responsibilities are codified in Board Policies. The Board of Trustees (Board) of the Peralta Community College District (PCCD) has two newly elected board members as of November 2020 and an Interim Chancellor as of August 2020. There has been significant transition of leadership at the Chancellor position with four Chancellors in the last 5 years as well as four new college presidents within the last year. Turnover in administration is has been very high in previous years, appears to be better, as there has been work done to recruit and hire adequate administration. The turnover and interims in the District Office particularly the Chancellor and financial administration has been directed linked to the dysfunction of the Board of Trustees behaviors and lack of support of administration. The seven-member Board is still working to understand the delineation of roles, responsibilities and clear lines of authority in the District and at the Colleges. While the District has a well-defined set of Board Policies (BP) and Administrative Procedures (AP) to aid in the decision-making process, it is not clear to what extent they are reviewed on a regular basis and are followed.

Findings and Evidence:

The Board has authority over and responsibility for these policies that assure the academic quality, integrity and effectiveness of the student learning programs and services and financial stability of the District. The Board receives quarterly financial reports to monitor the fiscal health of the District. The Board maintains a master calendar of required topics that are covered throughout the year and this calendar serves as the basis for agenda items that keep the Board apprised on institutional performance.

The Board has authority for policies that assure the financial stability of the institution however, the District is currently under Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) enhanced fiscal monitoring which resulted in a December 16-17 Fiscal Monitoring site visit. While there have been clear efforts to meet the fiscal recommendations, PCCD was put on probation in January 2020 and four Special Reports were requested. The Special Reports noted much hard work at the colleges to fix issues noted in the January 2021 action letter and there is still significant work to be completed. The 2019-2020 Financial Audit was not completed so a thorough analysis was not included in the Special Reports. ACCJC met in January 2021 and acted to Defer Action on the accredited status of the institution maintaining the current Probation status. The recent 2019-20 audit reflect 10 findings of which internal controls was noted for the fourth year in a row. The continuation of internal control findings and financial aid findings will require a stabile competent financial staff to ensure the financial stability of the district. While the colleges are working to improve their finances, enrollment management, and overall financial credibility the District Office is still experiencing instability in financial administrators. (IV.C.1,)

The Board Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice (BP 2715) provides that the governing authority rest with the entire Board, not with individual members. The board held a board retreat December 15-16, 2020 with an agenda that included Building Trust, Civility and Respect among

Board Members, Reaching Agreement and Adhering to Accreditation Standards. This retreat was facilitated by Dr. Helen Benjamin and resulted in a PCCD Board Statement of Cooperation which was adopted at the January 5, 2021 Board Meeting. This statement was signed by all the board members, committing them to adhering to BP 2715 Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice and a number of other items leading them towards functioning as a high-performing team. The Retreat also resulted in the development of Board Protocols of Communication that informs the processes Board members are to use when communicating with each other, CEO/Staff Members, the public and how to address complaints from the public. All the board members present (6 of 7) at the December retreat agreed to abide by the Board Protocols of Communication they developed with Dr. Benjamin. Since that time the faculty union filed a complaint, and the protocols are in legal review. There were multiple issues raised in interviews as evidenced through administrative turnover at the district office and apparent when watching Board meetings regarding the Board advancing the agendas of certain groups over the interest of the entire District wellbeing and effectiveness. It is noteworthy the Board of Trustees is actively working on these concerns.- (IV.C.2)

Board Policies (BP) 2431 and 2435 outlines the Chancellor Selection process and Evaluation of the Chancellor. The Board approved a temporary waiver in BP 2431 for the current Chancellor Search, to authorize proceeding with two finalists instead of requiring five finalists as noted in BP 2431. The Board is reviewing a permanent change to BP 2431 through the shared governance process. BP 2435, Evaluation of the Chancellor indicates the Chancellor and the Board shall mutually develop a timely evaluation process and tool that incorporates the District's goals, objectives and expectations. There is no evidence in the ISER's that an annual evaluation of the Chancellor took place nor is there evidence of an agreed upon evaluation tool, incorporating the necessary elements noted above. There was a special board meeting held July 18, 2020 for Public Employee Evaluation, Chancellor, and this was after the resignation letter of July 16, 2020 from the Interim Chancellor. There is no evidence in the Board Agenda as to whether or not an agreed upon evaluation tool was used during this Board meeting and it is clear through interviews that a Chancellor evaluation was not completed following the board policy. (IV.C.3)

PCCD Board meetings hold space for public comment. PCCD has seven duly elected trustees through area-based elections. The District has policies in place establishing election procedures. BP 2710 and AP 2712: Conflict of Interest is supposed to prevent conflicts of interest and that Trustees are not unduly influenced. Board members are required file an annual Statement of Economic Interests. All Board members filed their Statements of Economic Interests. There is concern within the District reflected in interviews, and evidence in high turnover in administration that some Board members advance the interest of certain groups over the interests of the entire District. This has resulted in high turnover of administrators particularly in the District Office. This results in lack of continuity in fiscal and process oversight. (IV.C.4)

The Board has established a number of policies and administrative procedures to support the District mission and ensure that it has ultimate responsibility for the educational quality, adequacy of resources and legal expertise. The Board's policies include setting policies for institutional effectiveness, graduation, curriculum development, and standards of scholarship. These BP's 1200: Mission, 2200: Board Duties and Responsibilities, 3225: Institutional Effectiveness by regularly assessing the District's institutional effectiveness, 6300: Fiscal

Management and Accounting requiring quarterly fiscal and budgetary conditions of the district to the Board. (IV.C.5)

PCCD has developed twelve Board Policies to specify the board's size, duties, responsibilities, structure and operating procedures. These policies are available to the public on the Board of Trustees webpage on the Peralta District website. Board policy 2010 defines Board membership as consisting of seven members elected by the qualified voters of the District and BP 2015 provides for two non-voting student members. Board policies also dictate the process for board elections, trustee duties and responsibilities and the manner in which meetings take place. (IV.C.6)

The District has BP and AP 2410: Board Policy and Administrative Procedure that identifies the Districts process for development and review of Board policy. The Board is a member of the Community College League of California Policy Subscription Service, which provides bi-annual updates. The District relies on a faculty member to serve as the liaison/coordinator with CCLC's Policy and Subscription Service and to ensure the District stays in compliance with legally mandated policy changes. In addition, the ISER states that the District reviews all policies and procedures on a six-year cycle, based on the date of last review and is tracked by the Chancellor's office. This Policy and Procedure lists each BP and AP and the date when they were last reviewed or revised. This is a very good process for tracking review and revisions however; many of the BP's listed have not been reviewed in the last six-years. It appears the faculty coordinator is not responsible for ensuring board policies are reviewed every six years but primarily for keeping the District in compliance with legally required mandates. (IV.C.7)

The Board has policies in place indicating a review of student success and mandating the colleges regularly and publicly post success indicators. The ISER states that student success, student learning, and achievement presentations are scheduled on the Board meeting topic sessions and scheduled for three times a year but in checking the Board of Trustees Meeting Schedule, only two student success reports were listed. In reviewing additional evidence provided, the Board has received presentations on enrollment trends, student success and the impact of COVID and fiscal issues. However, the board's self-evaluation indicates that they do not regularly review key indicators of student success as eighty percent of the trustees responding, feel that this standard is partially met or not being met. The board wants reports that provide for leading indicators of student learning and achievement, fiscal issues and other presentations that would allow them to review policies as necessary to make improvements before issues become problems. (IV.C.8)

Board Policy 2740 indicates that the Board should receive ongoing development as a Board and receive an orientation as new Trustees. The Board development program includes a new trustee orientation, study sessions and conference attendance. The Board members regularly attend the Community College League of California (CCLC) Effective Trustee Conference and Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) Conferences where workshops on the roles of trustees are presented. The new board members elected in November 2020 received a two-hour orientation to the District on Dec. 7, 2020 and were given a Trustee Handbook outlining the Roles and Responsibilities of a Trustee. (IV.C.9)

Board policy 2745: Board Self Evaluation provides for the Board to conduct a formal self-evaluation on an annual basis during the months of June and July. The Board uses the results from the self-evaluation to set goals for the upcoming year. Two evaluations were presented for spring 2020, one was specific to how the Board perceives itself meeting ACCJC Standards and the second one was used during a Board retreat to discuss issues within the Board and develop Board goals for 2020-2021. It does not appear that all seven Board members participated in either Self-Evaluation. One had six members participate and the other had five members participate. The Board held a two-day Retreat on Dec. 15-16 with a facilitator to review their self-evaluation and had an honest and in-depth discussion about board effectiveness. The result of this retreat was a signed PCCD Board Statement of Cooperation and the development of a Board Vision. It will be important to continue this process of regular evaluations and support the board's current efforts to establish goals for improvement. (IV.C.10)

Board Policy 2715, 2710 and AP 2712 are the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice and Conflict of Interest Code policies. Board Policy 2710 requires Board members to disclose any conflict of interest in items before the Board and recuse themselves from the discussions. AP 2712 requires the Chancellor to insure the District complies with conflicts of interest reporting requirements for designated employees. The District has Board Policy 2715 that is a code of ethics/standards of practice that should be followed by all board members. Board members also file annual statement of interest Form 700. During the December 15-16, 2020 Board Retreat, the Board recommitted itself to uphold the code of ethics and adhere to the PCCD Board Statement of Cooperation. (IV.C.11)

BP 2430 and BP 7110 delegates Authority to the Chancellor for administering the policies adopted by the Board and implementing decisions of the Board requiring administrative action. BP 7110 delegates authority to the Chancellor with the exception of appointment of management employees, non-academic temporary substitute, and short-term employees who are paid less than 75 percent of the fiscal year (except for professional experts, apprentices and student workers). Board members have discussed qualifications of recommended management hires and conducted internet searches on recommended hires. Results of evaluations of recommended management hires were requested by board members to ascertain whether a person was qualified for a particular management job. BP 7110 is more prescriptive than Standard IV.C.12 and is not delegating full authority to the Chancellor to implement and administer board policies. Although these policies exist, the interpretation on what they mean differs among board members and they should be discussed, reviewed and revised as appropriate. ACCJC met in January 2020 and acted to Impose Probation on the accredited status of the institution. The ACCJC action letter indicated that it was not evident from the special report that the District had addressed foundational issues including the lack of adherence to Board policies and administrative procedures. A Fiscal Monitoring Special Report was submitted for the Jan. 13-15, 2021 ACCJC Meeting. The Commission also considered the Fiscal Monitoring Peer Review Team Report prepared by the fiscal monitoring team that visited the institution December 16 – 17, 2020. As a result, ACCJC February, 2021 letter acted to Defer Action and continue the Probation period for the Peralta District until after the comprehensive review of the team visit scheduled for Spring 2021. (IV.C.12)

In preparation for the 2021 ACCJC accreditation visit, the Board members received training from Dr. Stephanie Droker, President of ACCJC on September 24, 2019. The Board received several updates on the ISER's being prepared by the colleges. The Board also attended CCLC and other Trustee related conferences where they received additional training on accreditation. During the interview process, the Board members indicated they had received numerous ACCJC trainings over the last three years. (IV.C.13)

Conclusions:

The College does not meet the Standard.

Recommendations to Meet Standards

District Recommendation 4: In order to meet the Standard, the team recommends that the Board of Trustees assure the academic quality, integrity, and effectiveness of the student learning programs and services and the financial stability of the institution. (IV.C.1)

District Recommendation 5: In order to meet the Standard, the team recommends that once the Board of Trustees reach a decision, all board members act in support of board decisions. (IV.C.2)

District Recommendation 6: In order to meet the Standard, the team recommends the Board adhere to their clearly defined policy for evaluating the CEO of the district (IV.C.3)

District Recommendation 7: (IV.C.4) In order to meet the Standard, the team recommends the governing board is an independent, policy-making body that reflects the public interest in the institution's educational quality. (IV.C.4)

District Recommendation 8: In order to meet the Standard, the team recommends that the Board establish a formal process for regularly assessing its policies for effectiveness in fulfilling the district's mission and revise them as necessary. (IV.C.7)

District Recommendation 9: In order to meet the Standard, the team recommends the Board delegate full responsibility and authority to the Chancellor to implement and administer board policies without Board interference (IV.C.12)

Recommendations to Improve Quality:

District Recommendation 12: In order to increase effectiveness, the team recommends that the Board regularly review key indicators of student learning and achievement and institutional plans for improving academic quality. (IV.C.8)

IV.D. Multi-College Districts or Systems

General Observations:

The Chancellor provides leadership and expectations for the college presidents to operate their college independently and effectively. Roles, responsibilities are clearing defined in the delineation of function and in board policies and administrative procedures. The District ensures budgeting and resource allocations that support college operations, are aligned with the mission of the District, and are informed through the district's Planning and Budgeting Integration Model annual summit. Communication between the colleges and the district occurs primarily through participatory governance committees and informs decision-making and improvements.

The Interim Chancellor and College Presidents, a relatively new team of executive leaders, are working extremely hard to improve communication and processes for districtwide integrated planning and resource allocation. They are building the systems that with time will produce positive results.

Findings and Evidence:

The Chancellor provides leadership in setting and communicating expectations to support the effective operation of the colleges. Leadership Standards of Excellence outline five leadership expectations: Commitment, Trust, Courage, Culture and Accountability, and Results-Oriented Excellence. The Chancellor clearly defines roles, authority and responsibilities between the colleges and the district through board policies, the delineation of functions, and the college president job description. (IV.D.1)

The Chancellor ensures colleges receive effective and adequate services to support the colleges in achieving their missions through board policies and administrative procedures. The district provides centralized information technology, human resources, fiscal affairs, and research and planning services to the colleges. The district holds a Planning and Budgeting Integration Model summit and program review process annually to inform allocation of resources. Delineation of functions is evident through college functional maps, however, there is no consistency on which operational responsibilities and functions are owned by the district, colleges, or are shared functions.

There appears to be some confusion about the delineation of functions and responsibilities between the district and the colleges. During the team visit, this issue kept coming up as questions about processes were asked. The District needs to establish a clear delineation of functions and responsibilities that are consistently applied across all colleges. The District and colleges can then work together to document the workflow and communication processes that ensure the district, and the colleges adhere to the delineation in practice. Functional maps provided as evidence in Institutional Self Evaluation Reports (ISERs) were different between three colleges and one college. (IV.D.2)

The district follows board policies and administrative procedures for allocation and reallocation of resources to support effective operation and sustainability. Resource allocations are determined using the district's Budget Allocation Model and through the Planning and Budgeting Integration Model. The district's Participatory Governance Council and other participatory governance committee advise on budget and planning decisions. The Chancellor provides regular fiscal updates to the Board and independent audit reports and audited financial statements demonstrate the district reviews and ensures effective control of expenditures.

(IV.D.3)

College presidents are delegated full responsibility and authority to implement and administer district policies without interference as noted in Administrative Procedure 2430. Presidents are responsible for full oversight of their colleges and ensuring board policies and administrative procedures are implemented. Presidents are expected to provide leadership to their constituencies and create a climate of partnership and accountability and be actively engaged with constituents through participatory governance groups.

The Chancellor is responsible for evaluating performance and holding presidents accountable and does this through the evaluation procedure and timeline established for all managers in accordance with Administrative Procedure 7124 and discussed during an interview with the Chancellor. This process includes development of annual goals related to the objectives in the district strategic goals and institutional objectives, 360 peer review and a review of core leadership competency areas.

The team suggests the evaluation tool and process be specific to the job description, roles and responsibilities of the college president. (IV.D.4)

The District and the Colleges work together to ensure planning and evaluation is integrated to improve student learning and achievement and institutional effectiveness. A crosswalk was created that aligns college strategic goals to district strategic goals and then to the State Chancellor's Vision for Success goals. This crosswalk has been used by the district and colleges to guide their strategic plan development. The district and colleges follow board policies and administrative procedures for institutional effectiveness and annually assesses goals and progress at the annual Planning and Budget Integrated Model summit. The last approved strategic plan was completed in 2015. The board is currently revising their mission and a stop gap strategic plan to provide guidance to colleges for planning.

Once the District establishes a clear and consistent delineation of functions in Standard IV.D.2, the team suggests that the participatory governance process, workflow and communication be documented to better support integrated planning and evaluation. (IV.D.5)

The Peralta Community College District utilizes a number of district-level participatory governance committees and standing operational groups to facilitate two-way communication between the district and colleges. Communication also occurs through districtwide administrative meetings such as the District Administrative Leadership Team and Manager Meetings. Other parts of the structure include the Planning and Budgeting Integrated Model (PBIM) as well as a number of district-wide planning committees. The District includes timely and accurate information and updates in their Peralta Gems weekly newsletter and through districtwide emails and utilizes its webpage and social media for external communication. College presidents regularly communicate to the Board on issues of student success and other items of institutional importance. Through reports at college governance committees and regular written communications, college presidents ensure that college constituencies are well informed of district matters and are able to provide college perspectives through two-way communication.

Once the District establishes a clear and consistent delineation of functions in Standard IV.D.2, the team suggests that a communication process and strategy be created to ensure effective operation of the colleges. (IV.D.6)

The District evaluates role delineations, governance and decision-making processes annually through the Planning and Integrated Budget Model summit. As a result, recent changes to improve services were made including the decentralization of Financial Aid, the coming decentralization of Admission and Records and the reconstitution of the Legal Department. These evaluation outcomes were communicated widely through reports at board meetings and in shared governance district wide committees.

The team suggests the district formalize the outcome evaluation process once a clear and consistent delineation of functions is completed in Standard IV.D.2. (IV.D.7)

Conclusions:

The College meets the Standard, except for Standard IV.D.2.

Recommendations to Meet Standards:

District Recommendation 10: In order to meet the standard the team recommends the District clearly delineate, document and communicate the operational responsibilities and functions of the District from those of the Colleges and consistently adhere to this delineation in practice. (IV.D.2)

Quality Focus Essay

The Merritt College Quality Focus Essay (QFE) is a well-developed document that provides a roadmap for identifying areas for improving institutional effectiveness and continuing to meet accreditation standards via four Action Projects (AP).

The APs focus on enhancing access to certificate and degree programs across the institution that align with the four pillars of Guided Pathways: Clarify the Path, Enter the Path, Stay on the Path, and Ensure Learning and with ACCJC Standards I.B., I.C., II.A. and II.C. These plans include a broad range of support and resources to provide relevant assistance to students as they pursue their academic and career goals with the intent of (1) closing the achievement gap that exists for Latinx and Black American students and (2) increasing graduation rates among these same groups by 15 percent in two years.

The first action project focuses developing efficient pathways for all of majors that are scheduled to support timely program completion and improved student success rates by Fall 2021.

The second action project focuses integrating and leveraging existing and planned resources, including the redesigned website, Merritt Hub (digital recruitment community), College Central (employment placement website), Guided Pathways program mapping, and Guided Pathways areas of interest.

The third action project focuses on developing a Career Exploration Summer Academy in partnership with OUSD's Linked Learning Division to enable students to earn college credit and explore hands-on (virtual) CE programs while earning a stipend for completion (Enter the Path).

The fourth and final action project focuses on launching a pilot cohort program intended to increase the academic success of Black and Brown students in STEM fields (Enter the Path, Stay on the Path, Ensure Learning).

The overarching anticipated impact of these projects is to make progress in closing the achievement gap that exists for Latinx and Black American students. The College intends to achieve the following specific outcomes:
- Increase graduation rates among Latinx and Black American students by 15 percent in two years.

- Decrease the average number of years that it takes Merritt students to graduate by 30 percent in two years.
- Strengthen the partnership between Merritt and OUSD schools with the result that more than 15 percent of students participating in the Career Exploration Summer Academy will enroll in one these programs at Merritt after they graduate from high school.
- Double the number of non-White students that graduate in STEM fields in two years.

The College will measure the success of the four Quality Focus Essay action plans by the following metrics:
- Action Plan 1: Student success rates, graduation rates, transfer rates, semesters enrolled
- Action Plan 2: Increased enrollment among target audiences, retention and graduation rates of students that enrolled as a result of the marketing campaign
- Action Plan 3: Increased enrollment in the Administration of Justice, Emergency Medical Technician, Fire Sciences, and Paralegal Studies programs as a direct result of the summer exploration program.
- Action Plan 4: Enrollment, graduation and transfer rates of Black American and Latinx students in STEM programs