PEER REVIEW TEAM REPORT

Palomar College
1140 W. Mission Road
San Marcos, CA 92069

This report represents the findings of the Peer Review Team that conducted a virtual visit to Palomar College from February 28, 2022 to March 4, 2022. The Commission acted on the accredited status of the institution during its June 2022 meeting and this team report must be reviewed in conjunction with the Commission's Action letter.

Chris Vitelli, Ed.D.
Team Chair

Table of Contents

Palomar College
Comprehensive Peer Review Visit
Peer Review Team Roster

Dr. Chris Vitelli, Team Chair
Merced Community College District
Superintendent/President

Dr. Michael McCandless, Team Assistant
Merced Community College District
Assistant Superintendent/Vice President of Student Services

ACADEMIC MEMBERS
Dr. Corey Marvin
Cerro Coso Community College
Vice President of Instruction and ALO

Dr. Veronica Ogata
Kapiolani Community College
Student Success Coordinator & Program Coordinator

Mr. William Turini
Madera Community College
Political Science Instructor

Ms. María Villagómez
Napa Valley College
Senior Dean, Language Arts, Library, Social Sciences, Distance Education

Dr. Ann Wright
Hartnell College
Instructor, Biological Sciences

ADMINISTRATIVE MEMBERS
Ms. Minerva Flores
Mendocino College
Director of Institutional Effectiveness, Research and Grants

Dr. Roberto Gonzalez
West Los Angeles College
Vice President of Student Services

Dr. Kelly Hall   **ACCJC STAFF LIAISON**
Southwestern College   Dr. Catherine Webb
Assistant Superintendent/Vice President   Vice President

Summary of Peer Review Process

INSTITUTION: Palomar College

DATES OF VISIT: February 28, 2022 – March 4, 2022

TEAM CHAIR: Chris Vitelli, Ed.D.

A ten-member accreditation Team conducted a virtual visit to Palomar College from February 28, 2022 through March 4, 2022 for the purpose of determining whether the College continues to meet Accreditation Standards, Eligibility Requirements, Commission Policies, and U.S. Department of Education regulations.

ACCJC's decision to conduct virtual visits for the Spring 2021 comprehensive reviews was based upon state mandated health guidelines, and the Commission's authority to implement flexibilities to accreditation processes and practices afforded by the federal government in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, the U.S. Department of Education's March 17, 2020 guidance, as well as all updates, permitted accreditors to perform virtual site visits for institutions as long as the accreditor follows up with an onsite visit in a reasonable amount of time to meet the statutory and regulatory requirements (though not necessarily a full peer-review site visit).

Consistent with on-site visits, and in accordance with the *Guide for Conducting Virtual Visits: An Addendum for Peer Review Team Chairs, Team Members, and Colleges,* which ACCJC provided to Team chairs, peer reviewers, and colleges being reviewed, the virtual peer review Team visit to Palomar College relied on an engaged and interactive format. The Team conducted multiple interviews with college representatives, participated in Team meetings to discuss findings, and conducted the required campus forums. The Team evaluated how well the College is achieving its stated purposes, providing recommendations for institutional improvement.

In preparation for the visit, the Team chair attended via Zoom a Team chair training workshop on December 1, 2021 and held a pre-visit meeting with the college CEO on January 10, 2022. During this virtual pre-visit, the Team chair met with campus leadership and key personnel involved in the self-evaluation preparation process. The entire peer review Team received Team training provided by staff from ACCJC via Zoom on February 1, 2022.

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

Prior to the virtual visit, Team members completed their Team assignments, identified areas for further inquiry, and provided a list of interview requests. During the visit, on February 28, 2022, Team members spent the afternoon discussing their initial observations and their preliminary review of the written materials and evidence provided by the College.

The College kicked off the virtual visit by holding a Kick-off Meeting with campus leadership and the Team. The brief meeting consisted of introductions, discussing the process, and a short video highlighting the College.

During the visit, Team members met with approximately 75 faculty, administrators, classified staff and students in formal meetings, group interviews and individual interviews. Team members met with all five trustees from the College and observed a board meeting. The Team held two open forums, which were well-attended, and provided the College community and others an opportunity to share their thoughts with members of the evaluation Team.

The Team is appreciative of the College staff for coordinating and hosting the virtual visit and ensuring a smooth process, which held high standards for the integrity of the peer review process.

Major Findings and Recommendations of the
Peer Review Team Report

Team Commendation

Commendation 1: The Team commends the College for its comprehensive professional development portal, Palomar Powered Professional Development (3PD), which provides robust support and training for all employees, including full-time and part-time faculty, classified staff, and management. (III.A.8, III.A.14)

Recommendations to Meet Standards:

None

Recommendations to Improve Quality:

Recommendation 1: In order to increase effectiveness, the Team recommends the College completes the implementation of the newly developed processes for integrated fiscal reporting, internal controls, and financial planning to improve oversight, transparency, and direction in decision-making and budget management. (III.D.5)

Recommendation 2: In order to increase effectiveness, the Team recommends the College's Governing Board strengthen its new member orientation and ongoing training programs for board development. (IV.C.9)

Recommendation 3: In order to increase effectiveness, the Team recommends the Governing Board reinforce protocols to ensure the Superintendent/President is delegated full responsibility and authority to oversee the operations of the College. (IV.C.12)

Introduction

Palomar College was established on January 15, 1946, when registered voters in the Vista Unified School District, the Fallbrook Union School District, and the Escondido Union High School District voted 714 to 417 in favor of establishing a "junior college" in North County, a region in the northern area of San Diego County.

Palomar College is a public, two-year community college with its main campus located 30 miles north of San Diego. As the largest single-college district in San Diego County, Palomar has a service area that spans more than 2,555 miles. Students may complete credit and noncredit coursework at the College's 200-acre campus located in San Marcos and at three district-owned sites: Escondido Education Center, Fallbrook Education Center, and Rancho Bernardo Education Center. The College offers programs at the Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton.

The College offers more than 250 credit degree and certificate programs within Instructional Services, which is comprised of five academic divisions. Student Services provides comprehensive support through Enrollment Services, Financial Aid, Counseling Department, Transfer Center, Career Center, Health Center, Disability Resource Center (DRC), Veterans Services, Extended Opportunities Programs and Services (EOPS), and other programs that help students achieve their educational goals.

Prior to the pandemic, Palomar College was serving more than 25,000 students annually— enrollments for 2020-21 were down to 21,430 due to impacts of COVID-19. The demographics have remained relatively steady with a majority of students are between of the ages of 18 – 24 (58.5%), female (52.5%), and identify as Hispanic (46.8%) or White (34%).

In March 2020, the College transitioned all instruction and support services online in response to the pandemic. Like most community colleges nationwide, Palomar College's enrollment has declined during the past two years. Impressively, however, the headcount decreased in fall 2020, but the percentage of full-time students was highest in this term (32.8%). Non-credit enrollment decreased substantially from 6.6% in fall 2015 to 3.6% in fall 2020. This reduction is also attributed to COVID-19, due to the remote nature of the pandemic learning environment.

In its 75 years, Palomar College has evolved to meet the ever-changing needs of its students and community, while remaining steadfast in its dedication to promoting student learning and success. The Team observed many notable traits of the College, including effective practices as part of the peer review process, including, but not limited to the following:
- The newly revised and comprehensive governance structure;
- The new executive leadership providing broad and consistent communication, and direction;
- State of the art and energy efficient buildings/facilities aligned with master planning goals and documents;
- The tremendous amount of work completed to address several areas of operational concern over the past year;
- The comprehensive professional development programs and support services for staff.

Eligibility Requirements

1. Authority

The Team confirms that Palomar 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). In addition, the College operates under the authority of the State of California Education Code, which establishes the California community college system under the leadership and direction of the Board of Governors (State of California Education Code 70900-70901). (ER 1)

The College meets the Eligibility Requirement.

2. Operational Status

The College is operational with more than 21,000 students enrolled each semester pursuing courses offered in face-to-face, distance education, and hybrid formats leading to associate degrees, associate degrees for transfer, certificates, and transfer to four-year institutions. (ER 2)

The College meets the Eligibility Requirement.

3. Degrees

The College offers more than 250 approved associate degree and certificate programs in academic and career technical disciplines. All associate degree programs have a required minimum of 60 credits. The catalog, which is accessible to all students online and printed, identifies the degrees and certificate, courses, course sequences, length of study for each program, and course credit, general education, graduation, and transfer requirements. (ER 3)

4. Chief Executive Officer

The College has a Superintendent/President who is the Chief Executive Officer of the District. The Superintendent/President is appointed by the Board of Trustees and serves as the administrator who has been delegated authority to administer Board Policies, Administrative Procedures, and provides leadership for the overall operations of the College. (ER4)
The College meets the Eligibility Requirement.

5. Financial Accountability

Palomar College engages a qualified independent auditor to conduct audits of all financial records. All audits are certified with explanations of findings documented and addressed by the College. The audit is presented annually to the Board and is available to the public. (ER5)

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 a 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 review visit.
☒	The institution cooperates with the review Team in any necessary follow-up related to the third party comment.
☒	The institution demonstrates compliance with the Commission *Policy on Rights, Responsibilities, and Good Practice in Relations with 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 community was provided with opportunity for third party comment, on the Accreditation website, through Jan. 25, 2022. The Accreditation website states the date of the site visit, and has posted updates as the time of the site visit approached.

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 identified elements of institution-set standards that addresses its mission and meets the Commission's requirements. These metrics are widely communicated and inform College planning and resource allocation.

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 Team reviewed the policies and procedures to confirm that criteria for awarding course credit, degrees, and certificates are consistent with common higher education practices. Students are awarded credit for classes based on the Carnegie unit. Programs are developed through a curriculum approval process to ensure appropriate rigor and length. Detailed information about all programs is published in the College Catalog. College practices align with the Commission Policy on Institutional Degrees and Credits. Students are apprised of the total cost of education, including tuition and other fees, through the catalog, the Fiscal Services website, and the Financial Aid website, and in printed publications. Authorized fees are listed in BP/AP 5030.

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: The catalog provides students with clear transfer-of-credit policies and information relating to articulation, transfer of credit from other institutions, associates degrees, credit for prior learning, and transfer planning. Students obtain information through the Articulation website and from the Transfer Center. BP/AP 4050 ensures completed courses satisfy transferability standards and meet GE and/or major preparation requirements.

Distance Education and Correspondence Education

Evaluation Items:

☒	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.
N/A	The institution demonstrates comparable learning support services and student support services for correspondence education students. (Standards II.B.1, II.C.1)
N/A	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.
☒	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 Team examined a random sampling of online courses from a wide variety of disciplines. All demonstrated regular and substantial interaction between students and the instructor. The Team confirmed that online students have access to learning support services and student support services. AP4105 specifies the requirement for password protected login to the course. Proctorio is available for proctoring exams. The technology infrastructure is sufficient to maintain and sustain distance education offerings. Palomar College does not offer Correspondence Education.

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 review) 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 Team reviewed Board Policy and Administrative Policy 5530, a sample of student complaints, and other pertinent information. The College meets the Commission's requirements.

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 meets the Commission's policy requirements by providing accurate and timely information to students and the public about its programs, locations, policies, and accreditation status.

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 U.S. Department of Education (ED). (Standard III.D.15)
☒	If applicable, the institution has addressed any issues raised by ED 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 ED. Remedial efforts have been undertaken when default rates near or meet a level outside the acceptable range. (Standard III.D.15)
N/A	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-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: The Team reviewed relevant documents pertaining to Title IV and found the College in compliance. Title IV financial aid and student loan default rates are within acceptable percentages for students entering repayment status.

Standard I

Mission, Academic Quality and Institutional Effectiveness

I.A. Mission

General Observations:

Palomar College recently updated its mission, vision, and values. The mission defines the College's student populations and commitment to supporting student learning and achievement. The Team found the College shared its mission broadly with constituents and the community.

Findings and Evidence:

The College publishes its mission via the website, catalog, and several other sources. The College's mission and values are reflected throughout their culture, educational philosophy, and practices. The Team found the College is committed to its vision of "transforming lives for a better future." The mission represents the College's educational purpose, student population, and commitment to student learning and achievement. (I.A.1)

The College analyzes and uses data to determine how to effectively accomplish its mission. The College provided several sources of evidence, including board policy (BP 3225) and administrative procedure (AP 3250), data metrics and dashboards, and tools that monitor and assess institutional student success efforts. Further, the development of master and strategic planning documents was informed by institutional and success and access data. (I.A.2)

The College ensures that its programs and services align with its mission through processes summarized in the Integrated Planning, Evaluation, and Resource Allocation Decision-Making Model. The College's Educational Master Plan and Strategic Plan with stated goals and objectives were evidence showing program and services alignment with the mission, vision, and values, along with examples of completed program reviews. (I.A.3)

The Team verified that the mission of Palomar College is regularly reviewed and updated, including a recent revision this past year through the participatory governance process. Palomar staff confirmed all stakeholders, including students, were involved in the development of the revision of the mission, vision, and values. The College has developed a robust governance structure for dialog related to institutional planning and effectiveness, academic quality and improvement on student learning, which are all integrated within their mission and part of the review process. (I.A.4)

Conclusion:

The College meets the Standard.

I.B. Assuring Academic Quality and Institutional Effectiveness

General Observations:

Palomar College engages in sustained, substantive and collegial dialogue about student outcomes, student equity, academic quality, institutional effectiveness and continuous improvement of student learning and achievement through a well-established and institutionalized committee structure. The College has established institution set standards and uses the data and other assessment data to organize institutional processes supporting student learning and student achievement.

Findings and Evidence:

The Team confirmed that Palomar College demonstrates sustained, substantive and collegial dialogue concerning outcomes related to student achievement, equity, academic quality, institutional effectiveness and continued improvement through its planning, evaluation, and governance structures. As part of its collegial dialogue, Board Policy (BP) 2510 *Participation in Local Decision-Making* indicates constituency participation is required to inform institutional decisions. Collegial dialogue regarding institutional and student outcomes is evidenced through its five planning councils. Each of the councils have appropriate constituency representation and report to the Strategic Planning Council (SPC)—ensuring a continuous dialogue on progress towards student and institutional success. Palomar College engaged with the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office (CCCCO) Institutional Effectiveness Partnership Initiative (IEPI) to implement organizational changes, improving its decision-making, constituency representation and participatory governance structures. Through IEPI, Palomar College has been able to address gaps in its decision-making processes through an impressive Governance Task Force (GTF). This resulted in a comprehensive re-design of the College's Governance Handbook, that includes roles of council members, council composition and what the College's planning and resource allocation process entails, all through a diversity, equity and inclusion lens. (I.B.1)

Palomar College defines and assesses student learning outcomes for all instructional programs as well as student and learning support services, through its established assessment process. The assessments align with the College's mission and documented in *Nuventive Improve* (formerly TracDat), the database for tracking assessment of Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) and Service Area Outcomes (SAOs). However, in a 2020-2021 review of the database, the College identified errors such as duplicate course entries, and areas with outdated assessments. Palomar College is now working to improve upon its assessment and documentation processes for SLOs and SAOs as part of a thorough improvement plan. (I.B.2)

The Team reviewed and confirmed Palomar College has established and published institution-set standards for student achievement as it relates to its mission and assesses these standards to inform continuous improvement. The College publishes its standards through its website and in formal planning documents. Standards are set through the Faculty Senate and Strategic Planning Council (SPC), and are adjusted when needed. The College utilizes historical data to set standard and stretch goals, and has integrated program benchmark data (such as course success rates and

completions for areas/departments) in its Program Review and Planning (PRP) for annual analysis. The College utilizes this information in a broader context to ensure t is appropriately serving its community of learners, and fulfilling its mission. (I.B.3)

The Team further confirmed Palomar College utilizes assessment data to inform its institutional processes, supporting student learning and achievement, through internal and external sources. The College uses a myriad of data sets to inform institutional processes and student success outcomes, such as data dashboards, student equity data, student survey data, statewide databases, National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) and other external data sources. The College uses data mined from these sources for a variety of institutional assessment and planning purposes, as noted in its Program Review and Planning (PRP), board decisions and published planning documents. The data are analyzed for any success and/or equity gaps and if needed, strategies are discussed to improve area/department outcomes. This is best exemplified in the College's Quality Focused Essay (QFE) highlighting the College's implementation of Assembly Bill 705 (AB705), which requires California Community Colleges to maximize throughput of new to term students taking transfer-level coursework in English and math within a one-year timeframe. (I.B.4)

Palomar College assesses its mission through its Program Review and Planning (PRP) processes, established department/area goals, SLOs, SAOs, and student success metrics. Data are disaggregated by program type, mode of delivery for analyses and program/area health. Additional metrics for analyses include enrollments, full-time equivalent students, fill rates and course efficiency ratios. The Palomar PRP process informs its Integrated Planning, Evaluation, and Resource Allocation Decision-Making Model (IPM) which connects to the Palomar Master, Strategic, Facility, Enrollment and Equity plans. Prioritized resource requests move through the College's allocation decision process, in which a summary is included in the *Palomar College 2021 Integrated Planning and Resource Allocation Report*. In addition, the College has implemented a new college wide resource allocation process which aligns PRP requests with larger institutional planning initiatives. (I.B.5)

Palomar College disaggregates and analyzes data at the institutional, program and course levels for subpopulation of students. Data are gathered and analyzed to identify service gaps, and if necessary, allocate or reallocate resources to mitigate adverse impact(s) towards student success. Palomar College's Student and Equity Council reviews College data and discusses strategies to address achievement gaps among disproportionately impacted subpopulations of students, documented in its 2019-2022 Equity Plan. State equity funding and categorical funds are leveraged to address identified gaps, specifically eliminating access gaps among students of color. Disaggregated data are also used to determine any curriculum disparities in instructional practice, and how to initiate practitioner changes to best serve students. This has resulted in professional development for faculty in utilizing student demographic data to enhance course content and improve classroom strategies. This is exemplified with the Strong Workforce Partnership Institute (SWP), which engaged faculty in practice reflection through data analysis– culminating in a course success and retention action plan. (I.B.6)

The Team confirmed that Palomar College regularly evaluates its institutional policies and practices including instruction, student learning, and resource management programs/processes

through its review cycle. The Strategic Planning Council (SPC) reviewed the College's integrated planning models and as a result, updated its Integrated Planning, Evaluation, and Resource Allocation Decision-Making Model. In tandem, the SPC also reviewed the College's Program Review and Planning (PRP) processes, which resulted in the addition of two standardized forms for instruction and non-instructional programs, supporting academic quality and the College mission. The aforementioned formation of a Governance Task Force (GTF), resulting in an update to the College's Governance Handbook, is an example of the evidence provided for this standard. The College also engaged the state's Fiscal Crisis Management Action Team (FCMAT) to conduct a fiscal health risk analysis. The analysis provided eight (8) recommendations to improve the fiscal health of the institution. These assessment and evaluative efforts have led to improved processes to better provide area/departments with appropriate resources, ensuring student success and fulfilling the overall mission of the College. (I.B.7)

The Team found that institution broadly communicates results of all its assessment and evaluation activities to internal and external stakeholders via a variety of modes. This allows the College to provide a comprehensive analysis of its strengths and opportunities for improvement. The Palomar College Governing Board in its annual institutional effectiveness workshop reviews its student success and achievement data, along with environmental scan metrics. Planning documents also contain an analysis of current assessment and future endeavors. These documents are made available via the College's website, along with annual presentations to the campus community. (I.B.8)

Palomar College engages in continuous, broad based, systematic evaluation and planning through its PRP, informing its Integrated Planning, Evaluation and Resource Allocation Decision-Making Model (IPM), guided by the College's Board Policy (BP)/Administrative Procedure (AP) 3250, Institutional Planning. The College's Program Review and Planning (PRP) process captures staffing and resource requests for instructional and non-instructional programs. This annual process connects the Strategic Plan and the PRP process to overall resource allocation and decision-making. The Team was impressed with the tremendous amount of work Palomar College has completed to improve upon its planning and resource allocation process. This was exemplified through its IEPI work on the development of its Governance Task Force (GTF), which was an overwhelmingly positive and inspiring experience for all participants. The College continues to work towards having an inclusive and comprehensive systematic evaluation and planning process. (I.B.9)

Conclusions:

The College meets the Standard.

I.C. Institutional Integrity

General Observations:

The Team found that Palomar College ensures the public remains informed of its accreditation status by publishing it on the College website and in relevant documents. The College catalog presents accurate and current information for all required details, including its certificates,

degrees, and expected program learning outcomes. Assessment data on student achievement and student learning is collected, and mechanisms are in place to make determinations regarding their meaning. Information on the total cost of education, including tuition, fees, and other required expenses, including textbooks and other instructional materials is made available to the public. The policies that govern the single-college district are regularly reviewed by the governing board and published in easily accessible locations—included among these policies are those that that promote honesty, responsibility, and integrity of all students and employees.

<u>Findings and Evidence:</u>

Palomar College works to assure the clarity, accuracy, and integrity of information it provides to students and the community. The College's accreditation status is published in the catalog and accreditation information is accurate and one-click away from the homepage. Student Learning Outcomes for courses and programs are widely available, with course and program-level outcomes posted appropriately maintained. (I.C.1)

The Team reviewed Palomar College's catalog and confirmed it includes accurate and current descriptions of its calendar; organizational structure; admissions and registration policies; student services, rights, and responsibilities; academic regulations; and graduate, transfer, and program information. (I.C.2)

The Team confirmed all active programs and courses are assessed at least once every three years in alignment with program review and planning cycles. Through annual program review updates, disciplines/programs reflect on SLO assessment results and develop action plans to improve courses, programs, teaching, and learning. Assessment results are analyzed and shared with the Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Cycle (SLOAC) Coordinators and the Learning Outcomes Subcommittee (LOSC), which reports to the Curriculum Committee. Outcomes assessment reports are then created by the SLOAC Coordinators and communicated with the Curriculum Committee and Faculty Senate. GE/ILO assessment reports are also posted for internal and external stakeholders through the Teaching Excellence website. (I.C.3)

The Team reviewed and confirmed the catalog and website describes all transfer and associate degrees, certificates of achievement and proficiency, program descriptions, and credit courses, along with their purpose, course requirements and content, and unit totals for each program. Program learning outcomes are available on the student learning outcomes website. (I.C.4)

The College's Policies and Procedures Committee reviews all BPs and APs on a four-year cycle—ensuring integrity, accuracy, and relevancy on a continuous cycle. Requests to propose or modify policy are brought to the appropriate planning council for approval and routed through the President's Office to the Policies and Procedures Committee. Interviews indicated that under the new College Council-centered model, the review and evaluation of college-level policies, procedures, and publications are addressed as either governance or operational matters. Governance matters are reviewed on a regular basis through the governance councils and operational reviews are conducted by the operational committees existing under the governance councils. (I.C.5)

Palomar College provides information to current and prospective students regarding the total cost of education in printed publications and online. The College's website includes information on Cost of Attendance, including tuition and fees, books and supplies, room and board, transportation and miscellaneous personal expenses for both California residents and non-residents. (I.C.6)

Through a review of applicable policies and procedures, the Team found that Palomar College maintains, publishes, and honors a policy addressing academic freedom (Board Policy 4030), which "encourages academic freedom of expression and the free flow and exchange of information and ideas." The College also sets standards for academic responsibility through Board Policy 4290, Academic Honesty, and the Code of Ethics found in the Constitution of the Faculty Senate of Palomar College. Interviews and discussions validated that while faculty are supported in their academic freedom, they also have a responsibility to present the content of their courses with a professional commitment to their discipline, not to their personal convictions. The Team also found the College establishes and publishes clear policies and procedures promoting student, faculty, classified professional, and administrative ethics, honesty, integrity, and responsibility. (I.C.7, I.C.8, I.C.9, I.C.10)

Palomar College is a California public postsecondary institution. It has no parent organization, private investors, or other external interests. It does not operate in foreign locations, nor does it require conformity among staff regarding beliefs or worldviews. (I.C.11)

Based on a review of evidence, the Team determined that the College has made public all required reports and documents regarding its compliance with ACCJC standards and policies, and found that the College exhibits clarity and accuracy in its relationships with external agencies, including compliance with appropriate California state regulations and statutes. The Team reviewed and confirmed the institution's communications with external agencies (e.g., the California Board of Registered Nursing, the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing, etc.) are clear, accurate, and appropriate. (I.C.12, I.C.13)

Through a review of evidence and interviews, the Team found that the College's commitment to student achievement, student learning, and high-quality education is articulated through its mission, board policies (particularly 1300, 2715, and 6200), and actions. Further, Palomar College is a publicly funded, not-for-profit institution and therefore does not generate financial returns for investors nor contribute to any financial organizations. (I.C.14)

Conclusion:

The College meets the Standard.

Standard II

Student Learning Programs and Support Services

II.A. Instructional Programs

General Observations:

Palomar College ensures all instructional programs are offered in fields consistent with the institution's mission and uses a faculty-driven process for academic program development regardless of location or mode of delivery. The College's instructional programs are aligned with its mission and conducted at levels of quality and rigor appropriate for higher education. The faculty demonstrate collective ownership over the design and improvement of the learning experience and engage in a comprehensive curriculum development and approval process, student learning outcomes assessment process, and program review process to ensure quality. The College assesses its educational quality through methods accepted in higher education, makes the results of its assessments available to the public, and uses the results to improve educational quality and institutional effectiveness. The institution defines and incorporates into all of its degree programs a substantial component of general education designed to ensure breadth of knowledge and to promote intellectual inquiry.

Findings and Evidence:

Palomar College uses rigorous program approval and program review processes to ensure offerings by the college are in fields of study consistent with the institution's mission and appropriate to higher education. The College's Curriculum Committee coordinates, evaluates, reviews, and ensures instructional programs and courses, regardless of location or delivery method, including distance education (DE), meet the standards set by the College mission, align with students' degree/certificate and transfer requirements, and adhere to all state and federal regulations. Additionally, all instructional programs go through the Instructional Program Review and Planning (IPRP) process. Through this extensive process, faculty are required to provide details about their (a) degrees and certificates; (b) program and course learning outcomes; (c) assessment plans for students' attainment of learning outcomes; (d) completion rates, and (e) steps for improvement, if applicable. Furthermore, career and employment data are also analyzed and aligned with program and course goals and outcomes to address and meet students' needs. (II.A.1)

The Team ensured faculty, including full-time and part-time faculty, are responsible for establishing, reviewing, and continuously improving program and course content and methods of instruction that meet academic and professional standards and expectations, federal and state requirements, Board Policies and Administrative Procedures, and any new legislation. Faculty exercise collective ownership in program and course development, review, and improvement, primarily through the College's Curriculum Committee and the Instructional Program Review

and Planning (IPRP) process (see II.A.1.). The Curriculum Committee further ensures courses and programs meet standards of rigor and currency. The IPRP process supports faculty to maintain curricular standards, improve courses (i.e., evaluate course SLO assessment reports) and programs (i.e., review program learning outcomes), and ensure students' needs are addressed (i.e., analyze student achievement data). The Team heard numerous compliments from faculty regarding the quality of support given during the pandemic to help transition to online learning and distance education modes of delivery. Additionally, to improve teaching and learning strategies and promote student success, faculty are offered numerous professional development opportunities (i.e., POET, Active Learning Leaders Conference, Plenary). (II.A.2)

The College has a process for identifying and assessing student learning outcomes for degrees and certificates. The outcomes are mapped and aligned to the General Education/Institutional Learning Outcomes (GE/ILOs) and tracked through the College's learning outcomes database. Using established institutional procedures, the identification, assessment, and review of course and program student learning outcomes (SLOs) occur as part of the formal curriculum development, review, and approval process through the Curriculum Committee, the Instructional Program Review and Planning process (see II.A.1 & II.A.2), and the Learning Outcomes Subcommittee (LOSC). The LOSC further ensures all programs, certificates, and degrees are assessed by assisting faculty, staff, and administrators in implementing regular SLO assessment cycles (every three years), providing SLO assessment support, and formulating steps to improve assessment results, if needed. Additionally, faculty are required to include course SLOs on all syllabi. Evidence provided demonstrates that the course SLOs stated on the syllabi align with the College's official Course Outline of Records (CORs). (II.A.3)

Palomar College has limited offerings at the pre-collegiate level. Selected departments (i.e., English, Math, Humanities) now offer pre-collegiate co-requisite courses to supplement transfer-level courses and stand-alone courses that prepare students for college-level curriculum. The College's catalog delineates the course numbering system to indicate the different levels of courses (i.e., pre-collegiate, collegiate). The College vets all pre-collegiate-level curricula and monitors student performance in these courses. (II.A.4)

The College adheres to board policies, administrative procedures, accreditation, federal, and state standards to ensure degrees and programs follow practices common of American higher education. The institution's requirements for Associate in Arts and Associate in Science degree programs are 60 semester credits of satisfactory completion of courses. Additionally, courses and programs go through an extensive and comprehensive review and approval process (see II.A.1 & II.A.2) to ensure appropriate length, breadth, depth, rigor, course sequencing, time to completion, and synthesis of learning. Faculty are required to develop two-year plans that delineate the program's courses, the appropriate course sequencing, and the semester each course should be taken by students in the program. (II.A.5)

The College provides a broad, multidisciplinary array of course offerings with various time and modality options, regardless of location. This allows full- and part-time students the flexibility to complete their selected certificate/degree program in a timely manner. Furthermore, the College

schedules courses that are consistent with established expectations in higher education. Using the College's course offering management and enrollment tracking system, deans and department chairs, in collaboration with Center directors, monitor whether scheduled sections are within the full-time faculty equivalent (FTEF) allocation and evaluate if such offerings will achieve enrollment and completion goals. Additionally, utilizing the Palomar Pathways Mapper, all students can select certificate and degree programs in which they are interested, review a semester-by-semester plan of course sequences, and map transfer and/or career pathway options. Students are further encouraged to meet with an academic counselor/Center specialist to customize an education plan that meets their needs. (II.A.6)

The Team found the College employs a variety of course delivery modes (i.e., hybrid, fully online, in person) and semester-length formats (i.e., 16 weeks, eight weeks, four weeks) to meet the needs of its diverse student population. The College offers a wide array of learning support services (i.e., in-person, online, and embedded tutoring, Veterans Services, Disability Resource Center, Transitions Program) for all students, regardless of location. To assess the effectiveness of delivery modes, teaching methods, and learning support services, programs go through the College's Program and Review Planning Process (PRP) (see II.A.1. & II.A.2). In this process, faculty analyze student success data (i.e., course success rates, retention rates) disaggregated by student demographics and equity categories (i.e., foster youth, first-generation) to address areas of improvement. The College provides numerous professional development opportunities for faculty to continuously improve their teaching methodologies and practices to meet the needs of its diverse student populations. (II.A.7)

The College has an exceptionally well-developed set of protocols for the awarding of credit for prior learning, as evidenced by board policies and procedures, a comprehensive website, student and faculty resources, FAQs, checklists, and instructional videos. The College uses rubrics to ensure unbiased assessment of student learning. Palomar is a statewide leader in this area and used by a model throughout the community college system. The College does not offer department-wide course or program examinations. (II.A.8)

Interviews with deans and department chairs confirm that the College awards degrees and certificates based on standard unit calculations, addressed in board policies, academic procedures, and curriculum documents. Evidence reviewed, including board policies, administrative procedures, and a variety of curriculum training materials, confirmed credits are consistent with accepted norms in higher education. The College's board policies and administrative procedures establish learning outcomes as a basis for awarding degrees and certificates. Moreover, board policies and administrative procedures demonstrate that the College follows federal standards for clock-to-credit-hour conversions in the awarding of credit. (II.A.9)

The Team found that transfer policies, credit for prior learning, and articulation agreements are documented with information for students available online and onsite, and the catalog provides transfer policies with program information and majors clearly identified. Examples of internal communications and working documents provided to the peer review Team demonstrate that

transfer of coursework policies and procedures are reviewed annually as part of the catalog process. The College website shows the institution has developed, implemented, and evaluated articulation agreements with institutions where patterns of student enrollment have been identified. (II.A.10)

The Team reviewed the college catalog, program review process, and curriculum committee minutes to confirm the College has adopted programmatic learning outcomes in communication competency, information competency, quantitative competency, analytic inquiry skills, ethical reasoning, the ability to engage diverse perspectives, and other program-specific learning outcomes. The College website, program review process, and institutional research reports provide evidence that these learning outcomes are regularly assessed and results are used to drive program improvements. (II.A.11)

Board policies and administrative procedures grant faculty the primary role in determining whether courses are appropriate for inclusion in the general education curriculum based on student learning outcomes and competencies correlating with degree level. Curriculum Committee minutes reflect dialogue about, and determinations for, GE approval. The Team reviewed evidence the College has a general education philosophy reflecting the requirements of this standard. (II.A.12)

Palomar College's catalog and website provide evidence that all programs include a focused study in one area of inquiry or discipline and includes key theories and practices appropriate for the certificate and/or degree level. (II.A.13)

The Team confirmed Palomar College verifies and maintains currency of employment opportunities and other external factors for all of career-technical education programs. Program reviews and advisory committee minutes demonstrate that competency levels and measurable SLOs of CTE programs are based upon faculty expertise and input from industry representatives. CTE faculty and professional advisory groups discuss current employment standards and revise curriculum as needed. Program reviews show the institution assesses student achievement of technical and professional competencies as captured in learning outcomes of career technical education courses and programs. (II.A.14)

The College has established policies and procedures regarding program elimination, including communication with enrolled students to ensure they are aware of the need to complete their education in a timely manner with minimal disruption. The website provided an example of a clear communication plan to students for a program that was recently discontinued. (II.A.15)

The College regularly evaluates the effectiveness of its courses and programs, as evidenced by completed program reviews and through interviews with faculty and administrators. The completed program reviews demonstrate that relevancy, appropriateness, and achievement of student learning outcomes, currency, and planning, are all components of the review process. The website and completed program reviews show that the review process is consistently

followed for programs, regardless of the type, and the results of program evaluation are used in institutional planning, goal setting, and resource allocation. Additional evidence was provided to confirm that changes/improvements in programs have occurred as a result of program evaluations. (II.A.16)

Conclusion:

The College meets the Standard.

II.B. Library and Learning Support Services

General Observations:

The College's Board Policy (BP)/Administrative Procedure (AP) 4040, Library and Learning Support Services, specifies that all students and College personnel, regardless of location or method of instruction, shall have access to educational materials, an array of reference materials, the training to use them, and study space. The College has full-time librarians at multiple sites as well as has developed a strong online library presence. The College has an extensive network of tutoring centers, some of which are discipline- and site-specific, and developed through close collaboration with faculty and an interdisciplinary Tutoring Committee. Librarians act as liaisons to disciplines to ensure close collaboration in the choice of materials, equipment, and services. Library and tutoring services are evaluated regularly through program review and surveys.

Findings and Evidence:

Through the website and interviews, the Team confirmed that the College offers library and learning support services at its main campus, three education centers, the Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton (CPPEN), and online. Full-time librarians and technicians are assigned to the main campus and the three education centers. Although library locations at the education centers are temporarily closed during the pandemic, they are normally open weekdays while instruction occurs. These sites all house physical holdings, some of which are specific to programs offered at the site. The Center's training facilities and classrooms and computer and printing services are proportional to their size and available to students. The library system contains extensive electronic holdings and access to more than 100 research databases. The College also offers extensive learning support services, including discipline-specific support offered at different centers. All tutoring transitioned to online as the pandemic developed through NetTutor and Zoom tutoring sessions. The College's Tutoring Committee works with the tutoring centers and provides recommendations for tutoring needs. Specialized services are provided by the Teaching and Learning Center (TLC), discipline-specific centers, and the Academic Technology Resource Center (ATRC). (II.B.1)

Library Services include specialist librarians who oversee library management, develop the collections, manage subscriptions and electronic resources, and work with instructional faculty to develop resources. Librarians and technical staff assigned to different centers develop resources to meet specific needs in consultation with personnel at the centers. Librarians work closely with

Information Services to maintain technology and AV equipment. Learning support infrastructure is extensive and includes the TLC as well as discipline-specific tutoring centers. Technology support is coordinated among the ATRC, the Distance Education Coordinator, and the Distance Education (DE) Committee to determine needs and provide the necessary training to support distance learning. In response to the pandemic, Library Services increased online access to reference materials and instituted synchronous meetings to assist students. The Access Technology Center (ATC) provides training and access to assistive technology. A dedicated Assistive Technology counselor and Alternate Media specialist meets student needs through the Disability Resource Center (DRC). (II.B.2)

Through document review, the Team confirmed that library staff review their activity through regular reports, and identify and prioritize needs through program review. SAO/SLO assessment is incorporated into program review for both library and learning support services. Library Services administers student surveys regularly, both as part of the review cycle and as otherwise needed. In addition to unit-initiated surveys, library services are also evaluated periodically by institutional instruments such as the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE). Learning support services are evaluated extensively through program review and online tutoring usage is also monitored. The College has worked to optimize attendance tracking to be consistent across all centers. The Team confirmed that the centers use usage data, faculty and student surveys, and outcomes data in their assessments. The TLC provides "skillshops" and streamlining of registration and matriculation, and uses student surveys to evaluate its effectiveness. (II.B.3)

Palomar College Library Services secures, maintains, evaluates, and documents formal agreements with outside agencies and local, state or nationwide consortia. Library Services evaluates existing partnerships and explores new ones through program review. In 2019, the College migrated to the Ex Libris Library Systems Platform. The California Community College Chancellor's Office and Palomar College have signed a letter of intent to continue using the new Ex Libris Library Management System. The College has access to LibChat through its membership in a regional learning resources cooperative. Library Services has several consortium agreements and contracts for a collection of 87 full-text databases. The Academic Technology Resources Center collaborates with Information Services to oversee contractual agreements relating to software connected to the Canvas Learning Management System. Librarians generate annual analyses of their resources to evaluate effectiveness in meeting the information needs of students. (II.B4)

Conclusion:

The College meets the Standard.

II.C. Student Support Services

General Observations:

The College has a process in place to evaluate the quality of all student services to ensure services support student learning and align with the mission of the institution. Student learning and service area outcomes are assessed on a three-year planning and assessment cycle. A wide

variety of services are offered to students including co-curricular, athletics, and counseling services to help students develop leadership and life skills as they pursue their educational goals. The College has established policies and procedures which guide students seeking to enroll in courses at the institution. The College has multiple measures and self-guided placement mechanisms to ensure students enroll and complete college level math and English requirements. Lastly, Board Policies and Administrative Procedures are in place to guide the process for maintaining student records and ensuring student records are secure.

Findings and Evidence:

Palomar College is committed to meeting the needs of its service area with quality student support services through ongoing evaluation of its student support services. The College has an evaluation process in place to measure the quality of its support services. The evaluation of services occurs regularly through the Program Review and Planning (PRP) process, including via the assessment and evaluation of Student Learning Outcomes and Service Area Outcomes, the Strategic Planning process, Action Planning, Student Services Department's plans, Initiative Planning and Assessment, Community College Survey on Student Engagement, and National Assessment of Collegiate Campus Climate survey. Assessment of student support services occurs at different intervals depending on the type of assessment on a yearly, three year, and five-year cycle. An example of Palomar's evaluation process to improve the student experience is demonstrated by the need to open new centers in the northern and southern areas of the District. Palomar College increased access to student services by opening the Rancho Bernardo and Fallbrook Education Centers. (II.C.1)

The Team found that Palomar College has a comprehensive evaluation process in place through the Program Review and Planning cycle to assess the effectiveness of support services. Through a document review, it was demonstrated the results of the assessment completed through the Program Review and Planning cycle are being used to improve student support services and programs. (II.C.2)

Palomar College is committed to meeting the needs of its service area and the Team found a resolute determination to increase access and improve equity within its diverse learner population. Palomar College regularly assesses students' needs for services and assures there is access to services regardless of location or delivery method, including at offsite locations and online. Access to services was expanded as a result of the pandemic by providing all services remotely, by providing additional technology to students, and by providing multiple student support services modalities. (II.C.3)

Palomar College offers a wide variety of co-curricular programs contributing to the student experience that are appropriate to its mission. This includes athletic programs, Associated Student Government, the campus television and radio station, the student newspaper, art shows, music and dance ensembles, and many other programs. The quality and effectiveness of programs are evaluated regularly through the Program Review and Planning process, which includes assessing SLOs and SAOs. Evidence exists documenting the institutional policies and procedures that guide the implementation and operation of co-curricular activities. This

evidence also includes following state and federal standards, when applicable, as well as College fiscal services procedures. (II.C.4)

Counseling and academic advising services are offered to students through 17 different departments/programs at Palomar College and are available to students in a variety of modalities. Counseling and academic advising are evaluated and improved upon on an annual basis through SAO assessment and the Program Review and Planning process. The Team confirmed counseling services are integral services aiding in student access and success and that information on academic requirements was provided accurately and in a timely manner. Professional development is provided on a weekly and quarterly basis to all counselors to ensure they have the most up-to-date information to advise students during counseling sessions. (II.C.5)

Palomar College is an open access institution. The College conveys this through board policy, catalog information, and on application material. Board Policy and Administrative Procedure 5052, Open Enrollment, outlines the college admission policy and specifies the qualifications of students appropriate for its academic programs. The admissions criteria for specialized programs are published and counseling services communicate this information to prospective students. Additionally, AP 5050 outlines processes followed by the College to advise students of the appropriate pathway based on students' educational goals. (II.C.6)

Placement processes are assessed on a yearly basis through the Program Review and Planning process for the Admissions Office and Enrollment Services. The AB 705 Committee, Office of Institutional Research and Planning, and English and math departments also assess the effectiveness of multiple measures placement. (II.C.7)

Palomar College has board policies and administrative procedures to secure, maintain, and store student records. Policies governing the release of student records are published in the college catalog and online. The Team found the College follows the established policies and procedures as well as follows federal guidelines to properly maintain student records. (II.C.8)

Conclusions:

The College meets the Standard.

Standard III

Resources

III.A. Human Resources

General Observations:

Policies and procedures included in evidence are in place to ensure faculty, staff, and administrators are hired and evaluated through thorough, systematic, and consistent means. While the College has been assessing staffing level needs to ensure financial sustainability of the organization, the Team found evidence supporting strategic staffing in collaboration with constituency groups and leadership as well as integrated planning, outside consultant support, and technology resources to aid in effective human resource management.

The College is currently working with an outside consultant to conduct an assessment to ensure the College continues to provide support and services to its community of learners and adhere to its overall mission. In addition, the College indicated it anticipates completing the integration of PeopleSoft's Human Capital Management and Financial applications software by the end of the 2023-2024 academic year, which will inform budget allocation when making staffing decisions and position control.

Palomar College has done remarkable work in ensuring that its employees are receiving relevant and current professional development content. Through Palomar's Professional Purposeful Development (3PD) portal, faculty and staff are able to participate in a multitude of training workshops. Training includes standardized state/federal compliance, technology use, as well as topics related to racial bias and microaggressions. Faculty may utilize their flex time and classified staff may create a plan for professional growth resulting in compensation. Palomar College leveraged technology to provide professional development enrichment for its employees. The Team commends Palomar College for its robust professional development activities, programs, and services.

Findings and Evidence:

The Team found that Palomar College assures the integrity and quality of its programs and services by employing staff who are qualified to support its programs and services. In accordance with its Board Policy (BP) and Administrative Procedure (AP) 7120 Recruitment and Hiring, Palomar College ensures that it employs qualified administrators, faculty, and staff to serve the needs of its students, the community, and the institution. The College adheres to federal and state hiring regulations, while also utilizing a variety of advertising methods to ensure a diverse pool of highly qualified candidates. The College follows an institutionalized process for hiring as noted in its BP/AP 7120, which delineates the hiring process for different employee classifications. (III.A.1)

The institution ensures that faculty qualifications include subject matter expertise, the requisite skills, appropriate degrees, professional experience, teaching skills, and other potential attributes that meet the mission of Palomar College. The institution uses the *Minimum Qualifications (MQ) for Faculty and Administrators in California Community Colleges* Handbook to verify prospective faculty have adequate credentials and appropriate knowledge of their subject matter. (III.A.2)

The Team found that the procedures and processes for determining minimum qualifications and equivalencies are detailed and documented. The College ensures administrators and other employees responsible for educational programs and services possess the necessary qualifications to perform duties required to sustain institutional effectiveness and academic quality. Minimum qualifications for administrators mirror those outlined by state regulations. The performance evaluation processes ensure administrators and other employees carry out their responsibilities according to their job description, which contribute to sustaining institutional effectiveness and academic quality. (III.A.3)

The College requires that degrees held by faculty, administrators and other employees are accredited by recognized U.S. accrediting agencies or from non-U.S. institutions where recognized equivalency has been established. Through board policy, the College establishes that all faculty, administrators, and other employees working in the community college system must possess degrees and/or credits from accredited institutions. For non-U.S. institutions, Palomar employs the services of the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES) or the Association of International Credential Evaluators (AICE), to establish equivalency. (III.A.4)

The Team found that evaluation processes for all employment groups at the College are well-defined by board policies and procedures, and collective bargaining agreements or handbooks where appropriate. Evaluations are thorough and address performance criteria specific to the employment group. Evaluations are reviewed to track compliance and to verify employee evaluation status. Completed evaluations are entered into a database (PeopleSoft) that provides an analysis of the employee evaluation process. The College is also currently piloting an evaluation platform to improve its processes. (III.A.5)

The College utilizes Program Review and Planning (PRP), class scheduling, and hiring priorities determined by the Instructional Planning Council (IPC) Faculty Prioritization Subcommittee, to identify a sufficient number of qualified faculty. Additionally, the College embeds short- and long-term workforce forecasting and planning through the institution's Staffing Master Plan to inform faculty hiring. This process includes data triangulation, integration with the College's mission, and an assessment community and student needs. (III.A.7)

The Palomar Faculty Federation (PFF) identifies professional development as one of its key activities for part-time faculty. Part-time faculty are appointed to various committees as part of the College's participatory governance process. The College also hosts orientations for new part-time faculty each semester. The Palomar Professional Purposeful Development (3PD) portal provides a one-stop site in which faculty sign-up for and receive professional development credit. The Team was very impressed with the College's outstanding work in providing

employees with a variety of professional development opportunities, especially for part-time faculty. (III.A.8)

Staff hiring and planning, as with faculty hiring, is vetted through analyses of the organization's structure, program reviews, and the Integrated Planning Model (IPM), to ensure a sufficient number of staff members are in place to support the College operations. All staff positions have an established classification that determines essential job functions and minimum qualifications. The College's current Staffing Master Plan (2018-2023) establishes a set of broad strategies for staffing across a five-year timeframe to address retirements/resignations and planning needs. The College is completing the integration of PeopleSoft Human Capital Management and Financials applications to address budget factors associated with staffing. The College is actively working towards full integration while still using manual methods. (III.A.9)

Palomar College also utilizes its Staffing Master Plan, Program Review and Planning (PRP) process, as well as a position prioritization process (through IPM) to assess the needs of the institution as it relates maintaining a sufficient number of administrators. All administrator positions have an established classification and are posted on the Human Resource Services (HRS) website. Human Resource Services ensures candidates meet qualifications prior to committee review. The College continues to work on its organizational structure to incorporate changes identified in its Fiscal Management and Crisis Team (FCMAT) assessment. The College has indicated a need for a re-design of its organizational structure to ensure maximum efficiency of funds. (III.A.10)

The College has board policies and administrative procedures related to personnel. The Policies and Procedures Committee, comprised of a Governing Board member, executive administrators and members of each constituent group, meet regularly to review and update all personnel related policies and procedures on a scheduled timeline. (III.A.11)

The Team found that Palomar College addresses equity and diversity through several means. The College has policies and procedures prohibiting unlawful discrimination and sexual misconduct. These policies and procedures also promote nondiscrimination and equal opportunity for both employees and students. The institution has groups/programs that promote diversity, equity, and antiracism through its Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Advisory Committee with Human Resource Services (HRS) oversite, and adheres to state and federal mandates. Palomar's Strategic Plan 2022 includes efforts to serve disproportionately impacted students by having a college workforce that reflects its diverse student body and community. In addition, the College completes an annual record of employee demographics, as well as applicant, interview, and hiring demographics. In the fall 2020 semester, Palomar College participated in the University of Southern California/California Community College (USC/CCC) Equity Leadership Alliance to help apply racial equity and inclusion practices in its hiring processes. (III.A.12)

Palomar College BP 3050, Institutional Code of Ethics, serves as the general code of ethics for all personnel. The policy asserts the College's commitment to "the highest ethical standards in furtherance of our mission of education and public service." Violations of BP 3050 are cause for

discipline and are addressed through the College's collective bargaining agreements and employment handbooks. (III.A.13)

Palomar College offers a variety of professional development (PD) opportunities to meet the needs of its employees. PD opportunities are developed as part of BP/AP 7160, Professional Development. The College uses an online portal to house all PD opportunities—more commonly known to employees as the Palomar Powered Professional Development Portal (3PD). Palomar employees provide feedback after each training on how to improve PD opportunities through an annual needs assessment survey. Classified employees may receive stipends to explore different career paths as part of their professional growth. The College has done a remarkable job in providing employees with a variety of professional development opportunities. (III.A.14)

The Team found that Palomar College's Human Resource Services (HRS) Office classifies and maintains personnel records as required by state and federal regulations. In addition, the College has Board Policies (BPs) and Administrative Procedures (APs), including BP/AP 3310 Records Retention and Destruction, and AP 745 Personnel File, which delineate processes the College takes to ensure confidentiality of employee records. The College also maintains employee data through a secure information management system. (III.A.15)

Conclusion:

The College meets the Standard.

Commendation 1: The Team commends the College for its comprehensive professional development portal, Palomar Powered Professional Development (3PD), which provides robust support and training for all employees, including full-time and part-time faculty, classified staff, and management. (III.A.8, III.A.14)

III.B. Physical Resources

General Observations:

The College's physical resources are safe and sufficient to serve the needs of the students, staff, and the community. Locally approved education bonds have allowed the College to expand, update, and modernize facilities. The College has a robust integrated planning model with appropriate participatory governance structures. The College's Educational Master Plan (EMP) informs the Facilities Master Plan (FMP)—both plans were integrated with other planning documents. Additionally, the Team found that both the EMP and FMP are supported by multiple operational plans, e.g., the Scheduled Maintenance and Five-year Construction Plans. Multiple internal committees and external compliance/regulatory agencies monitor the safety, adequacy, and appropriate use of physical resources and adherence to College plans.

The Team found that the College has an excellent Preventive Maintenance Plan and a robust ADA Master Plan available to stakeholders on the College's website. The College has made significant progress addressing financial challenges to fund established maintenance plans and has established a comprehensive Total Cost of Ownership strategy for new facilities.

<u>Findings and Evidence:</u>

The College meets the standards established to ensure construction and daily maintenance practices are in place and physical resources are safe and adequately maintained to support academic programs at all locations. The College's ADA plan is updated in tandem with new Educational and Facilities Master Plans. The Safety and Security Committee is a branch of the Facilities Department that performs regular inspections and publishes safety materials for the campus community. The College recently contracted a consultant to perform a safety and security assessment targeting security cameras, emergency lighting, and intrusion control mechanisms. The results and recommendations were presented to the Safety and Security Committee. The Environmental Health & Safety Department is responsible for mitigating safety risks, emergency preparedness, and long-term environmental sustainability. Campus safety is also maintained by the College's Police Department. (III.B.1)

The Team found sufficient evidence that Palomar College plans and maintains its physical resources and facilities in a manner that assures effective utilization and the quality necessary to meet the needs of the institution and mission. Facility planning efforts are supported by the Facilities Review Committee, the Finance and Administrative Services Planning Council, and the Strategic Planning Council. Facilities projects completed in recent years have exceeded requirements for environmental sustainability. The Team was impressed that the College has received multiple awards for design, energy efficiency, sustainability, and green design. (III.B.2)

The College continually evaluates the relevance and effectiveness of its resources and makes plans based on those evaluations through regular updates of the EMP and FMP. The Facilities Department regularly participates in the Program Review and Planning processes, which is integrated with the EMP and FMP. Resources requested through this planning mechanism are prioritized and funded through the established budget development process. Facility space inventory and utilization and scheduled maintenance and capital construction needs are tracked and monitored by the College. (III.B.3)

The College has long-range capital plans in place for the continued improvement of facilities and equipment. Long-term facilities maintenance items of the College are forecasted using a total cost of ownership (TCO) model. New buildings, beginning with the Fallbrook Education Center building, include TCO calculations from the architectural firms designing the facilities. The College relies on deferred maintenance funding from the state to address major repairs and replacements in its legacy buildings. (III.B.4)

<u>Conclusion:</u>

The College meets the Standard.

III.C. Technology Resources

General Observations:

The evidence supports that the technology resources at Palomar College are appropriate and adequate to support the institution's programs and has efficient and effective use of IT staff to support the IT infrastructure for the main campus and centers. Program Review facilitates requests and directs the planning of the College's current and future technology needs as evidenced in the comprehensive technology plan. Professional technology support is available for students, faculty, and administrators.

Findings and Evidence:

The Team found that the institution's technology services, professional support, facilities, hardware, and software are appropriate and adequate to support the institution's management and operational functions, academic programs, teaching and learning, and support services. The Team found that the College provided several sources of evidence to support this standard, including the Technology Master Plan from 2019, which is integrated with other master planning documents of the institution. (III.C.1)

Palomar College continuously plans for updates and replaces technology to ensure its technological infrastructure, quality, and capacity are adequate to support its mission, operations, programs, and services. The College has developed a plan to ensure technology is updated and/or adequately replaced as needed. The Institutional Technology Master Plan and the Program Review Planning process facilitate planning, updating, and replacing technology and the Infrastructure Planning Model identifies the order of infrastructure equipment replacement critical to meeting the mission of the College. (III.C.2)

The Team found sufficient evidence that the College assures adequate technology resources at all locations are implemented and maintained to assure reliable access, safety, and security. Interviews with employees and students confirmed the College also transitioned to fully online modalities of instruction, support services, and remote work with reliable access to mission critical technology, while also keeping the institution's network safe and secure. The institution's technology plan provides the framework and process for technology planning, the process for moving forward technology requests, the guiding principles for technology, and the institution's technology goals. (III.C.3)

Palomar College provides appropriate instruction and support for faculty, staff, students, and administrators in the effective use of technology and technology systems related to its programs, services, and institutional operations. The College utilizes several modalities for instruction and support, including, but not limited to, website tutorials, online and in-person workshops, orientations, and training sessions for faculty, administrators, and students. The College maintains a responsive help desk for just-in-time support and provides a variety of learning resources to support students and faculty. (III.C.4)

The College adheres to the policies it has in place for the appropriate and ethical use of technology. Staff, students, and administration receive the necessary notice, information, and

training regarding policies and procedures. The College publishes policies and procedures for acceptable use of technology, which address computer, communication, and network use, including individual users' responsibilities and rights in using technology for instruction, operations, and support services. (III.C.5)

Conclusion:

The College meets the Standard.

III.D. Financial Resources

General Observations:

The College has been working through significant fiscal challenges, but has made significant progress in its budgeting processes. The Team found the College has established sufficient monitoring, reporting, and planning to address both short- and long-term financial sustainability. Financial statements and protocols are audited to ensure compliance with all relevant laws. Fiscal information is shared frequently with the campus constituent groups and the Board of Trustees to ensure appropriate transparency and planning. There is ample evidence that there have been effective College-wide efforts to improve fiscal management and financial stability leading to fiscally healthy and sufficient finances to operate.

Findings and Evidence:

The College has a well-established plan for sustainability, stability, and improvement of fiscal stewardship and resource allocation. Under the Vice President of Finance and Administrative Services, the College is developing and implementing an integrated annual report and review process that tracks and monitors a set of fiscal performance metrics, including those analyzed as part of ACCJC's Composite Financial Index. The Team found financial resources are sufficient to support students and the institution in the near term. However, the College's own projections predict multiple years of deficit spending. The College's personnel costs are 89% of on-going revenue and up to 92% of unrestricted expenditures. Contracts with bargaining units provide for automatic Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) to the salary schedules and the College has no cap on its escalating health and welfare contributions. Under the current model, rising personnel costs will continue to outpace increases in revenue and COLA augmentations.

In November 2019, FCMAT issued a report. The College was deemed high-risk for potential fiscal insolvency. The FCMAT report contained eight major recommendations. The College entered into an agreement with FCMAT for technical support. A follow-up report in January 2021 commended the College on progress achieved over the previous 12 months, but noted significant work was needed to reach fiscal stability in the long-term. Interviews with senior administrators and a comprehensive review of the financial documents of the College left the Team with confidence they are on-track to fully overcome these challenges and maintain financial stability. (III.D.1)

The College has a well-developed integrated planning process that begins with the Educational Master Plan. Program review processes include resource requests and prioritization. In 2020,

the College overhauled its Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) plan that is aligned with the strategic planning goals and objectives. The SEM aligns expenditures with revenue and establishes a 3-year goal for alignment. The College's policies and procedures pertaining to financial practices and fiscal stewardship are reviewed and updated in a timely manner. Financial information is disseminated broadly and the College is currently hosting monthly budget meetings to disseminate the results of budget monitoring and to continue to develop strategies for fiscal stability. (III.D.2)

Over the past two years, the College has developed clearly defined guidelines and processes for financial planning and budget development. The Budget Committee, a sub-committee of the Strategic Planning Council, ensures that participatory governance structures are in place. At the beginning of each fiscal cycle, a budget model with underlying assumptions is presented and discussed with the Budget Committee, the Finance and Administrative Service Planning Council, and the Strategic Planning Council. (III.D.3)

The College borrowed $5 million from its OPEB fund to balance the 2019-20 budget and end the year without a deficit. Plans are to repay this loan over four years and make contributions on top of the reimbursement. The College has taken steps to strengthen the credibility of the multi-year projections with the integration and continued implementation of budgeting modules with Human Resources and Position Control modules. The College recognizes that it must maintain and continue to build on implementing plans and processes that lead to improved financial performance. The College's current multi-year projection predicts a negative unrestricted general fund ending balance of $20 million in 2024-25. The College is in the process of updating the multi-year forecast and incorporating improved financial performance results and projections, resulting in a positive fund balance forecast for FY 2024-25. (III.D.4)

In 2020, The College began strengthening its Internal Audit Program based on FCMAT recommendation and the College's own evaluation of its financial management practices. A key element of this effort was the recruitment of an in-house Internal Auditor. The College now has ongoing internal annual audits to examine control mechanisms. Since implementation of this measure, there have been no findings other than a deficiency in relation to Return of Title IV Funds. The College is in the process of implementing a comprehensive, integrated, enterprise resource program to improve system integration. The newly developed processes and systems will continue to enhance transparency and the College's ability to effectively monitor, plan, and report its fiscal position. The Team encourages senior administration to complete the implementation of these newly developed processes for integrated fiscal reporting, internal controls, and financial planning to improve oversight, transparency, and direction in decision-making and budget management (III.D.5)

The Team found that financial documents, including the budget, are prepared and formatted in a timely and informative fashion. Historically, the College did not use the same methodology as external entities such as ACCJC and FCMAT for calculating key performance indicators. The variation in methodology led to confusion and eroded the credibility of financial documents. However, the Team confirmed the College has recently aligned its methodologies with FCMAT and ACCJC, improving both credibility and accuracy. (III.D.6)

The College contracts with a CPA firm to conduct annual external audit reports. Audit opinions are unmodified for all of the past six years reviewed. The audits reported findings of significant deficiencies in internal controls for the fiscal years ending in 2015 and 2017. A corrective action plan was presented to the governing board in both years. The College developed a comprehensive Internal Audit Plan in FY2019-20. The Plan was presented to the Governing Board in February, 2020. Audit results, findings, and corrective action plans are communicated to leadership, the Budget Committee, and constituent groups. The audits are available on the Fiscal Services website for public viewing. (III.D.7)

Audit reports do not reflect any concerns related to financial controls. These audits include evaluation of the internal control systems. Board Policy 6300, Fiscal Management, directs the Superintendent/President to establish procedures to ensure adequate internal controls. Administrative Procedure 6300 delegates the responsibility for providing appropriate and adequate controls to the Chief Business Officer. The Team found the evidence sufficient in determining the College assesses for validity and effectiveness of financial and internal control systems. (III.D.8)

The Team found that the College has made significant progress in the area of fiscal stability. In September, 2020, the College was placed on enhanced monitoring by ACCJC. Factors cited by ACCJC included 3-years of negative operating results, funding deficits, reserves of only 10% (excluding other financing sources), and a net operating revenue ratio of -5.6% for the 3-year reporting period (excluding other financing sources). As of June 2021, the College's unrestricted general fund had $2.67 in liquid assets available for every $1 in obligations coming due within the period, indicating sufficient cash to maintain stability and weather unforeseen occurrences. The College ended with reserve of more than 22% in fiscal year 2020-21. Finally, the College maintains adequate insurance policies to cover losses or unexpected costs associated with property, liability, and worker's compensation claims. (III.D.9)

The College practices effective oversight of finances, financial aid, grants, contracts, and auxiliary organizations. Federal and state awards are audited annually and all competitive grants are approved by the governing board. Financial aid accounts are reconciled monthly. Measure M expenditures are reviewed by the Independent Citizens' Oversight Committee that submits an annual report to the governing board. The Foundation is a separate 501(c)3 that is governed by its own board and undergoes annual financial audits. (III.D.10)

The College's internally prepared multi-year budget projection predicts insolvency within 3 years, but the Team found that the governing board, senior administration, and constituency leadership were making significant plans to maintain a positive operating ratio. Progress has been made to bring costs in line with recommended metrics and the Team reviewed plans indicating an operating surplus in the current fiscal year, which will halt the deficit spending trend of previous years. Further, an early retirement incentive program in 2019-20 resulted in substantial savings in personnel costs in 2020-21. The College plans to exercise great caution in future hiring decisions to maintain judicious fiscal practices. Debt associated with the Measure M general obligation bond is paid through ad valorem tax collections. Lease Revenue Bonds used to remodel the student center will be redeemed with funds collected from the Student Center Fees which are adequate to satisfy the debt as it comes due. (III.D.11)

The College's OPEB liability was funded at 6.7% at the end of 2019-20. The College has established an irrevocable trust for OPEB funds. Compensated absences are contractually constrained and paid out only upon separation from the district. The 2020-21 audit indicates a $4.7 million liability associated with accrued vacation leave and banked load. The College maintains funding accounts designed for other post-employment benefit obligations to maintain its fiscal stability. (III.D.12)

The College has no locally incurred debt instruments. (III.D.13)

General Obligation bond expenditures associated with Measure M are monitored by the Independent Citizens Oversight Committee. These expenditures are also audited annually. There have been no findings, modified opinions, or questioned costs associated with Measure M expenditures. Categorical state and federal grants are reviewed as part of the annual financial audit. Competitive grant applications must be pre-approved by the governing board. These grants have a variety of compliance requirements that the College meets to remain in good standing. Fundraising efforts are undertaken by the Palomar College Foundation, which has its own board and annual audits. (III.D.14)

The College monitors and manages student loan default rates, revenue streams, and resources. The College's student loan default rates are below the national average and within acceptable limits. (III.D.15)

The Team found that the College has adequate policies and procedures in place to ensure contractual agreements are entered into in a manner that complies with the internal guidelines as well as government contracting and purchasing regulations. Staff work with legal counsel and the College's insurance provider, as necessary, to ensure industry best practices and optimal risk mitigation. (III.D.16)

Conclusion:

The College meets the Standard.

Recommendation 1: In order to increase effectiveness, the Team recommends the College completes the implementation of the newly developed processes for integrated fiscal reporting, internal controls, and financial planning to improve oversight, transparency, and direction in decision-making and budget management. (III.D.5)

Standard IV

Leadership and Governance

IV.A. Decision-Making Roles & Processes

General Observations:

Participatory governance is valued at Palomar College. Evidence and interviews demonstrate that members of the campus community are respected for their expertise and encouraged to participate. The College provides ample opportunity for participation and collaboration in decision making. The College's recently revised participatory governance process has only strengthened a culture of collegial participation and includes involvement by faculty, staff, administrators, and students. Interviews illustrated positive responses to the new governance structure. The Team encourages the College to continue implementation of the new governance revision to more effectively gain input from constituency groups in the decision-making process.

Findings and Evidence:

The Team found the College has established formal systems and participative processes and informal practices and procedures that allow individuals to bring forward ideas for institutional improvement. In response to an evaluation of governance communications, a Governance Task Force (GTF)—comprised of representation from all constituency groups—was convened to assess the participatory governance structure. Under the new structure, a College Council was established as the principal participatory planning and governance body for the College. Four newly constructed councils report to the College Council:
- The Institutional Effectiveness, Planning, and Fiscal Stewardship Council,
- The Equity, Education, and Student Success Council,
- The Employees, Community, and Communication Council, and
- The Infrastructure and Sustainability Council.

Each of the new councils includes representation from all constituency groups. (IV.A.1)

The College has policies authorizing appropriate constituency participation in decision-making processes. Board Policies (BPs) and Administrative Procedures (APs) outline a governance structure that involves faculty, staff, administration, and students in the planning and operation of the College. These policies and procedures encourage student participation and take into consideration the student perspective when making decisions. (IV.A.2)

Palomar College has recently completed a review and major revision of its governance process. Administration, classified professionals, faculty, and students are affirming the formative and substantive roles they play in determining the College's policies, planning, and budget. Interviews indicate that there is a great deal of excitement about this new structure and process. (IV.A.3, IV.A.5)

The Team confirmed that institutional policies and procedures describe the official responsibilities and authority of the faculty and of academic administrators in curricular and other educational matters   The College's Curriculum Committee is the central governing body that makes recommendations relating to curriculum and student learning programs and services. Policies and practices for curriculum development have evolved over the past several years, with numerous checks and balances added to ensure quality proposals. (IV.A.4)

The College has extensive processes to document and communicate decisions across the institution. The President's Office sends weekly email communications to staff to share current initiatives and monthly emails to students with links to relevant resources. The College has hosted campus wide updates to share information about initiatives. The administration initiated semi-monthly "question and answer" sessions with students. In addition to structural changes intended to increase communication, all governance councils are now using a single platform to house meeting agendas and minutes (BoardDocs); thus, giving the College a virtual "one stop shop" for information. Finally, while all governance meetings are public, all constituencies are represented on all decision-making councils and representatives from each group are tasked with the responsibility of reporting back to the groups they represent. (IV.A.6)

The College has evaluated its governance and decision-making structures, as previously mentioned. In 2017 and again in 2019, the College used an Institutional Effectiveness Partnership Initiative (IEPI) grant to improve upon institutional practices, including participatory governance. The College plans to continue to assess and improve the new participatory governance revision to ensure effectiveness and institutional continuous quality improvement of processes and operations. (IV.A.7)

Conclusion:

The College meets the Standard.

IV.B. Chief Executive Officer

General Observations:

The team confirmed the CEO has primary responsibility for the quality of the institution and provides effective leadership and is engaged with the campus community. The College has developed Board Policies and procedures that provide the Superintendent/President the authority to implement all College programs and activities. The Superintendent/President delegates authority to ensure all College programs and activities are implemented. The CEO provides effective leadership for the institution by providing leadership in planning, organization, budgeting, development of personnel, assessing institutional effectiveness, and providing effective communication.

Findings and Evidence:

The Team confirmed the Superintendent/President has the decision-making authority to oversee the implementation of all College programs and activities. The CEO provides effective leadership in planning, organization, budgeting, development of personnel, assessing

institutional effectiveness, and communication. The Strategic Planning Council description and meeting minutes demonstrates the CEO leads the Strategic Planning Council (SPC), which is responsible for reviewing and approving all master planning, resource allocations, accreditation standards, evaluation of effectiveness reports, and other plans brought forth by reporting councils. The CEO gives direct reports with the delegation authority to implement daily operational functions involving human resources and personnel development, budgeting and fiscal monitoring, student services, institutional effectiveness, and marketing and communication. (IV.B.1)

The CEO delegates authority to administrators and others aligned with their job duties and responsibilities. Authority for the implementation of college functions of the four divisions of the College are delegated to the assistant superintendents/vice presidents of each division. Evidence reviewed by the Team included BP/AP 6100, Delegation of Authority, and the job descriptions of the assistant superintendent/vice presidents of the four divisions. (IV.B.2)

The Team found confirmed that the Superintendent/President is responsible for establishing and assessing processes and recommends values, goals, and priorities through the Strategic Planning Council. Board Policy 2510 and AP 2510 outline the local decision-making process. As the chair of the Strategic Planning Council, the CEO oversees the College's values, goals and priorities, setting of institutional performance goals and institutional effectiveness priorities, establishing student achievement outcomes, and improving the teaching and learning environment. (IV.B.3)

The CEO has the primary responsibility for accreditation to ensure the College is compliant with all eligibility requirements, standards, and Commission policies. The CEO delegates authority for accreditation matters to the Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO) who reports directly to and meets regularly with the CEO. The CEO included accreditation as a standing item on the Strategic Planning Council agenda to keep all constituency groups updated on accreditation matters. The Accreditation Steering Committee (ASC) oversees the planning, guidance, and preparation of all reports and site visit materials for ACCJC. Members of the campus community are involved in the accreditation process through the Accreditation Steering Committee and the Accreditation Writing Leadership Team. The CEO informs and involves the Board in the accreditation process as outlined in BP 3200 and through the completion and submission of reports for Board approval following the governance process. (IV.B.4)

The CEO provides the Board and the Strategic Planning Council updates on statutory and compliance changes for informed decision making as evidenced by BP 2430. The CEO receives policy updates through the Community College League of California and the Policies and Procedures Committee to determine which changes are recommended to the Board for approval. The CEO ensures compliance with internal and external regulations and exercises responsibility over the budget. The College's fiscal management practices include budget projections that are given to the Board of Trustees and publicly shared with the campus community. The team confirmed budget information is shared among constituent groups (IV.B.5)

The CEO communicates with the community by meeting with elected officials from local municipalities and state leaders, participating in regional and local organizations, partnering with local K-12 and four-year universities, and meeting with community members through the

education center advisory groups. The Public Information Officer ensures that communications are released and available for communities served by the institution through a variety of media outlets. (IV.B.6)

Conclusion:

The College meets the Standard.

IV.C. Governing Board

General Observations:

The College's Governing Board consists of five elected Trustees who represent the Palomar Community College District. Four of the five Trustees are in their first 18 months of service. A non-voting Student Trustee also serves on the Board. Board has the authority and responsibility for policies that assure quality student learning and achievement and financial stability. The evidence provided in the form of Board policies, minutes, and interviews suggests Board actions are consistent in supporting the College mission. Board members participate in online training modules as part of their professional development. The Board is supportive of the CEO and is working to reinforce protocols for delegation of authority as well as delineation of roles and responsibilities.

Findings and Evidence:

Policies delineate that the Board has authority over and responsibility for policies to assure the academic quality and financial stability of the institution. The College's Policies and Procedures Committee regularly assesses, maintains, and evaluates the effectiveness of the Board's Policies and Administrative Procedures in fulfilling the College's mission (see IV.C.7). (IV.C.1)

The College's board policy on Code of Ethics/Standards of Practice ensures the governing board acts as a collective entity when making decisions. The Board Policy on Quorum and Voting requires a majority vote for a resolution to pass, and further identifies specific resolutions that require a unanimous vote. Interviews with the current trustees confirmed the governing board acts as a collective entity when making decisions. (IV.C.2)

The College's board policy on Duties and Responsibilities outlines the Governing Board authority and responsibility for selecting and evaluating the CEO of the College through a fair and open search process. The search process includes numerous components that are approved by the Board in a public meeting. The search committee is comprised of representatives from various campus constituencies. Additionally, the Board is responsible for conducting annual evaluations of the CEO. The evaluation process is developed in collaboration with the CEO and stated in the CEO's employment contract. Interviews with trustees and constituency leaders confirmed the governing board is following the established process. (IV.C.3)

The Team verified that the governing board serves the public interest in the College's educational quality and advocates for and protects the college from undue influence or political pressure. The Board has established board policies that are aligned with this standard and define

its duties and responsibilities to ensure educational quality, promote legal and ethical standards, and assure fiscal stability. (IV.C.4)

The College's board policies and administrative procedures were found to be consistent with the mission to ensure educational quality and ongoing improvement educational programs and services. Additionally, the Board monitors the implementation of the College's Integrated Planning, Evaluation, and Resource Allocation Decision Making Model to ensure that ongoing planning, evaluation, and resources allocations are sufficient, integrated, and focused on improving student learning programs and services. To assure the institution's financial integrity and stability, the Board reviews the College's performance in addressing its fiscal health, ensures compliance with federal, state, and local policies for all fiscal programs (i.e., student financial aid), and warrants the necessary resources to support the quality, integrity, and improvement of student learning programs and services. (IV.C.5)

Evidence demonstrates that the governing board publishes on the college website its bylaws and policies regarding its duties and responsibilities, procedures for meeting and voting, and the its size, structure, and operating procedures. (IV.C.6)

The Team found that the Colleges' policies and procedures are reviewed for currency and accuracy on a four-year cycle. The College's Policies and Procedures Committee meets monthly to ensure that all policies and procedures are reviewed and updated on a regular basis. The committee seeks input from relevant entities and stakeholders for recommendations or revisions to policies. The recommendations are forwarded to College Council for review and presented to the Governing Board for final approval. The Board ensures that the approval of any action aligns with the mission. The College receives updates from the Community College League of California twice a year and incorporates recommended changes that are legally required, advised, or suggested as good practice. (IV.C.7)

The Board reviews and discusses student performance data and student learning and achievement goals on a regular basis. Additionally, the Board receives, reviews, and discusses regular reports on student data and performance and uses the information to set annual goals. (IV.C.8)

The Team had extensive discussions with current governing board members regarding their current training program for board development. Current practice includes a brief onboarding process and orientation for new members and online self-paced training modules for all members. While the Team found sufficient evidence of basic training modules for the governing board, the College is encouraged to enhance and strengthen professional development and training to include more robust learning modules and modalities. To ensure the continuity of membership, board appointment terms for the College are staggered. Elections are held every two years to appoint trustees to four-year terms. The Student Trustee is elected on an annual basis. In addition, the College adheres to board policies and administrative procedures to address and fill vacancies on the Board. (IV.C.9)

The Board has an established a self-evaluation process outlined in Board Policy 2745, Governing Board Self-Evaluation. Each year, the Board participates in a workshop to determine their annual goals, meets mid-year to assess progress, and engages in a self-evaluation at the end of

the year. Board agendas, meeting minutes, and reports demonstrate evidence the governing board is adhering to its established self-evaluation process. (IV.C.10)

According to evidence, a clear code of ethics and conflict of interest are delineated in Board policies. Palomar College's Board of Trustees has an established process for dealing with board behavior that is unethical through Board Policy 2715. Board Policy 2710 defines conflicts of interests and board member violations are addressed as stated in Administrative Procedure 2710. Furthermore, the process for dealing with violations of laws and regulations are outlined in Board Policy 2715. (IV.C.11)

The Board delegates responsibility and authority to the Superintendent/President as outlined in Board Policy 2430 "Delegation of Authority to the Superintendent/President." Interviews with the Superintendent/President and Trustees indicated a mutual understanding of "delegation of authority" exists, but protocols need to be reinforced to avoid interference with operational matters of the College. For example, interviews confirmed that trustees are meeting directly and regularly with individual employees, departments/programs, and constituencies. If this continues, then interference with operational matters may begin to surface. To reinforce protocols, the governing board and Superintendent/President may consider developing a handbook to strengthen mutual understanding and delineation of roles. The Board holds the Superintendent/President accountable for District operations through the job description, performance goals, and annual evaluation. The Board works with the Superintendent/President to set annual performance goals, guided by job description of the position and performance goals and objectives developed in accordance with relevant policies. (IV.C.12)

The Board holds accreditation workshops that include training on Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and updates on commission policies and accreditation processes. The Governing Board receives regular updates on accreditation and ACCJC actions or policy updates that impact the College through the Superintendent/President and the Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO). By reviewing accreditation reports submitted to the ACCJC for approval, including the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER), Follow-up and Midterm Reports, and substantive change proposals, the governing board participates appropriately in institutional self-evaluation and planning efforts. (IV.C.13)

Conclusion:

The College meets the Standard.

Recommendation 2: In order to increase effectiveness, the Team recommends the College's Governing Board strengthen its new member orientation and ongoing training programs for board development. (IV.C.9)

Recommendation 3: In order to increase effectiveness, the Team recommends the Governing Board reinforce protocols to ensure the Superintendent/President is delegated full responsibility and authority to oversee the operations of the College. (IV.C.12)

IV.D. Multi-College Districts or Systems

General Observations:

N/A

Findings and Evidence:

N/A

Conclusion:

N/A

Quality Focus Essay

The Quality Focus Essay (QFE) describes three projects designed to increase student completion and transfer: completion of math and English in the first year; removing barriers to degrees; and program pathways to transfer and beyond. The projects align with the Chancellor's Office Vision for Success (VfS) Goals and with Palomar College's own goals for student completion and equity.

Project 1, Completion of math and English in the first year: Although improvements were seen in one-year "throughput" in math and English with the implementation of AB705 (multiple measures vs standardized testing; co-requisite model; reduction of remedial courses), the College seeks further improvement to eliminate disparities among different racial/ethnic groups. The College developed an action plan that includes evaluation of the placement tools; counseling, tutoring and other support for students; and professional development for faculty. The plan also highlights the need for improved communication between instruction and student services, to help students understand the relationship of their academic placements to their eventual academic pathways. According to the timeline, much of the work began in Fall 2021 and the Team confirmed a continuation of the work as part of the peer review process.

Project 2, Removing barriers to degrees: In partnership with the Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP) and supported by the Degrees When Due (DWD) Initiative, the College has embarked on an effort to identify, and potentially minimize, barriers to completion. In this multiphase project, the College identified a cohort of students who had earned more than 60 units but had not obtained a degree. The College has conducted a degree audit for these students and is working with them to encourage degree completion. Essentially, the goal is to identify and remove systematic barriers that impede completion. This is a three-phase process, culminating in the institutionalization of processes to find and engage students nearing completion and helping them finish. According to the timeline, the first cohort of students has been formed, their degree audit completed, and follow-up measures are underway. The Team confirmed a commitment to full implementation of this project and applauds the College's efforts to improve degree completion rates.

Project 3, Program Mapper: Palomar College launched its Palomar Pathways Mapper in June 2020. This project has been developed to complete development of the tool to maximize its benefit to students. The action plan sequence details the development of the Meta Majors; various ways to publicize the Mapper and make it available to students; includes transfer pathways to specific institutions among other components; and a timeline to develop an evaluation tool. The timeline described in the QFE indicates that the preparatory work is to be completed in Spring 2022 so that the mapper can be fully implemented in Fall 2022. The Team confirmed this project is still in progress and on-track for full implementation this fall.

Palomar College anticipates that these initiatives will increase completion, increase transfer, and reduce the number of units to completion. Assessment plans are detailed as well. The QFEs depict action plans that are well developed, have identified responsible parties clearly, demonstrate wide participation, and follow realistic timelines.