Response to Recommendations from the Most Recent Educational Quality and Institutional Effectiveness Review

Recommendation 1
In order to fully comply with the Standards, the College needs to review, update, and further integrate its various institutional plans, and formalize the integration among these plans as they contribute and align to an overarching institutional plan. (I.B.3)

To address this recommendation, Los Angeles Pierce College developed an integrated planning calendar showing a four-year cycle of planning. The overarching goals of completion, accountability, partnerships, and student success (CAPS), along with the idea of an integrated planning calendar, were presented during the opening day activities on August 22, 2013 (Rec.1.1).

The CAPS concept, which includes the completion-oriented vision statement of “More CAPS at Commencement,” and the integrated planning calendar were reviewed and vetted through the participatory governance bodies of the College. The Pierce College Council (PCC) formed a task force composed of faculty, staff, and administrators to develop the College’s strategic planning document. Grounded on the College’s mission and aligned with the Los Angeles Community College District Strategic Plan 2012-2017, the Strategic Master Plan 2013-2017 (SMP) provides an overarching framework that supports the integration of all College plans (Rec.1.2 and Rec.1.3). The SMP was discussed and approved by the PCC on December 12, 2013 and the Academic Senate on December 9, 2013 (Rec.1.4 and Rec.1.5). The governing board approved the College’s SMP on February 26, 2014 (Rec.1.6). The process of development and approval of the SMP is described in detail in the 2014 Follow-Up Report submitted to the Accrediting Commission in March 2014 (Rec.1.7).

The College has embraced integrated planning in the short time the SMP and the integrated planning cycle have been in place. Integrated planning is the guiding principle for the College’s decision-making and resource allocation processes:

- The Decision-Making and Planning Handbook was redesigned to more explicitly focus on how planning is integrated in institutional decision-making (Rec.1.8);
- The Annual Program Plan (APP) template was revised to map program goals to SMP goals (Rec.1.9);
- The Resource Allocation Matrix (RAM) was revised to align requests with SMP goals (Rec.1.10);
- The Committee Self-Evaluation (CES) template was revised to align governance committee goals to SMP goals (Rec.1.11);
- The College Planning Committee (CPC) has a standing agenda item for plan reporting and has developed a template for reporting plan updates (Rec.1.12); and,
- The Office of Institutional Effectiveness updates the PCC on progress towards achievement of SMP goals semiannually (Rec.1.13).

The Pierce College Integrated Planning Calendar 2013-2026, provides the timeline for the cyclical implementation, review and revision, and evaluation of all of the College’s plans. All plans in this first integrated planning cycle of implementation were one semester behind schedule. The Educational Master Plan (EMP), the Student Success and Support Program
Plan (SSSPP), and the Student Equity Plan (SEqP) were scheduled for completion in spring 2014, but were completed and approved in fall 2014. The Facilities Strategic Plan (FSP), the Plan for Enrollment Management (PEM), the Professional Development Plan (PDP), and the Technology Plan (TP) were scheduled for completion in fall 2014, but were completed and approved in spring 2015. Although final approval of the plans was off target by one semester, the College remained committed to the agreed-upon timeline as established in the integrated planning calendar. The College is undeterred and implementation of the plans is underway. Currently, there are no plans to modify the four-year cycle of integrated planning. These plans will be monitored in a similar manner to the SMP and will be on schedule for evaluation, review and revisions, and implementation in the next cycle on the approved schedule.

**Recommendation 2**

*In order to meet the Standard on student learning outcomes, the team recommends that the College thoroughly assess its student learning outcomes processes and make necessary modification to ensure authentic assessments, to demonstrate student achievement, and to provide for widespread institutional dialogue. (II.A.1.c; II.A.2.i)*

At the leadership retreat in August 2013, participants engaged in a dialogue about authentic assessment and drafted a definition (Rec.2.1). During 2013 opening day activities, the faculty was introduced to the definition of authentic assessment and break-out sessions were held on student learning outcomes (SLOs [Rec.2.2 and Rec.2.3]). In early fall 2013, the College adopted the following definition of authentic assessment, adapted from a statement by Jon Mueller, who is a faculty member at North Central College in Illinois: *Authentic assessment is a form of assessment in which students are asked to perform tasks that demonstrate meaningful application of essential knowledge and skills* (Rec.2.4). To continue the dialogue from the leadership retreat, departments began engaging in and documenting outcomes discussions (Rec.2.5).

The 2014 Follow-Up Report (Rec.2.6) details how the College established the basis for the institutionalization of authentic assessment. Since that report was submitted and with guidance from the College Outcomes Committee (COC), dialogue about authentic assessment has produced significant improvements in how the College addresses outcomes assessment:

- The Student Learning Outcomes addendum to the course outline of record (COR) was amended in spring 2014 to incorporate the definition of authentic assessment and General Education Learning Outcomes (GELO) mapping (Rec.2.7). All CORs going through an update must include SLOs on the new form (Rec.2.8).
- In spring 2014, an SLO review was added to the Curriculum Committee’s technical review process for review of outline updates (Rec.2.9).
- The Academic Senate approved the COC’s recommendation in spring 2015 to start collecting data in all sections and for all students during the fall and spring semesters (Rec.2.10).
The decision of which database to select was driven primarily by the faculty through the COC and the Academic Senate. The selection process included the participation from all four units of the College (Rec.2.18).

At the 2015 leadership retreat, College leaders engaged in dialogue to further systematize outcomes assessment across all divisions of the College (Rec.2.19). One area for discussion at the retreat was focused on how to align outcomes assessment with the other planning activities outlined in the Pierce College Integrated Planning Calendar, 2013-2026. The transition in outcomes leadership, vice presidential leadership, and outcomes tracking systems has created a gap in continuity of the previously-established six-year assessment cycle. The 2015 Leadership Retreat helped the College refocus its efforts on a sustainable cycle of assessment. In fall 2015, the COC will continue the discussion from the retreat and develop a clearly defined assessment cycle that is coordinated with the integrated planning and resource allocation cycle.

**Recommendation 3**

*In order to fully comply with the Standard, the College should fully develop, implement, and assess internal control mechanisms for the expenditures of grants and specified funds including the Associated Student Organization trust accounts and the Foundation to ensure these activities align with the mission and goals of the college. (III.D.2.d; III.D.2.e)*

1. *Internal control mechanisms for the expenditures of grants to be administratively managed to ensure alignment with the College mission and goals.*

The College has enhanced several internal controls to administratively manage the expenditure of grants to ensure alignment with the College’s mission and goals within the framework provided by the District’s Administrative Regulations AO-16 and AO-17 (Rec.3.1 and Rec.3.2). The vice president of Administrative Services and the Budget Committee provide oversight and assessment of expenditures through the review of quarterly reports (Rec.3.3). Furthermore, grant expenditures require the signatures of both the vice president of Administrative Services and the president of Pierce College (Rec.3.4). In addition to specific instructions and procedures for grant expenditures described in the Business Office and Accounting Policies and Procedures Manual (BOAPPM), grant expenditures are aligned with the strategic master plan and goals (Rec.3.5). The Preliminary
Grant Application Form requires the applicant to establish a link to the College’s strategic master plan along with requiring names of participatory governance bodies, if any, that were consulted in preparation of the grant. Signatures of the chair or director, area supervisor, vice presidents, and president are required (Rec.3.4).

A process chart was developed to detail the steps of applying for and accepting grants (Rec.3.6). The applicant fills out the Complete Preliminary Grant Proposal Form. In addition, the grant applicant fills out a Specially-Funded Program abstract at the time that the grant is awarded (Rec.3.7). This document is later attached to the funding request and is sent to District’s Accounting Department to establish the billing cycle and provide critical information about the grant. Grants that originate through the Foundation for Pierce College follow a similar process and grant requests are aligned with both the Foundation’s and College’s mission and goals. Final approval to move forward with a grant resides with the college president (Rec.3.8).

To further ensure oversight of grant activities and expenditures, the Office of Academic Affairs reorganized to create a dean of Academic Affairs and Institutional Advancement to work directly with faculty at the beginning of the grant development process. The Office of Administrative Services is hiring a grants coordinator to monitor the implementation of grants and ensure compliance with programmatic and fiscal requirements once grants have been awarded.

2. **Internal controls for expenditure of Associated Students Organization (ASO)/College trust accounts to be administratively managed to ensure alignment with the College mission and goals.**

Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD) Administrative Regulations S-2, S-3, S-4, S-5, regulate and define management of the Associated Student Organization (ASO) funds (Rec.3.9, Rec.3.10, Rec.3.11, and Rec.3.12). Funds outside of the ASO are placed in a trust account in the business office in accordance with District Administrative Regulation AO-14 (Rec.3.13). This is further described on pages 55-63 of the Business Office and Accounting Policies and Procedures Manual (Rec.3.5). The Trust Account Creation Form has been revised to reflect alignment with the College’s strategic master plan (Rec.3.14).

Recommended changes to applications, forms, and other documents are discussed broadly among several participatory governance committees, including the Pierce College Council, Budget Committee, ASO officers, ASO advisers, ASO club presidents, and Departmental Council to ensure alignment with the College’s mission and strategic goals. Beginning in spring 2014, training for these groups was conducted. Training is an ongoing annual process and has been systematized within the ASO organization (Rec.3.15). The ASO budget request form requires alignment with the College’s strategic master plan goals (Rec.3.16).

3. **Internal controls for expenditure of funds from the Pierce College Foundation are administratively managed to ensure alignment with both the Foundation’s and College’s mission and goals.**
The new *Foundation Accounting Policies and Procedures Manual* developed in consultation with the vice president of Administrative Services and the associate vice president of Administrative Services contains specific instructions and procedures regarding Foundation expenditures as outlined on pages 13 and 14 in the Policy for Purchases and Disbursements section (Rec.3.17). Additionally, on page six, the manual outlines the responsibilities and functions of the college president to inform the Foundation of the College’s goals and to serve as an ex-officio member of the Foundation Board.

District Board Rules 13106 and 13109.12, which describe the responsibilities of the college president and the vice president of Administrative Services with respect to oversight of auxiliary organizations, including the College Foundation, regulate the administrative management procedures for expenditure of funds. Specific audit and oversight responsibilities of the college president are defined in the Board Rules 13106 and 13109.12. The roles and responsibilities of the vice president of Administrative Services are defined in Board Rules 13107 and 13109.12 (Rec.3.18).

The Foundation follows the same process flow matrix for grants. They must fill out the Preliminary Grant Application Form (Rec.3.4) and obtain signatures from college administration for approval. In spring 2015, through the participatory governance process, the College requested an external financial audit of the Pierce College Foundation. This process is currently underway. The final report will provide insight to understanding the income and expenditure of funds over the last 15 years (Rec.3.19 and Rec.3.20).

4. *Internal cash controls for collection and distribution of funds on the campus need to be administratively managed.*

Within the framework of District’s Administrative Regulation B-12 that specifies cash and check directives (Rec.3.21), the College’s Administrative Services division introduced the *Policy and Procedure Guide for Fundraising* in early spring of 2013 (Rec.3.22). This document directs users to fundraising applications and other related documents that have been revised to explicitly align with the College’s strategic master plan (Rec.3.23). Discussions and training with department chairs and program managers regarding best management practices have taken place (Rec.3.24, Rec.3.25, Rec.3.26, and Rec.3.27). Academic Affairs deans have included fundraising training at their school meetings (Rec.3.28 and Rec.3.29). Training has also been conducted with the ASO (Rec.3.15).

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