Peer Review Team Report

Gila Community College
Globe Campus
8274 South Six Shooter Canyon Road
Globe, Arizona, 85501
&
Payson Campus
201 North Mud Spring Road
Payson, Arizona 85541

This report represents the findings of the Peer Review Team that conducted a focused site visit to Gila Community College from October 7-9, 2024. The Commission acted on the accredited status of the institution during its January 2025 meeting and this team report must be reviewed in conjunction with the Commission's Action letter.

Lennor M. Johnson
Team Chair

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Summary Analysis of Peer Review Team Visit

INSTITUTION: Gila Community College

DATES OF VISIT: October 7 to October 9, 2024

TEAM CHAIR: Lennor M. Johnson

A five-member accreditation team visited Gila Community College from October 7 to October 9, 2024, for the purpose of assessing the Candidacy Application according to Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, Commission Policies, and United States Department of Education (ED) regulations. The team evaluated how well the institution is achieving its stated purposes, analyzing how well Gila Community College is meeting the commission Standards providing for quality assurance and institutional improvement, and submitting a report to the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, (ACCJC) Western Association of Schools and Colleges regarding the Candidacy status of the Center.

In preparation for the team visit, the team chair attended a training on August 21, 2024 and conducted a pre-visit discussion with the Gila Community College President prior to the campus visit. The entire peer review team received team training conducted by the ACCJC staff prior to the visit. The peer review team received the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report and Teach-Out Plan several weeks prior to the site visit. Team members found the report to address Eligibility Requirements, Commission Standards and Policies, and confirmed that there was broad participation of faculty, staff, and administrators in compiling the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report.

Prior to the visit, team members completed written evaluations of the Institutional Self Evaluation Report (ISER) and began identifying areas for further clarification. Prior to the visit, team members also discussed their views of the written materials provided by Gila Community College. The team identified four team leads and members for each standard. Team members carefully read the ISER and assessed the evidence provided by the college. The team visited the Gila Pueblo Campus in Globe and Payson Campus, as well as the two locations where Gila Community College provides 50% or more of a degree: the Globe/Miami Regional Training Center in Miami, AZ and Arizona Department of Corrections Rehabilitation in Globe, AZ. During the peer review team visit, team members conducted formal meetings, interviews, and observations involving approximately fifty or more college faculty, staff, administrators, members of the board, CEO, and students. The team attended two open forum meetings to allow for comments from any member of the campus or local community.

Summary Analysis
The Gila County Community College District/Gila Community College (GCCCD or GCC) is seeking candidacy with the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC). This report represents a crucial step in Gila's two-decade-long effort to achieve independent accreditation.

Formed in 2002, Gila has operated as a provisional district, partnering with Eastern Arizona College (EAC) to offer accredited programs. The district's mission is to provide accessible, high-quality education through academic, technical, and personal enrichment programs that meet the needs of Gila County residents. With two campuses—Gila Pueblo Campus in Globe and Payson Campus in Payson—Gila serves a diverse population, including a significant percentage of Hispanic and Native American students, as well as older adults seeking personal enrichment opportunities and training.

As a provisional district, Gila faces specific challenges, such as ineligibility for a majority of state aid and federal grants. The district is working towards independent accreditation to remove these barriers and expand its service to the community. Gila's contractual relationship with EAC will end on June 30, 2025, making the pursuit of accreditation its top priority.

In its report, Gila emphasizes its commitment to student success and equity by implementing support programs like dual enrollment for high school students, financial aid initiatives, and a tuition waiver for residents aged 55 and older. These efforts reflect the district's dedication to promoting equitable outcomes for all students, particularly those from underserved populations.

Looking ahead, Gila has set strategic goals to strengthen its institutional capacity, improve technological infrastructure, and secure financial stability. The district views accreditation not just as a regulatory requirement, but as a catalyst for continuous improvement and a reflection of its values: academic integrity, transparency, and student-centered service. The ISER presents a comprehensive evaluation of Gila's strengths, challenges, and readiness for independent accreditation. Coupled with the peer review team's assessment, it shows a strong commitment to academic excellence and a strategic focus on addressing community needs.

During the site visit, the review team commended GCC for its strong sense of community and its ability to engage various student groups, including older adults and high school students through dual enrollment and career technical education partnerships. The team also identified areas requiring improvement before GCC can achieve initial accreditation. Specifically, the district needs to establish institution-set standards and disaggregate data to better inform its planning and improvement processes. The team further emphasized the need to fully implement and operationalize its governance structure to ensure compliance with ACCJC standards.

To enhance institutional effectiveness, the team recommended that the district focus on disaggregating data related to its student support services to evaluate their effectiveness and impact. Addressing these recommendations will be essential for GCC's progress toward accreditation and will enable the district to further strengthen its institutional capacity and student support.

In summary, GCC's ISER and the site visit reflect its commitment to aligning with ACCJC standards and Gila has demonstrated the capacity to serve as an accredited institution. By

addressing these recommendations, the district will be well-positioned to achieve initial accreditation and continue its mission of serving the diverse educational needs of Gila County residents.

Major Findings

Commendations:

Commendation 1: The team commends the Institution for its ability to foster a sense of belonging and community with its students, providing multiple opportunities for engagement, particularly with its older adults and high school populations via dual enrollment and career technical education partners (Standard 2.8).

Recommendations for Compliance:

Recommendation 1 (Compliance): In order to achieve initial accreditation, the team recommends the Institution develop institution-set standards and meaningfully disaggregate data to inform plans for continued improvement (Standard 1.3).

Recommendation 2 (Compliance): In order to achieve initial accreditation, the team recommends the Institution implement and operationalize their governance structure (Standard 4.3).

Recommendations to Improve Institutional Effectiveness:

Recommendation 3: In order to increase institutional effectiveness, the team recommends the College disaggregate data to evaluate the effectiveness of its support services (Standard 2.7 and Standard 2.9).

Required Documentation:

The Institution submitted the required documentation per the Accreditation Standards, except for Standard 1, item v.

In order to meet the requirements for expected documentation under Standard 1, the team recommends the Institution submit "Documentation that the institution has established standards and goals for student achievement (i.e., institution-set standards), including but not limited to standards and goals for course success, degree and certificate attainment, transfer, job placement rates, and licensure examination pass rates, at the institutional and program levels."

Standard 1

Mission and Institutional Effectiveness

General Observations

Gila Community College demonstrates a commitment to its students through a mission that emphasizes affordability, accessibility, and flexibility, as reflected in its varied educational delivery methods. The mission aligns with the Institution's focus on lifelong learning and student success, and it is widely communicated to stakeholders through multiple channels. While the College has a deep understanding of the student populations it serves, articulation of the College's commitment to equitable outcomes for all students could be improved by referencing specific student demographics such as rural, low-income, and first-generation learners.

The College has established clear goals for institutional improvement, including plans to develop performance objectives for key student success metrics such as degree completion and transfer rates. Gila demonstrates accountability through regular program reviews and the use of advisory committees to inform program improvements. The Institution would benefit from integrating equity more directly into its strategic planning, using disaggregated data to address achievement gaps, and increasing student feedback participation. Efforts to better align resources, innovation, and long-term planning with equity goals, particularly in upcoming strategic planning sessions as scheduled, will further enhance Gila's impact on student success and institutional growth. The College will also need to develop institution-set standards to guide planning for increasing student outcomes.

Findings and Evidence

Gila Community College demonstrates its commitment to its students through its mission, which emphasizes lifelong learning and student success, highlights the importance of high-quality, affordable, and student-centric education, and emphasis on affordability and accessibility demonstrates an understanding of the unique challenges faced by its student demographics. The mention of in-person, hybrid, and distance education reflects the College's flexible structure, accommodating various learning preferences and needs. The mission was approved by the Board at the July 31, 2024, meeting and will be reviewed and revised on a regular cycle. The mission is communicated widely and readily available to stakeholders via the College website, strategic planning session, and evidence shows engagement with internal and external stakeholders such as Payson Adventure Day, STEM festivals, and Music in the Garden. The vision statement supports the intended student population by being the first choice for post-secondary education, the first choice for vocational training and job skills enhancement, and the provider of enrichment programs for all ages. (1.1).

Gila has set a clear and ambitious goal of gaining institutional accreditation, highlighting seven critical success factors. At the next strategic planning session scheduled for fall 2025, outcomes-based goals with performance objectives to measure the institution's progress will be developed for degree completion, transfer rates, Math and English completion, third-party licensure rates, and CTE job placement, along with efforts to address equity barriers through disaggregated data and financial aid access. The institution could benefit from more explicit connections between its goals and the unique needs of its community, as well as clearer performance metrics and resource allocation plans. Although

Gila established baseline Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), it would be beneficial to outline preliminary metrics or benchmarks even at this early stage. This could ensure that stakeholders have a clear understanding of success measures as the institution progresses through its accreditation process. Additionally, Gila should consider developing detailed strategies for enrollment growth and better integrate equity initiatives across institutional responsibilities at the College's fall 2025 strategic planning session. Finally, strengthening the alignment of the Master Facilities Plan with academic and community goals would enhance its overall impact (1.2).

The institution demonstrates a commitment to accountability and assessment through regular program reviews, including annual and three-year evaluations of student learning outcomes (SLOs), course learning outcomes (CLOs), and program learning outcomes (PLOs). An annual review for each academic program, designed to assess student learning and determine whether Course and PLOs are being met, is completed by Gila faculty to improve academics through the process of collecting and analyzing evidence relative to quality, shared reflection regarding a program's status and future direction, and feedback through administrative review. Gila uses qualitative feedback from Occupational Advisory Committees to inform program improvements. Gila has developed courses for its degrees and certificates. Approval of courses and curriculum are submitted to the Board. Learning outcomes information is contained within the 2025-2026 GCC catalog. The institution learning outcomes (ILOs) lacks clarity on student achievement and the specific use of disaggregated data to identify equity gaps. While tools like the Graduate Exit Survey have the potential to address this, low participation limits their effectiveness.

The team suggests focusing on setting clear achievement standards, utilizing disaggregated data for long-term planning, and increasing student participation in feedback mechanisms to ensure comprehensive decision-making and equitable outcomes. The team noted the College plans to establish institution-set standards as part of the KPIs in their strategic plan but at the time of the visit they were not set yet. (1.3).

A College Council, composed of administrators, faculty, staff, and student representatives, will be created to direct and allocate resources to support the College's Strategic Plan, which will ensure accountability and broad input. The College Council will have primary oversight for assuring that all major decisions align with the College's Vision, Mission, and Values Statements and financial resources to ensure allocations are made in the best interest of the public. Currently, regular planning cycles, including annual instructional program portfolio reports and three-year comprehensive program evaluations, support decision-making and continuous quality improvement. SLOs at the course level, PLOs, and ILOs are assessed systematically as determined in each program's annual report with student achievement and demographic data provided for each program. The College plans to effectively engage external stakeholders and use data-driven analysis to address program effectiveness and community needs via occupational advisory committees.

Suggested improvements could be made by developing a structured evaluation framework with clear timelines, systematizing innovation, and ensuring long-term sustainability post-2025. Additionally, enhancing the use of disaggregated data to improve equity in student outcomes, integrating program evaluations into long-term planning, and increasing transparency in financial decision-making would strengthen Gila's planning processes. The College will benefit by expanding stakeholder participation,

formalizing feedback loops, and improving both innovation support and financial planning alignment (1.4).

The College regularly communicates progress toward the mission through a variety of channels such as emails, announcements, meetings, the District website, and zoom, which help bridge the geographical spread between campuses. Regular administrative meetings, written reports, and the development of a President's Newsletter support transparency across leadership and staff, while the public availability of Board information promotes openness. Plans to make strategic updates, program reviews, and learning outcome data accessible via the District website, along with Town Halls and Public Forums, highlight a strong commitment to stakeholder engagement. There is a need for clear timelines for implementing these initiatives and more details on how external stakeholders will be informed. The institution would benefit from focusing on formalizing feedback processes and improving data transparency, particularly through disaggregated data, to enhance equity and strategic planning. A communication plan to publicize the availability of institutional reports would further strengthen transparency and accessibility (1.5).

Conclusion: The College meets Standards 1.1, 1.2, 1.4, and 1.5.   The College does not meet Standard 1.3.

Recommendation: In order to achieve initial accreditation, the team recommends the Institution develop institution-set standards and meaningfully disaggregate data to inform plans for continued improvement (Standard 1.3).

Standard 2

Student Success

General Observations

In alignment with its mission, the institution delivers high-quality academic and learning support programs that engage and support students through their unique educational journeys. The institution's processes for curriculum design and development reflect generally accepted practices in higher education. The institution's CTE programs and general education philosophy reflects its degree requirements and is consistent with expected norms in higher education. The institution's general education offerings provide opportunities for students to engage in the arts and humanities, sciences, mathematics, and social sciences.

The institution provides students with accurate, current, and consistent learning outcomes for the courses and programs in which they are enrolled. The institution has mechanisms for ensuring effective communication with its students in multiple modalities regarding available programs, services, and resources. The institution schedules classes in alignment with student needs and program pathways to ensure students have the opportunity to complete programs within a reasonable period of time. The institution regularly evaluates the effectiveness of its delivery modes and teaching methodologies to support equitable student learning and achievement and uses results to guide improvements.

Aligned with its mission, the institution designs and delivers effective processes for identifying and delivering innovative practices and support services for students' academic and non-academic personal wellness, and basic needs to enhance student success, equitable outcomes, and institutional quality.

The institution establishes co-curricular and student engagement activities based on the needs of the students and the community it serves, including the needs of student populations that are under-resourced. The institution serves as a cultural and social hub, partnering with local businesses, schools, and organizations to host activities on the campus and in the community.

The institution relies on Program Review to assess, improve, and examine the quality of its academic, learning support, and student services programs. The institution follows established processes that include analysis of data related to student learning and achievement.

Findings and Evidence

Programs and courses offered at Gila Community College (GCC) are offered in fields of study that align with the mission, are appropriate to higher education and lead to degrees, certificates, and transfer. Academic programs offered at GCC closely align with their mission and reflect well-defined expected outcomes. This is evident with the implementation of the dual enrollment program and Arizona General Education Curriculum (AGEC) program that allows students to earn a certificate that can be transferred to any of the three public state

universities in Arizona. These programs serve economically disadvantaged minorities and underserved students throughout Arizona. Further, Aspire Arizona provides Payson students with the opportunity to take general education courses, at no cost to the student. Courses at all campuses are offered during the day, evening, and weekends as needed. GCC has Distance Education procedures in place. Pending the granting of candidacy status, GCC will submit a Substantive Change Application to the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges to request approval to teach distance education courses. (2.1)

Faculty and appropriate stakeholders play a central role in designing and delivering academic programs that support equitable opportunity for student success while also reflecting on industry standards. Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs) articulate measurable knowledge and skills that serve as the foundation. These ILOs guide faculty in the development of learning outcomes for programs and courses. ILOs and PLOs are accurately aligned with individual courses and SLOs.

The Program Portfolio Review process and the course outline template focus on communicating, reflecting on, and assessing student achievement of learning outcomes. Faculty review and analyze data, allowing new best practices to emerge that can inform effective modifications to SLOs and improve academic program offerings. Curriculum processes at the College have faculty oversight and external workforce/industry advisory groups play an important role in the development of career education courses and programs. Requirements for all course and program submissions, including SLOS, are required and vetted by the curriculum committee, approved by the appropriate administrator and ultimately brought before the District Governing Board for review and approval. Curriculum changes and revisions are assessed by level and the assignment of a level determines who approves of the change. The College may consider using success and completion data as part of their review process and engage in dialogue around equitable outcomes for students throughout the curriculum development process. (2.2)

The College incorporates a General Education component into all its degree programs, ensuring breadth of knowledge and promoting intellectual inquiry. Policy 4031 General Education Course Criteria establishes clear standards for the College's General Education courses and General Education criteria for six individual program areas listed under the AGEC redesign. The redesigned AGEC is a 32-35 semester credit certificate program. Policy 4005 Institutional Learning Outcomes also reflects the intended General Education competencies and provides a means to assess the General Education framework's accomplishment. The ILOs articulate measurable knowledge and skills that serve as the foundation for success in society and in the student's discipline or vocation. (2.3)

The College has mechanisms for ensuring effective communication with its students in multiple modalities regarding the programs, services, and resources available. The College uses multiple platforms with the website being the primary tool for communicating all information about the College. The website is currently in the process of being updated gradually over the course of the next year to ensure an appropriate balance of keeping Eastern Arizona College links active

for current students while preparing new links, services, and software for future students. The overhaul of the website will take place during 2025 when it is appropriate to fully transition the website, at which time all links currently going to Eastern Arizona College will be replaced. The homepage will organize information for students into five main categories and will include contact information for all services at the Payson and Gila Pueblo campuses. (2.4)

The scheduling process at GCC follows a timeline that includes input from faculty and counselors. Administrative staff work with faculty, using course sequencing guides to create rotation schedules that ensure critical courses do not overlap and that essential courses in the majors are properly sequenced with other required courses. The Graduate Exit Survey asks students to rate, on a five-point scale, factors including course availability. The College evaluates the degree to which scheduling facilitates timely completion of degrees, certificates, and transfers. Course sequencing for dual enrollment partners such as Aspire, NAVIT, and CVIT are reviewed annually, and each partner is provided a report at the end of each semester regarding enrollment for their own reporting purposes in compliance with FERPA. The College reflects on time-to-completion data in program review and institutional evaluation, and devises plans to improve completion rates. (2.5)

The College uses a variety of delivery modes and teaching methodologies to meet student and curricular needs and promote equitable student learning and achievement. The College views the opportunity to offer an increased number of modalities as being equity-focused and could benefit student pathways and equitable access, which is particularly important for GCC considering its large, rural service area. To meet the changing needs of its students and to promote equitable access and success, GCC will offer courses in four modalities which include in person, online synchronous, online asynchronous, and hybrid (campus part-time; online asynchronous part-time). Increased modality options could improve equitable outcomes for marginalized groups that may face challenges such as transportation, work obligations, and children that can prevent them from accessing traditional classrooms on a fixed schedule. (2.6)

Aligned with its mission, GCC provides a variety of services and developmental policy programs that foster a culture of support. Admissions, registration, academic advising, disability services, orientations, workshops, financial aid, tutoring (Net Tutor), and access to mental health care (Better Mynd) are available in person through faculty and staff, online, and /or via the Learning Resource Center (LRC) at both campuses. A Step to Success brochure is provided to each new student that comes to campus and is available in the Catalog. Flyers and television monitors post additional information across campuses, Facebook and Instagram social media posts. Additional services include Veterans information and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Program reviews are used as part of the assessment process to measure student success and proficiency, and the success of student support services.

GCC has adequate means to support student learning needs through the library and learning support resources available on both the Gila Pueblo and Payson campuses. Currently, government documents, reference collections, short stories, and essays are also made available to all students through EAC Alumni Library online resource database. (2.7)

GCC fosters belonging and community among students, faculty and staff by creating formal and informal opportunities for students to engage with each other and the many facets of the institution. Cultivating a sense of belonging and inclusivity creates a culture of success and improves educational outcomes. The College establishes co-curricular and student engagement activities based on the needs of the students and the unique community each campus serves. GCC is a cultural and social hub, partnering with local businesses, schools, and organizations to host activities on the campus and in the community. The Scrub Camp, University Transfer Fair, STEMfest, Cosmetology competition, College Day, Toastmasters International, and Student Art Show and Sale are all prime examples of robust community and student engagement.

Further, during the site visit, the team encountered many individuals, from students to community partners that spoke in support of the value of education and the importance of sustaining business, industry, and public services within the county to increase student success. Further, the community expressed ideas and possibilities for the future which demonstrates an interest and engagement in the College.

Recognizing the value of lifelong learning, the College offers academic and personal enrichment courses to the community. Many older adults in Gila County take advantage of the physical, mental, and social stimulation provided through GCC courses and campus events/activities. Tuition for students 55+ is waived to encourage class participation, personal well–being, and lifelong learning. Additionally, classes have been specifically developed for older adult interests. Gila Community College also serves justice-impacted students in the correctional facility and provides technical education in the Regional Training Center both located in Globe, AZ. These are both longstanding programs that have deep impact in the community and are evidence of the College's commitment to serving students where they are on their educational path. (2.8)

The College follows established processes that include analysis of data related to student learning. Individual faculty conduct assessments at the course level, ensuring that instruction is equitable and consistent across all modes of delivery. Faculty work collaboratively to establish learning outcomes, design assessment plans, conduct assessment projects, and implement innovative strategies to improve programs as evidenced in program reviews Policy 4005.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) at the course level are assessed according to the assessment mode identified on the course outline. The College developed a graduate exit survey that will be used for assessing SLOs and provide a means for gathering demographic information and eliciting feedback from students. In addition, the College has developed a course evaluation that will allow students the opportunity to evaluate every course and instructor at the end of each term.

An annual program review is done in Gila County to assess student learning and determine whether Course and Program Learning Outcomes are being met. Curriculum processes have been developed and new curricula will follow the guidelines and processes as established by the Curriculum Committee. (2.9)

Conclusion: The Institution meets Standards 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, 2.7, 2.8, 2.9.

Recommendation 3: In order to increase institutional effectiveness, the team recommends the College disaggregate data to evaluate the effectiveness of its support services (Standard 2.7 and Standard 2.9).

Commendation 1: The team commends the Institution for its ability to foster a sense of belonging and community with its students, providing multiple opportunities for engagement, particularly with its older adults and high school populations via dual enrollment and career technical education partners (Standard 2.8).

Standard 3

Infrastructure and Resources

General Observations

Gila Community College demonstrates a commitment to hiring qualified personnel, with all faculty members meeting or exceeding minimum qualifications, as outlined in Procedure 5012-PR3, ensuring alignment with the college's mission and strategic goals. The institution's administrative roles are clearly defined, and its hiring processes are well-documented. Gila is preparing for its transition to full independence by aligning current staff with future organizational needs through regular evaluations and career goal discussions. While hiring practices are strong, there is room for improvement in areas such as diversity recruitment, professional development planning, and ensuring continuous adaptation to higher education trends. The college also shows commitment to aligning professional learning opportunities with institutional goals, though it could benefit from formalizing its professional development plans and linking them to budget planning and decisions.

Furthermore, Gila has implemented a structured employee evaluation process, with room for improvement in the use of evaluation data for ongoing professional development and long-term planning. Strengthening these areas will enhance Gila's efforts to maintain a high-quality, diverse, and adaptive workforce.

The college has established policies and procedures governing accurate and transparent budget planning cycles. Budget policies reflect the college's goals of supporting quality educational services to students and providing opportunities for growth, while strengthening efforts towards fiscal responsibility and sustainability. Gila Community College further demonstrates sound practices for facility and asset management.

The college demonstrates its commitment to establishing and maintaining a strong technology infrastructure, addressing both instructional and operational needs, while concentrating efforts on technology for student course engagement through in-person and remote classroom environments. The institution maintains consistent technology services across both campuses to ensure ease of access for faculty, staff, and students. Through its policies and procedures, the college demonstrates strong guidelines for the safe and effective use of technology in educational and operational areas and further demonstrates its efforts for ensuring effective protocols that provide guidance in the event of technological emergencies.

Findings and Evidence

Gila hires qualified personnel; all faculty members meet or exceed minimum qualifications based on established guidelines (Procedure 5012-PR3 Faculty Credentialing). This demonstrates the institution's commitment to employing qualified faculty to support educational programs and student success. The Senior Dean, Associate Directors, and Assistant Directors appear to

have clearly defined roles. Faculty members meet or exceed established qualifications based on Procedure 5012-PR3, and the institution's hiring processes are well-defined in Procedure 5015-PR1, supporting recruitment aligned with its mission and strategic goals. There is a clear future organizational vision, with roles appropriately delineated to support educational programs. Gila demonstrates forward thinking by outlining plans for transitioning its personnel as it works toward becoming a fully independent community college district. This includes evaluations of current employees and aligning them with the new organizational structure based on strengths and career goals. Regular assessments of employment practices, including IPEDS reporting and Key Performance Indicator (KPI) reviews, show a commitment to maintaining and improving personnel quality, diversity, and equity. The College reviews employee policies annually and adjusts benefit programs, such as health insurance and state retirement, to ensure equity.

However, there lacks specifics on how staffing levels are determined, strategies for handling diversity in recruitment, and details on the ongoing assessment of qualifications. More structured approaches to professional development, diversity tracking, and adaptation to emerging trends in higher education would strengthen the institution's commitment to continuous improvement. Lastly, incorporating feedback mechanisms and training for hiring committees could further enhance equitable hiring practices. (3.1)

The college demonstrates its commitment to professional learning opportunities. The college should consider including a professional development plan that demonstrates alignment with the mission and goals of the college and provides criteria for related requests as outlined in Policy 5070. The visiting team learned through discussion that the Teaching, Learning, and Community (TLC) Committee once implemented would assess professional development needs acquired through the employee evaluation process and formulate a comprehensive and prioritized strategy for establishing district wide professional development goals. Additionally, the college should consider a link between a professional development plan and the college's annual budget development process. (3.2)

Employee evaluations are specific to each organizational structure area (i.e. faculty, staff, and administrators). The procedures demonstrate a positive participatory engagement in the evaluation between supervisor and faculty or staff member, with opportunities for conversation and improvement plan development. The inclusion of additional source evaluation data also provides relevant input where applicable. The procedures could be strengthened to specify what data would be collected and how this information would be utilized as a decision-making tool beyond immediate evaluation. The visiting team subsequently learned that it will be the role of the TLC Committee to collect and analyze data from the employee evaluation process that addresses professional development needs. (3.3)

The college has adequate financial resources to support program needs, and has developed quality procedures and guidelines for developing its annual budget that include supporting the educational and operational support service areas, demonstrating positive efforts for ensuring

a sustainable mission and fostering student success. Incorporating procedural language to provide a direct link between program review resource requests, zero-based budgeting processes, and the institution's performance evaluation and student success data would serve to strengthen these processes. (3.4)

The college highlights that the financial planning process is directly aligned with the institution's mission and strategic plan throughout its policies and procedures, providing for a robust timeline that ensures stakeholder participation, including the institution's program and support services areas (Ref. Procedure 3100-PR1). Additional guidelines ensure that institution performance data and strategic plans are considered and aligned during the annual budgeting process (Ref. Procedure 3100-PR2).

The college further demonstrates its practices of fiscal transparency with college and community stakeholders through various resources available for disseminating budget planning, development, and regular reporting information. Specific focus areas, such as Workforce Development, technological resources, and facilities maintenance, are well-aligned with the institution's goals to improve student success and educational services. While the college demonstrates commitment to stakeholder involvement through designated avenues, additional clarity to how stakeholder input impacts the budgeting and decision-making process would strengthen the college's communication of its resolve to include its diverse stakeholders in these processes. (3.5)

The college relies on external CPA services, through which it has received unmodified audit reports, and plans to continue with these services, ensuring there is continuity in external oversight during its transition to independence. The adoption of QuickBooks Online Advanced for fiscal management and ADP for HRIS/Payroll demonstrates a commitment to using technology to maintain accurate and timely financial data. Policies and procedures provide for a regular review of financial data, ensuring ongoing internal and external oversight.

To strengthen financial management, the college should consider enhancing its internal control policies and procedures that ensure data accuracy, fraud prevention, and segregation of duties, and include a regular assessment of these control mechanisms. Implementing an internal audit function or clarifying internal audit roles may assist in reinforcing stronger financial oversight, while integrating feedback from external audits into ongoing improvements to demonstrate continuous progress toward mitigating risk and improving financial accountability and transparency. The college recognizes that this may require additional staffing considerations to ensure appropriate fiscal management and control practices and has clearly demonstrated its commitment toward that goal. (3.6)

The college has clear processes, including its program review system, for analyzing past financial data as an inclusion in its continuous quality improvement process, from individual programs or operational support services to a college wide level. During the site visit, the team

learned the practices for reviewing instructional and non-instructional evaluation processes and how it is linked to budgetary needs and its development policies. The college is likewise demonstrating positive efforts for establishing annual contingency reserves. The college may want to include in its budget planning process a stronger consideration for long-term priorities related to capital improvements, facility maintenance, and other future obligations. (3.7)

The college demonstrates policies and practices for ensuring the safety of its facilities for faculty, staff, and students at both its Globe and Payson campuses, maintaining compliance with local, state, and federal regulations, while emphasizing a proactive approach through procedures for reporting safety concerns within its facilities by various stakeholders. The college has plans for the continuation of its commitment to evaluate the effectiveness and sufficiency of its facilities and equipment through the development of a Master Facilities Plan (MFP). A current list of all capital equipment and college assets is updated annually by the college's contracted CPA and is used for inventory and depreciation schedules. An inventory of capital assets is maintained for both campuses and each site location and is updated annually. The development of an MFP would provide Gila Community College with an effective plan for addressing future infrastructure and physical resource needs, including on-going scheduled maintenance and equipment replacement cycles. (3.8)

The institution provides comprehensive access to technology resources for faculty, staff, students, and other stakeholders as outlined in Policy 2030 Technology Resource Standards and provides support to its educational programs and operational support services. Technology resource needs are considered a critical component in the annual budget process. Clearly defined policies and procedures are in place for the safe and secure use of information technologies, including guidelines communicated through syllabi, handbooks, orientation meetings, and training schedules. The college regularly evaluates its technology infrastructure (including network security) via the IT Department's annual program review process to ensure ongoing effectiveness in supporting educational services and college administrative operations. The college recognizes the likely necessity for additional support staff to maintain its network security infrastructure. The college may need to consider implementing proactive strategies for enhancing technology resources in addition to routine maintenance and replacement cycles. Additionally, while communication channels are in place, the college should create a clear process for gathering user feedback to improve the technological experience for faculty, staff, students, and other stakeholders. (3.9)

Gila Community College demonstrates appropriate strategies in risk management, emergency preparedness, and business continuity planning, emphasizing a comprehensive risk management policy integrated with the college's mission and values. The institution has an Emergency Preparedness and Response initiative that ensures quick responses and mitigation strategies, supported by external partnerships for insurance and risk mitigation. The college has contracted with a third-party vendor for business insurance and risk management support, services and policies are reviewed annually, with additional consideration in the budgeting process. Annual reviews of insurance policies keep the institution aligned with evolving risks,

and partnerships with IT providers ensure strong backup and security protocols for critical data systems. The college may consider a more detailed risk assessment practice that includes specific contingency planning in the event of financial or technological emergencies, including a regular testing procedure of emergency and backup systems. Further, Gila may want to consider including more focused cybersecurity contingency planning and post-incident assessment processes to ensure swift recovery in the event of technological failures or cyberattacks. (3.10)

Conclusions: The Institution meets Standards 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7, 3.8, 3.9, 3.10.

Standard 4

Governance and Decision-Making

General Observations

The College has conveyed a strong sense of the importance and value of a clear governance structure. There is an early governance framework that allows for flexibility and innovation in order to respond to the needs of the community and engage multiple constituencies internally and externally. It is clear there is transition planning underway and an implementation timeline is ready to launch. Opportunities exist to fully flesh out the decision-making structure further and include evidence of guidance/support shared with college constituent groups and individuals along with communications with the college about governance and decision-making processes. It is important for internal and external community members to see where and how they have input and how the college president arrives at a decision or decisions.
These were not directly presented in the ISER; however, during the site visit, the peer review team was provided with more context for what the College would move to accomplish if successful in establishing candidacy.

Findings and Evidence

The College presented solid, clear evidence of its commitment to principles of academic freedom, academic integrity, and freedom of inquiry in this standard primarily demonstrated through policy and procedures. Policies and the student code of conduct appear to be communicated through flyers, the use of a common syllabus template, and the admissions form. The college provides a sample syllabi template that will be used and will be helpful to ensure consistent reference to their policies and the appropriate procedures across all programs. (4.1)

The preliminary decision-making structure outlined in this standard describes five governance groups that will be formed or transitioned from Eastern Arizona College as the college advances towards a self-sustaining, independent college. Each group has a distinct purpose and role to avoid duplicating effort; each council/committee affords opportunities for membership and input from all constituencies--students, staff, faculty and administration--to make decisions and provide recommendations as appropriate. The preliminary structure provided in the ISER also allows flexibility for ad hoc, task group, and subcommittees as necessitated and approved by the College Council. Further, listening, two-way communication, and the focus on the students' experience are all prioritized. A review of the documentation shows the policies and procedures that are in place.

As they develop and evolve their governance structure during the separation from Eastern Arizona College, the College might consider developing a governance guide or handbook for

continued transparency and engagement with the campus community. Based on conversations during the peer team site visit, the College could also consider the added value of an institutional effectiveness committee within their governance structure. Such a committee could serve a variety of functions depending on current and emerging needs including transition implementation, data governance and institutional effectiveness, facilities master planning and accreditation. (4.2)

Student success, through "a welcoming and enriching atmosphere" for each and every student is reiterated, emphasized, and demonstrated throughout the site visit. There is clear recognition of different student journeys and the role of the college in serving all students. During the site visit, the peer review team observed a passionate and deeply committed group of faculty, staff, and administrators who are dedicated to serving the region by offering opportunities that not only enhance individual educational and career attainment, but also contribute back to the communities in which they live. In pursuit of independence, individuals have contributed their own time to working together to support college goals and collaborate on policies and procedures. There was also consistent reference and/or inclusion of both colleges in all discussions demonstrating inclusiveness and engagement across campuses.

Going forward, it is essential to build on the initial foundation described in the ISER and shared during the site visit once the college implements and enacts its decision-making structure. While individuals are encouraged to participate and have ownership in creating this environment, it is not clear how campus constituents will engage within their respective constituencies (e.g. faculty, staff, students and the community) and how information, perspectives, ideas flow to the five main governance groups, how meeting information will be disseminated and when meetings will typically occur. The team learned during the visit that detailed procedures would be developed and discussed by the stakeholders. This may also include but is not limited to the following: a) how members are elected, selected or appointed, b) the term length of committee member service, c) how decisions and/or recommendations are made at the committee level through consensus or majority and articulate roles, d) expectations of committee members, and e) develop annual committee goals related to the committee charge and in alignment with the College mission, vision, and values. In other words, the College can determine if the committees are recommending bodies or have decision making authority, distinguish what agenda items are appropriate for College Council such as college-wide strategic initiatives, significant operational changes, policies, procedures and area updates. Building on the general operational procedures for committees (aside from the initial charge), and formalizing the authority of committees and the College Council will clarify the governance structure and provide transparency to students, employees, the governing board and the general public (4.3)

The District Governing Board role and responsibilities are clearly articulated in the succinct narrative of this standard and supported by the policies and procedures included in the report including Policy 1015 Administrative Powers and Duties, demonstrating the board's

responsibility for the overall quality and stability of the institution. The response also indicates upcoming fiscal changes that may result from transition away from Eastern Arizona College and the need to take on the fiscal responsibilities. (4.4)

The team reviewed policies and procedures and minutes that demonstrate the governing board evaluates the president and that the CEO has the authority to implement board policies. (4.5)

The team confirmed the college meets the standard based on the review of policies, procedures and codes as explained in the College's response, and that the board functions effectively as a collective entity to promote the institution's values and mission. Processes and expectations of board members are noted in board policies around ethics and professional conduct, oath of office, conflict of interest, and the governing board bylaws. The College has also purchased board document management software to manage information and provide access and transparency. (4.6)

Conclusions: The Institution meets Standards 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6. The Institution does not meet Standard 4.3.

Recommendation 1 (Compliance): In order to achieve initial accreditation, the team recommends the Institution implement and operationalize their governance structure. (Standard 4.3)

Verification of Required Documentation

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. Some required documentation may have been used in response to ACCJC Standards that address the same or similar subject matter. For each required item listed, the team must verify its review of the required documentation, and indicated its conclusion by choosing one of the options below and note any comment or concerns where needed:

Verified	The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.
Verified, with Recommendations for improvement	The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements, but improvement is recommended.
Not met	The team has reviewed the elements of this component and found the institution does not meet the Commission's requirements.

Standard 1: Mission and Institutional Effectiveness

Required Item	Conclusions
i Documentation of institution's authority to operate as a post-secondary educational institution and award degrees (e.g., degree-granting approval statement, authorization to operate, articles of incorporation) (ER 1)	__X__Verified _____Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement _____Not met **Recommendation(s) for improvement**:
ii. Procedures/practices for periodic review of mission/mission-related statements, including provisions for revision (if/when revisions are needed) that allow for participation of institutional stakeholders, as appropriate for the character and context of the institution	__**X**__Verified _____Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement _____Not met **Recommendation(s) for improvement**:
iii. Documentation of the governing board's approval of the institutional mission (ER 6)	__**X**__Verified _____Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement _____Not met **Recommendation(s) for improvement**:

iv.	Procedures/practices for setting institutional goals, including provisions for the inclusion of input from relevant institutional stakeholders, as appropriate for the character and context of the institution	____Verified __**X**__Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement ____Not met **Recommendation(s) for improvement**: Gila would benefit from integrating equity more directly into its strategic planning, using disaggregated data to address achievement gaps, and increasing student feedback participation. Efforts to better align resources, innovation, and long-term planning with equity goals, particularly in upcoming strategic planning sessions, will further enhance Gila's impact on student success and institutional growth.
v.	Documentation that the institution has established standards and goals for student achievement (i.e., institution-set standards), including but not limited to standards and goals for course success, degree and certificate attainment, transfer, job placement rates, and licensure examination pass rates, at the institutional and program levels (ER 2, ER 11)	____Verified ____Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement __X_ Not met **Recommendation(s) for improvement**: See Recommendation 1

Standard 2: Student Success

Required Item	Conclusions
i. Documentation that the institution's practices for awarding credit reflect generally accepted norms in higher education, including: • Commonly accepted minimum program lengths for certificates, associate degrees, and baccalaureate degrees • Written policies for determining credit hours that are consistently applied to all courses, programs, and modalities • Adherence to the Department of Education's standards for clock-to-credit hour conversions, if applicable (ER 10) (See Commission *Policy on Credit Hour, Clock Hour, and Academic Year*)	_X___Verified ____Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement ____Not met **Recommendation(s) for improvement**:
ii. Documentation that the institution's transfer of credit policies include the following: • Any established criteria the institution uses regarding the transfer of credit earned at another institution • Any types of institutions or sources from which the institution will not accept credits • A list of institutions with which the institution has established an articulation agreement • Written criteria used to evaluate and award credit for prior learning experience including, but not limited to, service in the armed forces, paid or unpaid employment, or other demonstrated competency or learning See *Policy on Transfer of Credit*	__X__Verified ____Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement ____Not met **Recommendation(s) for improvement**:
iii. Documentation of the institution's advertising and recruitment policies, demonstrating alignment with the *Policy on Institutional Advertising and Student Recruitment* (ER 16)	__X__Verified ____Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement ____Not met **Recommendation(s) for improvement**:
iv. Documentation of clear policies and procedures for handling student complaints, including: • Evidence that these policies/procedures are accessible to students in the catalog and online; • Evidence that that institution provides contact information for filing complaints with associations, agencies and governmental bodies that accredit, approve, or license the institution and any of its programs	__X__Verified ____Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement ____Not met **Recommendation(s) for improvement**:

Required Item	Conclusions
v. Verification that the institution maintains files of formal student complaints received throughout the current accreditation cycle (i.e., since the last site visit), demonstrating: • Accurate and consistent implementation of complaint policies and procedures • No issues indicative of noncompliance with Standards	__X__Verified ____Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement ____Not met **Recommendation(s) for improvement**:
vi. Verification that student records are stored permanently, securely, and confidentially, with provision for secure backup	__X__Verified ____Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement ____Not met **Recommendation(s) for improvement**:
vii. Documentation of the institution's policies and/or practices for the release of student records	__X__Verified ____Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement ____Not met **Recommendation(s) for improvement**:
viii. Documentation that the institution's policies and procedures for program discontinuance provide enrolled students with opportunities for timely completion in the event of program elimination	___X_Verified ____Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement ____Not met **Recommendation(s) for improvement**:
ix. Official college catalog contains required elements (ER 20)	__X__Verified ____Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement ____Not met **Recommendation(s) for improvement**:
FOR TITLE IV PARTICIPANTS: Note college does not participate in Title IV.	
x. Documentation of institution's implementation of the required components of the Title IV Program, including: • Findings from any audits and program/other review activities by the U.S. Department of Education (ED) • Evidence of timely corrective action taken in response to any Title IV audits or program reviews See *Policy on Institutional Compliance with Title IV*	____Verified ____Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement ____Not met **Recommendation(s) for improvement**:

Required Item	Conclusions
FOR INSTITUTIONS WITH DISTANCE EDUCATION AND/OR CORRESPONDENCE EDUCATION: **Note the College does not participate in DE or CE.**	
xi. Documentation of institution's : • Procedures for verifying that the student who registers in a course offered via distance education or correspondence education is the same person who participates in the course and receives academic credit • Policies and/or procedures for notifying students of any charges associated with verification of student identity (if applicable) • Policies regarding protection of student privacy See *Policy on Distance Education and on Correspondence Education*	____Verified ____Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement ____Not met **Recommendation(s) for improvement**:
REQUIRED ONLY IF APPLICABLE **– Note the following are not applicable to GCC**	
xii. Documentation demonstrating how the institution distinguishes its pre-collegiate curriculum from its college-level curriculum	____Verified ____Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement ____Not met **Recommendation(s) for improvement**:
xiii. Documentation of policies and/or procedures for awarding credit for prior learning and/or competency-based credit (n/a)	____Verified ____Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement ____Not met **Recommendation(s) for improvement**:
xiv. Documentation of agreements with other external parties regarding the provision of student and/or learning support services (n/a)	____Verified ____Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement ____Not met **Recommendation(s) for improvement**:
xv. Policies and/or other documentation related to institutional expectations of conformity with any specific worldviews or beliefs (n/a)	____Verified ____Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement ____Not met **Recommendation(s) for improvement**:

Standard 3: Infrastructure and Resources

Checklist Item	Conclusions
i. Written policies and procedures for human resources, including hiring procedures	__X__Verified ____Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement ____Not met **Recommendation(s) for improvement**:

ii.	Employee handbooks or similar documents that communicate expectations to employees	__X__Verified ____Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement ____Not met **Recommendation(s) for improvement**:
iii.	Annual financial audit reports - 3 prior years (include auxiliary organizations, if applicable) (ER 5)	__X__Verified ____Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement ____Not met **Recommendation(s) for improvement**:
iv.	Practices for resource allocation and budget development (including budget allocation model for multi-college districts/systems)	__X__Verified ____Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement ____Not met **Recommendation(s) for improvement**:
v.	Policies guiding fiscal management (e.g., related to reserves, budget development)	__X__Verified ____Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement ____Not met **Recommendation(s) for improvement**:
vi.	Policies, procedures or agreements (e.g., AUAs) related to appropriate use of technology systems	__X__Verified ____Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement ____Not met **Recommendation(s) for improvement**:
FOR TITLE IV PARTICIPANTS: Note the College does not participate in Title IV.		
vii.	Documentation that the institution's student loan default rates are within the acceptable range defined by ED, or – if rates fall outside the acceptable range - documentation of corrective efforts underway to address the issue	____Verified ____Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement ____Not met **Recommendation(s) for improvement**: Need to review and find out – not mentioned
REQUIRED ONLY IF APPLICABLE: Note not applicable		
viii.	Documentation of any agreements that fall under ACCJC's policy on contractual relationships with non-accredited organizations	____Verified ____Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement ____Not met **Recommendation(s) for improvement**:
ix.	Written code of professional ethics for all personnel including consequences for violations	____Verified ____Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement ____Not met **Recommendation(s) for improvement**: Need to review if discussed.

Standard 4: Governance and Decision-Making

Checklist Item	Documentation
i. Governing board policies/procedures for selecting and regularly evaluating its chief executive officer	__X__Verified ____Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement ____Not met **Recommendation(s) for improvement**:
ii. Documentation or certification that the institution's CEO does not serve as the chair of the governing board (ER 4)	___X_Verified ____Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement ____Not met **Recommendation(s) for improvement**:
iii. Governing board policies/procedures/bylaws related to Board Ethics	__X__Verified ____Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement ____Not met **Recommendation(s) for improvement**:
iv. Governing board policies/procedures/bylaws related to conflict of interest	__X__Verified ____Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement ____Not met **Recommendation(s) for improvement**:

Other Federal Regulations and Related Commission Policies

Checklist Item	Conclusions
i. Documentation of the institution's appropriate and timely effort to solicit third party comment in advance of the Focused Site Visit and – if applicable - cooperate with the review team in any necessary follow-up See *Policy on Rights, Responsibilities, and Good Practice in Relations with Member Institutions*, Section D	__X__Verified ____Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement ____Not met **Recommendation(s) for improvement**:
ii. Documentation that the institution provides accurate information for the public concerning its accredited status with ACCJC on its institutional website, no more than one page (one click) away from the home page See *Policy on Representation of Accredited Status*	__X__Verified ____Verified, with Recommendation(s) for improvement ____Not met **Recommendation(s) for improvement**: