

EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

Deep Springs College
Big Pine, California

A Confidential Report Prepared for the
Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges
Western Association of Schools and Colleges

This report represents the findings of the External Evaluation Team that visited
Deep Springs College on March 13-16, 2017

Dr. Kevin Trutna, Chair

Visiting Team Members

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Dean, Science, Language Arts, Math
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Summary of the External Evaluation Report

Deep Springs College
March 13-16, 2017
Dr. Kevin Trutna, Team Chair

An eight member team visited Deep Springs College (DSC) from March 13-16, 2017, for the purpose of determining whether the College continues to meet Accreditation Standards, Eligibility Requirements, Commission Policies, and USDE regulations.

The team evaluated how well the College is achieving its stated purposes, providing recommendations for quality assurance and institutional improvement, and submitting recommendations to the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) regarding the accredited status of the College.

In preparation for the visit, the team chair attended an ACCJC chair training workshop on December 1, 2016, and conducted a pre-visit to DSC on January 12, 2017. During this visit, the chair met with the President and Dean to learn about the self-evaluation preparation process and to tour the facilities in advance of the team visit.

The visiting team attended an ACCJC training session provided by ACCJC staff on January 20, 2017, and held a conference call with all participants on January 23, 2017, in preparation for the visit.

The evaluation visiting team received the DSC self-evaluation document and related evidence. It should be noted that the structure and mission of DSC are unique, not found in other colleges, with the three pillars of DSC being academics, labor, and self-governance. The beneficial ownership of college operations from students is another aspect that is strong and unique to the institution. The visiting team found that the self-evaluation report included broad participation across campus, including an extraordinary level of student review and input.

Team members found the report to be comprehensive in addressing recommendations from the previous evaluation team, Eligibility Requirements, Commission Standards, and Commission Policies. However, the narrative provided and supporting evidence cited was inadequately referenced and required further, in-depth investigation to provide sufficient evidence in support of statements made in the report. The College was more than helpful in providing all information and explanations requested to the visiting team, and this informed the eventual findings and recommendations.

During the evaluation visit, team members met with campus constituents, committees, and individuals and visited classrooms. Informal meetings took place during communal dining and across campus. An open forum was attended by the majority of the Student Body and several staff members. Team members reviewed numerous materials supporting the self-evaluation report, including electronic documents and items in the team resource room.

The visiting team greatly appreciated the natural beauty of the campus, its isolation, and the welcoming atmosphere on campus. Students, staff and faculty were all open, honest, and forthcoming in their responses. The team was impressed with the extensive self-governance expectations and responsibility of students in their substantive ownership of college operations and learning. The team was also impressed with the integration of responsibilities through the three pillars required of all students.

The visiting team found Deep Springs College to be in compliance with almost every Eligibility Requirements, Commission Policies, and USDE regulation. The team members observed a few areas where DSC could improve as an institution. Some of these areas were also noted in the Quality Focus Essay and planning agendas developed by DSC. Other minor processes are currently under revision to maintain compliance.

Major Findings and Recommendations of the 2017 External Evaluation Team

Team Commendations

Commendation 1

The team commends the College for living their mission statement. Student engagement and commitment to the three pillars of Deep Springs College is exceptional. The faculty, staff, and administration provide the foundation for these academic, labor, and student self-governance pursuits.

Commendation 2

The team commends the College for its robust culture of dialogue, which impacts every aspect of the program, including review of processes, courses, course outcomes, and the DSC community. This practice leads to concrete outcomes and helps develop skills that will benefit students in their future educational and professional endeavors.

Commendation 3

The team commends the College for providing students opportunities to acquire life skills and gain responsibilities through the integration of the labor and student self-governance pillars with the academic program.

Commendation 4

The team commends the College on how it promotes students' beneficial ownership of the College through the development of curriculum, labor, and in the evaluation of faculty and administrators.

Team Recommendations

Recommendations to Meet the Standards

None

Recommendations for Institutional Effectiveness

Recommendation 1

In order to improve institutional effectiveness, the team recommends the College document and effectively communicate the purpose, discussion, recommendations, and decisions of College committees and meetings. (Standard I.B.1; I.B.6; IV.A.6)

Recommendation 2

In order to improve institutional effectiveness, the team recommends the College complete the strategic planning and resource allocation processes which includes goals, objectives, methods of assessment, analysis, results, and how the results are used for improvement. (Standard I.B.1; I.B.9; ER 19)

Recommendation 3

In order to improve institutional effectiveness, the team recommends the college establish an integrated planning model to clearly connect the goals and assessment of the three pillars (academics, labor, and self-governance) to the goals and assessment of the strategic planning process. (Standard I.B.1; I.B.9; ER 19)

Recommendation 4

In order to improve institutional effectiveness in the process of the board's evaluation of the CEO, the team recommends that the board establish a policy to describe the formal, systematic evaluation of its CEO to include criteria and goals. (Standard IV.C.3)

Introduction

Deep Springs College (DSC) is a private, two-year liberal arts college located in a very rural part of Inyo County with the nearest large town, Bishop, 40 miles away. The 300-acre campus was founded in 1917 by electricity tycoon L.L. Nunn who built the educational program around three pillars: academics, self-government, and manual labor. The College now includes an additional 2,500 acres in the Deep Springs Valley and leases 90,000 acres of Bureau of Land Management and United States Forest Service land. DSC's student body has traditionally been all-male. However, pending litigation, the College is pursuing a policy that would allow for admissions with no gender restrictions.

DSC is unique in that it is the smallest college in California. The admissions process is highly competitive, with only 12-15 students admitted each year out of an applicant pool of over 200. The College has a total student body of only 24-30 students. Class sizes are small and intimate, with a student-faculty ratio of 5:1. Students play a large role in their own education by serving on the College's three standing committees, which are responsible for student admission decisions, faculty hiring decisions, course selection, evaluation of their peers, and evaluation of faculty and administrators.

Students attend DSC free of tuition, but in exchange, students have much expected of them. In addition to participating in a rigorous academic liberal arts curriculum, students are required to perform at least 20 hours of labor per week, which includes running a 155-acre alfalfa farm, caring for 200 head of cattle, running the dining hall, and overseeing all campus facilities. The College believes that strenuous effort, both inside and outside the classroom, is paramount to the development of intellectual and ethical character and follows from the mission which was described by faculty as training students to “do good in the world.”

The majority of DSC students do not receive a degree after attending. Nearly all transfer to a four-year institution to complete a Bachelor's degree and therefore have no need of an Associate's degree. Students regularly transfer to some of the most prestigious colleges in the country, including Harvard, Yale, Columbia, Chicago, and Stanford. Alumni of DSC have gone on to receive many awards, including the Pulitzer Prize, Fulbright Scholarships, Rhodes Scholarships, and many others.

DSC has been accredited since 1957 and its accreditation was last reaffirmed in 2011.

Eligibility Requirements

1. Authority

The evaluation team confirmed that Deep Springs College is authorized as a degree granting institution. Deep Springs is a private two-year college, incorporated as a 501(c)(3) in the state of California. It is accredited by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC).

The College meets the Eligibility Requirement.

2. Operational Status

The evaluation team confirmed that the College is operational and provides educational services. All students are given the opportunity to obtain a degree and courses are offered that allow students to earn a degree.

The College meets the Eligibility Requirement.

3. Degrees

The visiting team confirmed that all of Deep Springs College's students are enrolled in a degree program and that all courses offered lead to a degree and/or transfer to a four-year university.

The College meets the Eligibility Requirement.

4. Chief Executive Officer

The team confirmed that the Governing Board of Deep Springs College has appointed a Chief Executive Officer (CEO). The Board of Trustees delegates authority to the CEO to administer all board policies and the primary responsibility of the running of the institution. The delegation of authority is detailed in board policy, the President's job description, and the President's employment contract.

The College meets the Eligibility Requirement.

5. Financial Accountability

The evaluation team confirmed that Deep Springs College employs qualified external agencies to conduct audits for all financial records. All audits are certified and all findings and explanations are documented appropriately.

The College meets the Eligibility Requirement.

Compliance with Federal Regulations and Related Commission Policies

Public Notification of an Evaluation Team Visit and Third Party Comment

Evaluation Items:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The institution has made an appropriate and timely effort to solicit third party comment in advance of a comprehensive evaluation visit.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The institution cooperates with the evaluation team in any necessary follow-up related to the third party comment.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The institution demonstrates compliance with the Commission <i>Policy on Rights and Responsibilities of the Commission and Member Institutions</i> as to third party comment.

[Regulation citation: 602.23(b).]

Conclusion Check-Off:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.
<input type="checkbox"/>	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.
<input type="checkbox"/>	The team has reviewed the elements of this component and found the institution does not meet the Commission's requirements.

Narrative:

Deep Springs College informed all donors and alumni of the upcoming team visit and solicited feedback from these groups. The visiting team found evidence that the College meets the requirements.

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.
☒	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.
☒	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.
☒	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.

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

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:

Deep Springs College provided evidence to meet all above requirements with respect to standards of student achievement. The visiting team found evidence that the College regularly evaluates its institution-set standards and is committed to institutional improvement through its established processes.

Credits, Program Length, and Tuition

Evaluation Items:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Credit hour assignments and degree program lengths are within the range of good practice in higher education (in policy and procedure).
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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).
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Tuition is consistent across degree programs (or there is a rational basis for any program-specific tuition).
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Any clock hour conversions to credit hours adhere to the Department of Education's conversion formula, both in policy and procedure, and in practice.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The institution demonstrates compliance with the Commission <i>Policy on Institutional Degrees and Credits</i> .

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

Conclusion Check-Off:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.
<input type="checkbox"/>	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.
<input type="checkbox"/>	The team has reviewed the elements of this component and found the institution does not meet the Commission's requirements.

Narrative:

Course credit information is within the range of good practice and is described in the Deep Springs College Handbook and the Academic Course Catalog. Although most students transfer without a degree, a student enrolled full-time can complete all degree requirements within two years. Deep Springs College does not charge tuition to any of its students.

Transfer Policies

Evaluation Items:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Transfer policies are appropriately disclosed to students and to the public.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Policies contain information about the criteria the institution uses to accept credits for transfer.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The institution complies with the Commission <i>Policy on Transfer of Credit</i> .

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

Conclusion Check-Off:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.
<input type="checkbox"/>	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.
<input type="checkbox"/>	The team has reviewed the elements of this component and found the institution does not meet the Commission's requirements.

Narrative:

Transfer credit policies and procedures are described in the Academic Course Catalog and are communicated online through the website. The College does not accept credits from transfer institutions; however, it does allow for courses passed at other institutions to satisfy certain requirements for the Associates of Arts degree.

Distance Education and Correspondence Education

Evaluation Items:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The institution has policies and procedures for defining and classifying a course as offered by distance education or correspondence education, in alignment with USDE definitions.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	There is an accurate and consistent application of the policies and procedures for determining if a course is offered by distance education (with regular and substantive interaction with the instructor, initiated by the instructor, and online activities are included as part of a student’s grade) or correspondence education (online activities are primarily “paperwork related,” including reading posted materials, posting homework and completing examinations, and interaction with the instructor is initiated by the student as needed).
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The institution has appropriate means and consistently applies those means for verifying the identity of a student who participates in a distance education or correspondence education course or program, and for ensuring that student information is protected.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The technology infrastructure is sufficient to maintain and sustain the distance education and correspondence education offerings.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The institution demonstrates compliance with the Commission <i>Policy on Distance Education and Correspondence Education</i> .

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

Conclusion Check-Off:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission’s requirements.
<input type="checkbox"/>	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.
<input type="checkbox"/>	The team has reviewed the elements of this component and found the institution does not meet the Commission’s requirements.

Narrative:

Deep Springs College does not offer distance education nor correspondence education.

Student Complaints

Evaluation Items:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The student complaint files for the previous six years (since the last comprehensive evaluation) are available; the files demonstrate accurate implementation of the complaint policies and procedures.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The team analysis of the student complaint files identifies any issues that may be indicative of the institution's noncompliance with any Accreditation Standards.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The institution demonstrates compliance with the Commission <i>Policy on Representation of Accredited Status</i> and the <i>Policy on Student and Public Complaints Against Institutions</i> .

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

Conclusion Check-Off:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.
<input type="checkbox"/>	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.
<input type="checkbox"/>	The team has reviewed the elements of this component and found the institution does not meet the Commission's requirements.

Narrative:

Deep Springs College made student complaint files for the past six years available to the team. The visiting team found evidence that the College has clear procedures for student complaints and has a systematic process for using feedback for continuous improvement. Student complaints are evaluated and addressed by the Academic Appeals Committee, which is made up of three students and one faculty member. Student complaint information can be easily accessed on the College website.

Institutional Disclosure and Advertising and Recruitment Materials

Evaluation Items:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The institution provides accurate, timely (current), and appropriately detailed information to students and the public about its programs, locations, and policies.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The institution complies with the Commission <i>Policy on Institutional Advertising, Student Recruitment, and Representation of Accredited Status</i> .
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The institution provides required information concerning its accredited status as described above in the section on <u>Student Complaints</u> .

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

Conclusion Check-Off:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.
<input type="checkbox"/>	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.
<input type="checkbox"/>	The team has reviewed the elements of this component and found the institution does not meet the Commission's requirements.

Narrative:

Accurate and timely information about programs, the college location, and policies is provided on the College website and in the Academic College Catalog. The visiting team found that the College meets the requirement.

Title IV Compliance

Evaluation Items:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The institution has presented evidence on the required components of the Title IV Program, including findings from any audits and program or other review activities by the USDE.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The institution has addressed any issues raised by the USDE as to financial responsibility requirements, program record-keeping, etc. If issues were not timely addressed, the institution demonstrates it has the fiscal and administrative capacity to timely address issues in the future and to retain compliance with Title IV program requirements.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The institution's student loan default rates are within the acceptable range defined by the USDE. Remedial efforts have been undertaken when default rates near or meet a level outside the acceptable range.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The institution demonstrates compliance with the Commission <i>Policy on Contractual Relationships with Non-Regionally Accredited Organizations</i> and the <i>Policy on Institutional Compliance with Title IV</i> .

[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:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.
<input type="checkbox"/>	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.
<input type="checkbox"/>	The team has reviewed the elements of this component and found the institution does not meet the Commission's requirements.

Narrative:

Deep Springs College does not participate in Federal Title IV programs. The College does not accept federal funding or levy tuition and fees on its students.

Standard I – Mission, Academic Quality and Institutional Effectiveness, and Integrity

Standard I.A – Mission

General Observations

The Deep Springs College (DSC) mission statement is lengthy and unique, reflecting the College's distinctive institution. The mission was described as being "intentionally broad," meaning it greatly encompasses the Deep Springs experience, what is necessary to achieve student success, and the necessary commitment to achieving student goals. With this in mind, the team observed that the mission is meeting its intended student population. (Standard I.A.1; ER6)

The mission emphasizes the College's three pillars: academics, labor, and student self-governance. These "guiding principles" have changed only slightly since the College's inception 100 years ago. The programs and services are closely aligned with the mission. The mission also works to notify students of the College's expectations. "No tuition or fees are levied, but strenuous effort, self-governance, and selfless service to the community are expected of everyone" in addition to lifelong obligations to service and social responsibility are a part of Deep Springs' values. The visiting team found evidence that the mission speaks to its student audience and the public. (Standard I.A.1)

Still, with a mission statement this detailed, it leaves a great deal to be assessed. One way in which DSC assesses its mission to inform planning is through disaggregated student data; albeit data is skewed because of the small student body of less than 30 students. Therefore, DSC relies more on qualitative data for gap analysis in assessing the mission. All constituencies review the mission on a regular, systematic basis. (Standard I.A.2; I.A.3; I.A.4; ER6)

Findings and Evidence

Assessments of mission-aligned policies and programs and the use of the mission statement in regards to planning occur annually and in response to the last self-study. A formal community-wide review of the mission statement is led by the Deep Springs administration. While the College constituencies review the mission statement annually, the mission is reviewed and slight changes (e.g. "men" to "people") approved by the board every 5 years. The mission statement was last approved in 2016. (Standard I.A.4; ER6)

In discussions with faculty members, it was observed that faculty intentionally use data to assess the mission and meet the educational needs of the students. An example is their use of alumni data. Alumni are surveyed to determine the breadth and quality of their Deep Springs education once they transfer. This information is used to determine curriculum gaps, which in turn informs the hiring decisions for the identified areas. (Standard I.A.2)

The application process is an example of the mission guiding resource allocations. Upon gathering and assessing data from student applications and high school success (what they

found to be the most predictable success factor), the College identified a gap in the diversity breadth of students applying. Accordingly, DSC targeted recruiting efforts to attract Native American, African American, low-income students, and students coming from public schools. The result was an increase of student applications from these subpopulations. (Standard I.A.3)

Additional mission assessments occur within the Goals of Deep Springs Academic Program (GODSAP) reports. This analysis is designed for continuous quality improvement on the first DSC pillar of academics. Courses are rigorously evaluated, focusing on how well the class proceeded, how the course met the student learning outcomes, and the identifying of gaps for continuous quality improvement and to inform new courses. The newly adopted Goals of the Deep Springs Labor Program (GODSLAP) report functions in the same way as it assesses the labor pillar of the Deep Springs mission. In its Quality Focus Essay, DSC recognizes the need to assess the third pillar, student self-governance, as it relates to the mission. Once developed, this assessment will also utilize quantitative and qualitative alumni data and will require student learning outcomes development. The College recognizes this need for the improvement of academic quality and institutional effectiveness as represented within their mission. (Standard I.A.2)

Individual program mission statements also exist. According to the Deep Springs Path 2015-2017 and the Trustees of Deep Springs Strategic Planning Agenda (9/19/15), a review of the draft program mission statement took place for the following areas: academics, labor, operation and maintenance, farm/ranch/garden, bunk house, institutional support, and financial (for which there was not yet a draft). In this meeting, the Board asked for “ultimate goals” of each area, including program priorities. These additional mission statements read more like learning outcomes and could possibly be viewed as such. Reviews of these programs are presented to the board annually, informing resource allocation and institutional planning efforts. This is especially true in the management of farm/ranch/garden program. (Standard I.A.3; I.A.4; ER6)

The mission is made public within the DSC Academic Catalog and Deep Springs Student Handbook, and it is posted on the College website. (Standard I.A.4; ER6)

The team found evidence of the aforementioned Standards in the DSC Academic Catalog, Deep Springs Path 2015-2017, and the Trustees of Deep Springs Strategic Planning Agenda, in using interviews to validate the Institutional Self Evaluation Report narrative, and within the mission statement itself.

Conclusion

The College meets the Standards and related Eligibility Requirements.

Standard 1.B – Assuring Academic Quality and Institutional Effectiveness

General Observations

Deep Springs College (DSC) embraces a mission statement that is aimed at providing a comprehensive and rigorous education that includes stewardship, leadership, and self-governance. The College mission statement is clearly stated on the College's website as well as in the College Catalog.

The visiting team found evidence that DSC is engaged in continuous and intentional dialogue around outcomes, planning, and institutional effectiveness. The College has adopted the following nine competencies that are integrated at all levels of the College: critical thinking, reading, speaking, writing, leadership, listening, appreciation of different modes of inquiry, appreciate and participate in different modes of creative endeavor, and appreciate and participate in different modes of vocational and recreational endeavor.

The College has established meaningful assessment processes to evaluate outcomes at the course, program, and institutional level that is supported by the College's mission and exist within the single-program structure of DSC through the three pillars of academics, labor, and shared-governance. The College engages with data that is based on narrative, evaluations, and robust dialogue. Communication, transparency, and self-governance are key attributes of all students, faculty, staff and administration. Each constituency is actively engaged in the success of the College with a level of student involvement and responsibility not seen in other colleges. Because of this high level of student involvement, the visiting team observed areas where the College could improve in areas such as committee documentation and communication, completing the strategic planning and resource allocation model that has been partially developed, and completing the analysis process of the student labor pillar.

Findings and Evidence

DSC engages in sustained, substantive and collegial dialogue about outcomes, student equity, evaluation, academic quality, institutional effectiveness, and continuous improvement on a systematic and regular basis. With nearly every aspect of the College, faculty, staff, students and administration engage in continuous dialogue and improvement through various avenues. For example, the College successfully implemented the Goals of the Deep Springs Academic Program (GODSAP) and Goals of the Deep Spring Labor Program (GODSLAP) process of evaluating outcomes for the academic and labor pillars respectively. These two processes evaluate learning outcomes at the course, program, and institutional level. As identified in the Quality Focus Essay, the College is currently engaged in developing an evaluation process for the College's third pillar, student self-governance. Another structured process for evaluation observed is the Academic Policy Review Process (APRP) which includes the Faculty Committee and Curriculum Committee collaborating on changes to the College's academic policies. This successful planning juncture demonstrates the College's dedication to a mission in which faculty, students, and administration collaborate through listening and leadership to address the academic policies of the College. (Standard I.B.1)

The College has three main committees which are heavily student-led, yet include appropriate fulltime faculty leadership: Curriculum Committee, Review and Re-invitation Committee, and Application Committee.

The team also verified the College's commitment to diversity and equity. In particular, the College is dedicated to equity in outreach efforts as DSC strives to attract a diverse and intellectual student body. As part of the application process, faculty and students review high school grades, transfer rates, and alumni survey results to help the Application Committee decide where to focus outreach efforts and resources. DSC recently started to recruit more heavily for Native Americans, African Americans, low-income students, and public school students as a result of a need identified through the aforementioned planning review process. (Standard I.B.1)

The College is also able to engage in many informal discussions because of the small number of students, faculty, and staff on campus. Students are required to participate in a weekly public speaking class every fall and spring semester. While the entire College community is welcome to attend and provide feedback, the assigned instructor is responsible for the final grade in the class. Activities such as this provide a platform for students to build confidence, learn how to communicate effectively, and ultimately learn how to be not only an engaged student, but an engaged and well-versed community member. This contributes to the robust dialogue and collaboration that occurs continuously at the College. (Standard I.B.1)

The visiting team confirmed that DSC systematically assesses all learning outcomes at the course, program, and institutional level through the College's course evaluation process, the GODSAP process, and the GODSLAP process. These outcomes have nine competencies: critical thinking, reading, speaking, writing, leadership, listening, appreciation of different modes of inquiry, appreciate and participate in different modes of creative endeavor, and appreciate and participate in different modes of vocational and recreational endeavor. All of these outcomes/competencies are published in the College Handbook provided for all students. Once courses have been reviewed and recommended by the Curriculum Committee, faculty establish learning outcomes for each course. At the end of each course, faculty make assessments of learning which includes course evaluation and detailed student feedback. Additionally, the team confirmed that these results are also included in the GODSAP and GODSLAP reports on a regular basis. The results of these assessments are discussed, reviewed, and used for course and program improvement. (Standard I.B.2; ER 11)

Student services consist of library services, counseling services, and orientation. The team confirmed that regular assessment of library services is done through reports that are provided to the Trustees of Deep Springs (TDS), and the College has initiated a survey to solicit student feedback regarding library services. The visiting team found evidence that the library was designed and functioning to support a high-quality liberal arts education. Counseling and orientation services are handled by the Dean, who works closely with students and many four-year universities regarding articulation and transfer. In addition, the Application Committee also engages in a robust interview process for College applicants. This occurs every spring and the Application Committee completes an analysis each year of

the process, noting needed improvements, and how to make the experience even more worthwhile for both the applicants and the College. (Standard I.B.2)

The College's Institutional Self Evaluation Report provided the College's institution-set standards for student achievement and how the College is engaged in continuous quality improvement. The College identified institutional set standards in applicant demographics, parent education level, type of high school, average ACT/SAT score, number of students attending the college, ethnicity of college population, number of courses offered each academic year, size of incoming freshman class, number of student withdrawals (from the college), GPA, course completion, labor positions, assigned labor time, unassigned labor time, number of labor supervisors students worked with, number of formal evaluations received from supervisors, college transfer rate, number of students in graduating class (completers of the two year program), number of transfer students, and the average number of transferred credits. The College has established "standards" as a baseline for the College's institutional standards as well as overarching goals in which the institutional standards are related to curriculum, labor, and student outcomes. This data helps the College to gauge their progress towards their goals and to incorporate the data and/or results into the GODSAP or GODSLAP process as appropriate. (Standard I.B.3; ER 11)

The College has been intentional in how assessment data and institutional processes support student learning and student achievement. Students are engaged not only in the academic program (associate of arts degree and/or transfer), but are also required to actively participate in the three DSC pillars of academics, labor, and self-governance. The academics and labor pillars have set goals and objectives that are assessed on a regular basis and are summarized in the GODSAP and GODSLAP reports. Described in the Quality Focus Essay, the College is in the process of creating an assessment report for the self-governance pillar; this will be very similar to the GODSAP or GODSLAP reports. Data reports from the institutional set standards are utilized in various committees such as the Application Committee, Review and Re-invitation Committee, and Curriculum Committee, which are then captured in the GODSAP report. (Standard I.B.4)

DSC utilizes a streamlined process to evaluate course, program, and institutional level outcomes. Thus, the traditional program review process is captured within the assessment of the pillars, which includes course and program assessment. These assessment reports are summarized in the GODSAP and GODSLAP reports with the Self-Governance report still being finalized. Within these reports are breakdown of course evaluations, student and faculty feedback, institutional standard assessment, and committee review and feedback. Thus, the GODSAP and GODSLAP reports are comprehensive reports that yield insight to many levels of learning at the College. The team verified that the College relies on the institutional standards for quantitative and qualitative data that are disaggregated for analysis, and that such reports were widely used and discussed throughout the College. (Standard I.B.5)

Given its total student population of no more than thirty students, coupled with the fact that class sizes are very small (around 5-13 students per incoming class), the College recognizes shortcomings is disaggregating student outcome data which is skewed due to the small

population size. Instead, the College participates in making each incoming class diverse, yet demonstrates the ability to excel both academically and personally at the College. The Application Committee reviews incoming student population data along with disproportionately impacted students to develop recruiting strategies to attract these students. As a result of this analysis, the college is currently actively recruiting Native American, African American, low-income students, and public school students. Such analysis occur informally and as needed. (Standard I.B.6)

The team found that the College regularly evaluates its policies and practices across all areas of the institution. The process the College engages in to review policies and procedures is the Academic Policy Review Process (APRP). The College's Academic Policies cover a wide range of areas on campus including grades, schedule of classes, learning disabilities, student and faculty applicants, course proposals and curriculum, labor, transfer, writing requirements, public speaking, probation, appeal process, confidentiality, academic honesty, and degree requirements. All other policies, such as those for safety, guests, and smoking, are modified and approved by the appropriate committee or Student Body then forwarded to the President or the Trustees of Deep Springs (TDS) for consideration. This process includes the Faculty Committee and the Curriculum Committee, meeting separately to review academic policies and identify any changes or modifications. These two committees then come together to review their recommendations and take a majority vote for each recommended change. Each approved recommendation is then forwarded to the College President who then accepts or rejects each recommendation. All changes to the Academic Policies are disseminated to the entire student body and submitted to the TDS for review and approval, with resulting changes starting with the upcoming academic year. The process for changes in the academic policy are clearly delineated in the College's Handbook, which is made available to all students, faculty, staff, and administration. (Standard I.B.7)

One of the greatest strengths and outstanding characteristics of DSC observed by the visiting team is campus communication and discussion. Students, faculty, staff, and administrators are consistently and constantly involved in many levels of communication from the weekly public speaking class to the information discussions in the museum, committee meetings, class times, communal dining, or even the boarding house discussions during dinner. Students are not only encouraged but are required to become articulate and informed communicators—both in writing and orally. Part of this process is also the communication regarding committee work and College decisions with the TDS. In speaking with students, faculty, staff, and administrators, they feel informed, included, and empowered as part of a community that embraces the isolation aspect of DSC. (Standard I.B.8)

During the visit, the team found through interviews and additional evidence that the College employs a two-prong approach to institutional effectiveness and planning. The first approach or planning process includes the three pillars of education at the College: academics, labor, and student self-governance. This process is notably student-driven and includes assessment plans for each pillar (with the exception of the student self-governance pillar, which is currently in progress). This process establishes the following: goal setting, review of goals, assessment and analysis, and is then followed by an improvement plan and/or allocation request if needed. The improvement/allocation process includes all substantiated goals by the

appropriate committee (which consists of faculty and students) and recommendations forwarded to the President and Board. College committees that review and analyze planning goals include the Curriculum Committee, Application Committee, and Review and Re-invitation Committee. If the President and administration support the request, the request is then forwarded to the Board for consideration. If an allocation is requested, the Board considers both the President's recommendation along with the appropriate committee's report. Again, with the small size of DSC, the visiting team found many of the above processes to be informal in nature. (Standard I.B.9; ER 19)

The other prong to planning is the strategic planning process. While strategic planning has been in process for decades at the College, formalizing the process is much newer and is still in the construction phase. This process is more administrative and will utilize the student evaluation processes (such as the course evaluation process) to assist the College with the assessment and analysis of goals and objectives. Currently, the College has set strategic planning goals and objectives and is in the process of assessing and analyzing these goals. In addition, this strategic planning process would follow in a similar path described above where improvements and/or resource allocations would go through the President/Administrative team followed by review and approval of the TDS. (Standard I.B.9; ER 19)

Conclusion

The College meets the Standards and related Eligibility Requirements.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

In order to improve institutional effectiveness, the team recommends the College document and effectively communicate the purpose, discussion, recommendations, and decisions of College committees and meetings. (Standard I.B.1; I.B.6; IV.A.6)

Recommendation 2

In order to improve institutional effectiveness, the team recommends the College complete the strategic planning and resource allocation processes which includes goals, objectives, methods of assessment, analysis, results, and how the results are used for improvement. (Standard I.B.1; I.B.9; ER 19)

Recommendation 3

In order to improve institutional effectiveness, the team recommends the college establish an integrated planning model to clearly connect the goals and assessment of the three pillars (academics, labor, and self-governance) to the goals and assessment of the strategic planning process. (Standard I.B.1; I.B.9; ER 19)

Standard 1.C – Institutional Integrity

General Observations

Deep Springs College (DSC) provides clear, accurate, and well-communicated information about all aspects of the institution. The main sources of evidence used by the visiting team included the academic catalog, the DSC Handbook, website, meeting minutes, and reports to the Trustees of Deep Springs (TDS). The Academic Catalog is available online. Overall, DSC is committed to representing its programs and policies to prospective applicants and the campus community with appropriate attention to clarity, accuracy, and detail. Students, faculty, and staff of the College community are provided with appropriate guidelines for acting honestly, ethically, and fairly in carrying out the work of the College. The team found that DSC demonstrates fiduciary responsibility in adhering to its mission.

Findings and Evidence

DSC provides information to the Deep Springs community as well as to the public in general. Evidence of this was found in a variety of places, in particular on the College website, on the Deep Springs College Handbook, and in the Deep Springs Academic Catalog. The mission appears in both the Handbook and the Catalog. The learning outcomes and educational program are described in the Handbook, as are student support services. The Deep Springs Catalog is updated every two years. The current version was last updated in June 2016. Since DSC courses change each term, the Catalog should be seen more as a repository of past courses than of current curriculum. Current curricula are approved through the Curriculum Committee, which is comprised largely of students, with input from the Faculty Committee. Changes are reported on at the biannual meeting of the TDS. The reports are not published online, but students serve on the board and are aware of the curriculum. DSC's current accreditation status is posted on the website. (Standard I.C.1; ER 20)

DSC's Academic Catalog is available on the website and in print form. Supplemented by the Handbook, it gives evidence of accurate and current information on all relevant facts, requirements, policies, and procedures required. The applications process, which is led by the Application Committee (ApCom), provides prospective students with a clear picture of what the requirements and expectations of their course of study will be. (Standard I.C.2; ER 20)

Students and faculty at DSC are deeply involved with matters of academic quality, including the documented assessment of student learning and evaluation of student achievement. Faculty use Goals of Deep Springs Academic Program (GODSAP) self-assessments to improve as instructors; these function as learning outcomes and are made available to current students. Students regularly evaluate courses through the Curriculum Committee and Retention Committee and the results are shared through the biannual meetings of the TDS. The meetings are open to the public, but the minutes and information reported on is not posted on the College's website. Disaggregate data of student achievement is also not available either online or in the Catalog as stated in the Institutional Self Evaluation Report. However, DSC regularly publishes alumni newsletters on its website containing the colleges

of transfer, academic awards, and other professional achievements of DSC graduates including many aspects of the institution set standards. (Standard I.C.3; ER 19)

DSC has one Associate's of Arts degree, and this is described in the Catalog. Very few students complete the degree since almost all students transfer to complete their Bachelor's degree. The GODSAP goals described in the Handbook function as the learning outcomes for DSC. These are aligned more to the College's overall mission than to its sole degree. (Standard I.C.4)

Regular review of DSC policies and procedures is evidenced through a variety of means. Committees play a large role in this and evidence in the DSC report included wording changes to academic policy and transcripts of discussions from the Curriculum Committee and faculty meetings. Reports to the TDS provide further evidence of regular review of policies and procedures, as do notes on strategic planning. (Standard I.C.5)

The College mission states "No tuition or fees are levied" on students at DSC. This is stated in the Catalog and it covers value of tuition, room, and board. The catalog also states that students instead contribute to the College through helping with the administration and day-to-day operations of the college. The Catalog provides estimated costs for travel, books, insurance, and incidentals. These costs can also be covered by a scholarship in the case of demonstrated financial need. (Standard I.C.6)

The DSC Catalog includes a statement of Academic Freedom. This appears in the DSC Handbook as well, which includes a section on faculty duties. These include the maintenance of "a community environment of genuine academic freedom and of respect for ideas and persons." At an open forum meeting with the visiting team where most of the student body attended, several students commented upon the culture of respectful discourse that permeates class discussion and outside communications. Students noted that they were free to express ideas, but they were also expected to present their ideas well and to back them up. The Catalog includes a section on the ethics of maintaining confidentiality in DSC's evaluation process (this applies to both students and faculty), and the Catalog also includes a section defining academic honesty and consequences and procedures associated with dishonest behavior. Appendix K of the Handbook provides a Statement of Community Ethics that applies to the entire DSC community. (Standard I.C.7; I.C.8; I.C.9; I.C.10; ER 13)

Standard I.C.11 was not applicable as DSC does not have any foreign locations.

DSC has maintained timely compliance with Commission's Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, Commission policies, guidelines, team visits, and substantive change requirements. The College's accredited status is displayed on the College website and in printed materials such as the College catalog. Reports to the TDS give evidence that the board has been kept up to date on accreditation processes. Correspondence between DSC and ACCJC indicates that the College maintains good relationships with the Commission and discloses its status with that body on its college website. (Standard I.C.12; I.C.13; ER 21)

DSC's mission is to provide a high quality, tuition-free education. Reports to the TDS and Annual Reports on college resources provide evidence of fiduciary responsibility and an adherence to the mission. (Standard I.C.14)

Conclusion

The College meets the Standards and related Eligibility Requirements.

Standard II – Student Learning Programs and Support Services

Standard II.A – Instructional Programs

General Observations

Deep Springs College (DSC), located in the isolated high desert of eastern California, utilizes three pillars of academics, manual labor, and self-governance to form the basis for the College's single liberal arts associate degree. The College is known for its high quality education while instilling accountability, leadership, and academics. "Staffulty" (what the College calls staff and faculty) engage in robust dialogue regarding nearly every aspect of the College's academic courses and programs. The College utilizes several planning and assessment processes to ensure course content and methods of instruction exceed accepted academic standards. Students and faculty continuously improve courses and programs through a regular and systematic review process. DSC has engaged in a thorough review of learning outcomes through the Goals of the Deep Springs Academic Program (GODSAP) and Goals of the Deep Springs Labor Program (GODSLAP) process, which includes a model of nine general education competencies that are measured at the course and program level.

The teaching methodologies and learning support services at DSC reflect the diversity of its students, exceptional course rigor, and highly qualified faculty and staff. By integrating key aspects of academics, physical labor, and self-governance, students graduate and/or transfer with a distinguished education from DSC. Graduates of the College often transfer to four-year universities such as Columbia, Cornell, Brown, Harvard, Reed, Chicago, Yale, Stanford, Columbia, and UC Berkeley.

Findings and Evidence

DSC only offers courses in a face-to-face seminar format with about 5–10 students per course. Courses offered are consistent with the mission of the College and are appropriate to higher education that lead to an associate degree or transfer. As described in the DSC Handbook and observed by the visiting team, the College utilizes a process called GODSAP to also validate that courses support the College's mission. Curriculum is reviewed and approved through the College's Curriculum Committee. The Curriculum Committee is a collaboration between administration and students to provide courses that are diverse, appropriate for transfer/degree, and have student interest. This committee also ensures that courses offered are in alignment with the College's mission, are based on recognized higher education fields of study, and are sufficient in content, length, and rigor. In addition, every course outline includes the course title, units to be awarded, description, and Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs). (Standard II.A.1; ER 9; ER 11)

Course proposals are initiated by the faculty to be considered by the Curriculum Committee. All three full-time faculty at the College propose approximately four courses per term/semester with at least two courses being offered each semester in the following required areas: humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. Once courses have been reviewed, selected, and recommended by the Curriculum Committee, faculty establish learning

outcomes for each course. At the end of the course, faculty assess the course by completing a course evaluation that includes student feedback and assessment of SLOs. In addition to the course evaluation process, the College's GODSAP and Academic Policy Review Process (APRP) also supply a framework for systematic evaluation and continuous improvement. In addition, these results are also used to assess faculty performance and goals as part of the GODSAP process. (Standard II.A.2)

DSC identifies and regularly assesses SLOs for its courses through the Course Evaluation Process, the GODSAP process, and the GODSLAP process. Learning outcomes for each course fall under one of the nine areas of general education competencies: critical thinking, reading, speaking, writing, leadership, listening, appreciation of different modes of inquiry, appreciate and participate in different modes of creative endeavor, and appreciate and participate in different modes of vocational and recreational endeavor. These overarching themes are carried out in each course as well as their Associate of Arts degree. Faculty determine the outcomes as part of the course proposal process and are assessed by both the course evaluation and the GODSAP and GODSLAP processes. These highly collaborative and student-involved processes occur after the conclusion of every term. Results from these assessments are used for course and program improvement and discussed at the appropriate committee or TDS level. As stated in the College's Institutional Self Evaluation Report, the GODSAP and GODSLAP processes currently assess the two of the three major pillars of the College. The College is currently developing a third evaluation process to assess the third pillar of self-governance. (Standard II.A.3)

Course syllabi shared with students include an addendum of the College's official description of the course. This description is the "long" description of the course, which is considered the official outline of record. A shorter version of this outline is published in the catalog and also as part of the course proposal process. Within this description are the SLOs of the course. SLOs are assessed using the course evaluation process, the GODSAP, and the GODSLAP. (Standard II.A.3)

DSC does not offer pre-collegiate courses and there are no prerequisites to any of the courses offered at the College. (Standard II.A.4)

DSC offers one instructional program, an Associate of Arts Degree in Liberal Arts. The College requires 60 semester units in order to earn the degree. Although few students actually earn the associate of arts degree, students transferring to four-year colleges have courses that are reviewed by the Curriculum Committee for length, breadth, depth, rigor, and course sequencing. Detailed information regarding the College's degree requirements are in the College catalog. The visiting team observed that most students are interested in transferring to prestigious liberal arts university and do not enroll at DSC with the goal of obtaining a degree. (Standard II.A.5; ER 12)

DSC offers courses only in a face-to-face format, which are predominantly in the morning hours. In addition, courses are offered in a seminar type setting allowing for ample one-on-one attention from the faculty and in-depth discussion. The team confirmed that students may complete courses required for an associate of arts degree and/or transfer within a reasonable

period of time and that schedule of classes is based on data, student need, innovative practices, and proper sequencing and alignment. The program and fields of study offered at DSC (natural sciences, social science, and humanities) align with the mission, are rigorous, and culminate in stated learning outcomes (Standard II.A.6; ER 9)

DSC courses are taught within classroom, lab, and field work settings. Library and IT services offer support. Library sources include JSTOR and links to educational resources in addition to an impressive book collection for the size of the institution. In support of the diverse needs of its students, DSC allows for students to request independent/directed study courses which are approved by the Curriculum Committee. Faculty (and subsequently the curriculum new faculty bring with them) are hired to add a breadth of courses within the three main requirements of natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities. The College uses alumni data to determine these gaps in curriculum and determine student needs. Equity is addressed within the three pillars of the institution, academics, labor, and student self-government as students rotate work and governing positions systematically according to policy. (Standard II.A.7)

DSC does not use department-wide course or program examinations. The College also does not accept credit for prior learning. (Standard II.A.8)

The College utilizes analysis and assessment of SLOs for awarding credit for courses and programs. The analysis of courses is completed in a variety of formats including the course evaluations, GODSAP, and GODSLAP. Course descriptions are consistent with generally accepted norms in higher education and course offerings follow federal guidelines and unit credits are consistent with the norms in higher education. (Standard II.A.9; ER10)

DSC's transfer of credit policies are stated in the Catalog. The College does not accept transfer credit from other institutions of higher education. (Standard II.A.10; ER10)

Courses are defined in both "long description" and "short description" formats. Short descriptions are less detailed and are published in the DSC Catalog. All long course descriptions contain additional information, including "Statements on Learning Goals" or learning outcomes. These are: ability to read, critical thinking skills, and appreciate different modes of inquiry. Students receive these long course descriptions along with the course syllabus, which highlights the outcomes of focus for that particular course. Writing skills and communication competencies are tenants of the institution, as the curriculum is heavily writing focused and students engage in a weekly public speaking class. Program level learning outcomes are stated in the College catalog. The College includes general education outcomes within the GODSAP, their extensive course evaluation process. There are nine stated general education competencies/institutional learning outcomes in the areas of communication, inquiry and reasoning, information competency, social responsibility and personal development. The visitant team verified that each course SLO maps to at least one of the nine competencies/institutional level outcomes. (Standard II.A.11)

The associate of arts degree at DSC requires a component of general education that is core to the College's mission. The general education outcomes have nine competencies which are

threaded throughout each course and assessed using the GODSAP and GODSLAP processes. These nine competencies are critical thinking, reading, speaking, writing, leadership, listening, appreciation of different modes of inquiry, appreciate and participate in different modes of creative endeavor, and appreciate and participate in different modes of vocational and recreational endeavor. As part of the course proposal process to the Curriculum Committee, faculty indicate which general education outcomes will be met and assess these at the end of each term through the GODSAP process. Outside of academics, general outcomes are also measured in the labor pillar through the GODSLAP process. The College is currently making progress on establishing a similar assessment model for these SLOs within the Self-Governance model and this is described in the Qualify Focus Essay. (Standard II.A.12, ER 11)

DSC offers one major instructional program that leads to an associate degree or transfer. The three required focus areas of study are natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities. Courses are based on SLOs and competencies. (Standard II.A.13)

Although DSC offers several courses as part of the labor pillar such as horseback and automotive courses, the College does not award career technical certificates or degrees. (Standard II.A.14)

The College continuously modifies courses within their program. However, the DSC engages in the Academic Policy Review Process (APRP) whenever significant changes occur. This process includes the Curriculum Committee, Faculty Committee, and administration to review and evaluate any proposed changes and make recommendations. Whenever policies or programs are changed, students are heavily involved in the decision, and given ample notice and guidance to plan accordingly. (Standard II.A.15)

The program and its courses at DSC are reviewed on a regular basis to improve the quality and currency of instructional and non-instructional programs. Courses at the College are evaluated for quality and currency through the College's GODSAP process. This process includes both faculty and the Curriculum Committee. The curriculum review process includes faculty reflection on improvements to enhance learning outcomes and student achievement. (Standard II.A.16)

Conclusion

A review of DSC's student learning programs demonstrates that the College has policies and procedures in place for comprehensive review of these programs for quality. Additionally, learning outcomes at the course, program, and institutional level are in place. The College has a process of curriculum development and approval and ensures that courses offered are rigorous yet appropriate in length, and lead to goal completion.

The College meets the Standards and related Eligibility Requirements.

Standard II.B – Library and Learning Support Services

General Observations

Deep Springs College offers various library and learning support services to supplement its unique liberal arts education in an isolated setting and student beneficial ownership of the College based upon the three pillars of academics, labor, and shared-governance. The library is located in the main campus building that also houses classrooms and faculty and administrative offices. Due to the small population of less than 30 students at DSC, support services are generally informal and covered by individuals who have more than one responsibility on campus.

The evidence cited in the self-evaluation report and observed by the visiting team identifies the ongoing evaluation of Library and Support Services. The involvement of internal (staff, administration, students) and external (consult from neighboring Cerro Coso Community College in Ridgecrest, CA) persons in developing various reporting documents show a commendable effort on the part of the institution to ensure that the quality of resources and the delivery methods are in place to meet the demands and needs of the students and faculty with respect to Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs). Alumni, especially recent transfer graduates, play an important role in feedback for college services.

Based on the three pillars of DSC, learning support services are sufficient in quantity, currency, depth, and variety to support the educational programs offered. Learning support services include library collections and recommended resources requested by faculty to support the learning outcomes and objectives for the courses. Tutoring and other learning support services are provided by the faculty at any time by request of the students. Since the faculty and staff all reside at the college, faculty-student engagement is available at all times and permeates the culture at DSC.

Findings and Evidence

The number of volumes (over 24,000) and subscriptions (over 20) appear to be adequate given the small number of students enrolled at DSC and pursuing the single liberal arts degree. The college also maintains a subscription to JSTOR for online research. An orientation of library services is provided to all first-year students. Additional support services are provided for individual students and faculty when necessary including interlibrary loan and purchase of course materials. The evidence cited and reviewed include several reports with respect to meeting the standard in this section. Faculty have direct input on the resources needed to address the learning needs of students based on the courses offered and relevant supplemental materials required. Although library resources and services are evaluated formally using an outside consultant every 2-3 years, interviews confirmed that faculty input and evaluation of the resources and services serve the college well given the size of the students and academic program offerings. (Standard II.B.1, ER 17)

The DSC Library is maintained by hired professional consultants, staff, IT professionals, Dean, and faculty. Faculty input is especially critical, serving as content experts in each

particular field. The visiting team also verified the participation of alumni, especially recent graduates, into the depth and appropriateness of library materials for a DSC liberal arts education in preparation for transfer. While there does not appear to be a formal structure of resource allocation, the library (like all other departments) provides a tentative budget early in the spring which is reviewed by staff, engaged in the self-governance discussions, and ultimately approved by the CEO. The Trustees of Deep Springs (TDS) are presented a tentative budget for approval during the spring board meeting. The final adopted budget is approved by the board at the fall board meeting. The relatively small number of courses allows for the allocation of appropriate learning services materials for each course taught at any given term within the academic year.

As identified in the College's self-study, the institution is committed to maintaining quality, depth, and breadth of library resources to meet this standard. The College ensures that learning service professionals help maintain library and other learning services through faculty input on materials needed for each course taught each term. In addition, the college also belongs to the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) global library cooperative through an annual subscription. The team verified this online service meets the library and learning service needs of DSC students. The statements provided in the College's self-study report were validated by interviews with the Dean and the Director of Operations who is responsible for the budget development process of the institution. (Standard II.B.2)

The Dean of the College meets with the faculty on an annual basis to ensure that the necessary support materials and equipment are provided for each course taught by the faculty. Budget needs of the library are documented in the Dean's report to the Trustees of Deep Springs and discussed in the board's Budget and Operations sub-committee before approving both the tentative budget at the spring meeting and the final budget at the fall meeting. Evidence cited and verified through reports of the Academic Affairs Committee validates that the standard is met. (Standard II.B.2)

Assessments conducted of the DSC Library by college staff and consultants along with the various library reports submitted to the Trustees of Deep Springs (TDS) are used to evaluate the effectiveness of the library and other support services with respect to SLOs. The TDS Academic Affairs Committee review these reports at the fall and spring board meeting. Recommendations are used for planning and resource allocation for continued improvement of all learning support services, including faculty tutorial sessions with students as needed in the Deep Springs community. During the most recent library report, a library consultant from Cerro Coso Community College made a recommendation for DSC to develop a formalized evaluation process of the library, in particular with regard to its usage and how this information might be used to improve effectiveness in meeting student needs and learning outcomes. This recommendation has yet to be formally implemented. Due to the small number of students and faculty at DSC, the evaluation process is currently informal as the visiting team observed the evaluation to be complete with full engagement of faculty in this process. (Standard II.B.3)

DSC belongs to the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) global library cooperative. The institution has determined that this service is a suitable match for both the college's library

collection as well as for student and faculty research needs given the subject matter taught at DSC. This service is provided through an annual subscription and is budgeted in the annual college budget. The evaluation process to ensure effectiveness is currently informal, but does take place on a regular basis. The College plans to move to a more formalized evaluation process in the future. The statements provided in this section were validated through interviews. (Standard II.B.4; ER 17)

Conclusion

The College meets the Standards and related Eligibility Requirements.

Standard II.C – Student Support Services

General Observations

Deep Springs College (DSC) offers support services to students appropriate to the size and academic goals of the College. Students are prepared for their course of study at DSC through a student and library orientation and through consultation with the Dean, who provides academic counseling and makes references to address student needs regarding learning disabilities or medical or psychological counseling. The dean also maintains all student records and archives them appropriately. Because of the close working relationship between students and the Dean, who also teaches, some procedures exist in practice but are not established as formal policies. The Dean's work to oversee library collections and other student services are regularly evaluated, as is the admissions process, which is clearly explained to applicants and which serves to help orient students to DSC. DSC provides a number of co-curricular activities related to the College's mission.

Findings and Evidence

The Institutional Self Evaluation Report provided evidence on library support services and was verified through interviews and reports. The library collection is regularly updated through input from regular internal and external consultation to improve the collections, and improvements are documented in the Library Report.

There is no formal tutoring on campus, but in a conversations with faculty, it was indicated that students often request additional classroom support from their instructors, and effort is also made to direct students to online resources such as online open courses. For courses DSC does not offer, the Dean assists students in identifying relevant online courses.

The College does not provide medical services for students. The Deep Springs Handbook for Students, Faculty and Staff notes hospital services in Bishop, California. There is no routine mental health care for students, but the college makes available, free of charge, a limited number of sessions with an experienced therapist, and the College maintains relations with several area mental health professionals. The Dean makes references or appointments for learning disabilities, medical and mental health on an as-needed basis.

Safety information including information on local nuisances (rattlesnakes) and labor-related (pesticide safety) are posted prominently in the main instructional building and through job training. Some personnel, including some students, on campus are trained to give basic medical assistance. During the visit, the team observed that the students were quite proud as a large number of students had just earned certification in First Aid and CPR. (Standard II.C.1; II.C.2, ER 15)

DSC offers co-curricular programs in auto mechanics, horsemanship, outdoor skills, riflery, and EMT training. These are based upon student interests and also intersect with the labor component of the College mission. (Standard II.C.3; II.C.4, ER 15)

At DSC, students are provided with a formal orientation by the Dean and undergo a lengthy application process that also serves as an on-boarding process. The Dean provides academic counseling, including an annual Transfer Night. An annual Directory of Alumni is published and made available to students. Many copies from past years were made available to the site visit team. The alumni directory provides contact information and employment history of alumni by year. More recent alumni are listed alongside their transfer institutions, providing another source of transfer information for DSC students. The Dean's services are regularly evaluated through the Review and Re-invitation Committee (RCOM) as evidenced in the "How to Run RCOM" document. At the biannual meetings for the Trustees of Deep Springs, there exists a standing agenda item for the RCOM report. (Standard II.C.5)

DSC has an applications and admissions process that is consistent with its mission. The admissions process initially involves the entire campus and then becomes the province of the Application Committee (ApCom), which uses a rubric to narrow down the selection of future attendees through successive rounds. This includes on-campus interviews and a series of assignments that clearly communicates the level of academic rigor expected of the student body. The site team was presented with versions of the rubric at a meeting with ApCom. The meeting made clear that this process serves an important onboarding function for those selected to attend DSC. ApCom regularly reviews its processes, as documented in the Application Committee Report. The report also demonstrates dialogue about and a commitment to minimizing bias in the applications process. Incoming students also participate in a summer orientation short-term semester. (Standard II.C.6; II.C.7; ER 16)

At DSC, the Dean maintains all student records including applications, evaluations, and transcripts. These duties appear upon the job description for the Dean. Student records are kept on a secure computer and are only distributed by the Dean upon request. Backup copies are stored at a local bank. The team verified the awareness and knowledge of Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) requirements, which require a student's permission to release educational records to third parties, including family members. The Dean indicated that FERPA guidelines were observed at DSC. (Standard II.C.8)

Conclusion

The College meets the Standards and related Eligibility Requirements.

Standard III – Resources

Standard III.A – Human Resources

General Observations

Based on Deep Springs College's (DSC) Institutional Self Evaluation Report, it is clear the focus of Human Resources at DSC is to provide the students of the College with the best available administrators, faculty, and staff accessible given the uniqueness of the college with its location and limited number of students. The College employs rigorous hiring practices and evaluation processes to maintain highly qualified employees that will have the most positive effect on students as possible.

DSC has a rigorous rehire evaluation process. It takes a skilled instructor to teach at such a unique institution. The ratio of students to labor program staff is approximately two to one. The visiting team found that based on the professional development policy and faculty handbook, faculty are well supported within their roles and have control over the curriculum they teach, in collaboration with faculty and students.

The employee information in the College's handbook provides supportive information for faculty, as does the faculty orientation. This information includes a code of ethics. The College relies upon the faculty evaluation process to determine faculty and course improvement. This is one of the processes that the College relies on for faculty and course improvement. The College, through the Goals of the Deep Springs Academic Program (GODSAP) and the faculty evaluation process, ensures quality instruction. The Goals of the Deep Springs Labor Program (GODSLAP) is a part of the labor staff self-evaluation process. The College has an established and rigorous faculty evaluation process which includes heavy student participation as one component. Retention of faculty is strong.

Findings and Evidence

High standards of professional qualifications guide the College's hiring processes administrators, faculty, and staff. Search committees aim to hire candidates that meet the needs of both the specific job and the institution as a whole. The College uses alumni feedback to determine gaps in curriculum which informs their hiring processes. An example would be an alumnus reporting a lack of breadth in Natural Sciences upon transferring. The College hires and maintains administrators, faculty, and staff based on high standards of professional qualifications. (Standard III.A.1)

Faculty are hired and retained based on high standards of professional qualifications and the demands of living and working in a unique and isolated educational environment. As defined in the Eligibility Requirements, the number of faculty is sufficient in size and experience to support the College's educational programs. In addition to criteria of professional expertise and scholarly activity, faculty must display the ability to work with students as part of the college's mission of student beneficial ownership of and participation in their own education, the ability to work one-one-one with individual students including academic advising, and

the ability to work on committees and contribute to administrative tasks and community presence. Long-term and short-term faculty qualifications and criteria include expertise in the specified area of study, demonstration of scholarly activities, and teaching skills and abilities that are deemed well suited for the College's academic program. (Standard III.A.2; ER 14)

Administrators and other relevant employees have specific demands with regards to administrative expertise specific to institutional effectiveness within the College. These demands include the ability to work well with students who work across a range of different positions within the College. The qualifications for relevant staff include both administrative skills as well as skills specific to working with the student learning objectives and the mission of the College. Relevant expectations are listed in individual job descriptions. (Standard III.A.3)

Administrators, faculty, and other employees have qualifications relevant to their job responsibilities and duties. As observed in the Faculty section of the College's Academic Course Catalog, faculty and administrators hold degrees from accredited institutions. (Standard III.A.4)

All faculty are regularly evaluated utilizing the College's Final Course Evaluation Form. Staff evaluations are handled by the Review and Re-invitation Committee representing the College's student body. Criteria for each job and position are clearly defined, stated, and used as a metric for measuring effectiveness within each position. Faculty are evaluated annually and per course taught, and staff, including administrators, are evaluated annually, as stated in interviews with the Dean and President. (Standard III.A.5)

Learning outcome assessments used by faculty, through the self-evaluation of GODSAP, are utilized to improve teaching and learning. GODSAP and GODSLAP are the programs utilized by the College to evaluate faculty and staff, respectively. Such evaluations support the three pillars of DSC. The GODSAP serves to assist course design and evaluation as well as program assessment. The GODSLAP serves to connect the labor program to staff self-evaluations. An evaluation of the third college pillar, self-governance, is being developed and is described in the Quality Focus Essay. (Standard III.A.6)

An appropriate number of qualified faculty members are employed to maintain the quality of the College's educational programs. The College works to ensure that faculty are hired and retained based on their professional qualifications and suitability for living, working, and teaching at DSC. The College has been successful in hiring long-term and short-term faculty to teach the required curriculum and meet the pedagogical needs of the academic program. The College currently employs three full-time long-term faculty members and one short-term faculty member. The short-term faculty numbers fluctuate between one and three each term, for an average of eight per year. These numbers are sufficient to meet the needs of the currently attending twenty-six students and to fulfill the College's mission for the academic program. (Standard III.A.7; ER 14)

Part-time and adjunct faculty members are incorporated into the instructional aspect of the College. The part-time and adjunct faculty are also quickly integrated into the community

living alongside full-time faculty, staff, and students. Evaluations, oversight, and professional development opportunities are provided to short-term faculty by the College Dean in conjunction with the College's Curriculum Committee. (Standard III.A.8)

Qualified staff members are employed by the College in adequate numbers. The College is effective in hiring qualified staff and in guaranteeing their retention. The student to staff ratio of approximately two to one reflects the College's adherence to the mission of providing a comprehensive education located on a working farm and cattle ranch where labor is a core component of the educational experience. (Standard III.A.9; ER 8)

The College governance includes a labor committee that decides upon the division of the work for the farm and associated operations. This is student-run committee provides the labor necessary for operations of the college from maintenance, facilities, and farm operations.

Qualified administrators in adequate numbers are employed by the College. The core administrative staff is maintained for oversight of the academic program. Administrative staff are recruited and hired with the focus on the fact that multiple job responsibilities are required of each position. The evaluation of administrators also includes a significant student input component as described in policy and Board oversight. (Standard III.A.10; ER 8)

The College's written personnel policies and procedures are available for information and review. Employee policies regarding the professional aspects of living and working at the College are clearly outlined for all hired personnel. The Employee Information section of the College's handbook contains the written personnel policies and procedures. (Standard III.A.11)

The College supports its diverse personnel with effective practices and policies. This diversity includes nationally and internationally educated, ethnic and gender varietal, and ranges of age. The small size and remote location of the College to some extent determines the nature of the pool of applicants. The personnel at the College represent both equitable and diverse hiring practices, as shown in the Faculty section of the College's Academic Course Catalog. (Standard III.A.12)

DSC maintains a written code of professional ethics for its personnel. This information is communicated to all members of the community during orientation. The College's handbook provides a clear outline of its written code of professional ethics. (Standard III.A.13)

Professional development opportunities are a priority for both faculty and staff. The College is committed to supporting the professional development of its faculty and staff as it recognizes the importance of professional development in maintaining their career and future professional work. The College's Professional Development Policy is outlined in the Curriculum and Faculty section of its handbook. The team observed that DSC works with faculty in developing a teaching load each year that is supportive of professional development and helps faculty to stay engaged in their academic field. (Standard III.A.14)

The College's personnel records are maintained per legal guidelines. Each employee has access to his/her personnel records in accordance with the law. The College's Fairness Policy (with regards to the maintenance of personnel records) is contained in its handbook. (Standard III.A.15)

Conclusion

The College meets the Standards and related Eligibility Requirements.

Standard III.B – Physical Resources

General Observations

Deep Springs College (DSC) is located on a 90,000-acre ranch in a remote high-desert valley in eastern California, just over the Nevada border. The College is the only presence in the valley, with the nearest town over a mountain pass approximately 45 minutes away.

Renovations to the campus completed in the late 1900s and early 2000s are being maintained appropriately to ensure the longevity of these improvements. Most recent renovations include the museum as well as faculty and staff housing. The College has initiated the process of extensive renovation and rebuilding of the Boarding House. Design work with construction projected to start in 2018.

A solar array was installed in 2005-06 as a source of efficient, renewable energy that could defray monthly expenditures. The College receives credits for its excess power from Southern California Edison.

Findings and Evidence

The College is committed to ensuring the integrity and safety of its physical resources, not only the buildings and classrooms, but also the spaces associated with the Farm and Ranch Labor program. The team observed that safety is a priority with oversight from staff and the Trustees of Deep Springs (TDS). Safety incidents are reported to the board at its spring and fall meetings. (Standard III.B.1)

The College regularly assesses its physical resources and makes recommendations for updates, upgrades, and renovations. Most recent renovations include the renovation of the museum and faculty and staff housing. The Boarding House has been identified as the next renovation and rebuilding project for the College. An architectural firm has been selected and is gathering community input for the spaces in the Boarding House. (Standard III.B.2)

Evaluations of the facilities and equipment of the College occurs regularly. These include academic and administrative facilities, farm and ranch equipment associated with the College's labor pillar, as well as its hydroelectric and solar energy production equipment. (Standard III.B.3)

The College's long-range capital plans include maintenance projections as well as upgrades of all College infrastructure. The College has initiated the process of an extensive renovation and is rebuilding the College's Boarding House. The College estimates that the renovation will cost \$1.8 million. Development work is already underway with respect to raising funds for the project. About \$300,000 has already been raised. (Standard III.B.4)

Conclusion

The College meets the Standards and related Eligibility Requirements.

Standard III.C – Technology Resources

General Observations

Deep Springs College (DSC) provides the technology services to support its instructional and support programs. An IT specialist was recently hired, and the College is allocating the necessary funds to maintain and improve its system.

Findings and Evidence

Technology services, professional support, facilities, hardware, and software are appropriate and adequate to support the College's operation, academic programs, support services. Staffing has increased with the hiring of a fulltime IT specialist, as well as making more funds available to support the College's technology infrastructure. (Standard III.C.1)

DSC has plans and processes in place to ensure that its technology infrastructure is adequate to support its mission, operations, programs, and services. Recent budgetary changes make IT repair and maintenance a permanent budget line item. (Standard III.C.2)

All technology resources are located at one campus. (Standard III.C.3)

The availability of technology instruction and support is of constant focus. The team observed that the student body is highly involved in technology decisions that support learning. For example, to support the isolation ideal, the Student Body decided that online video streaming of movies would not be permitted and they further limited Wi-Fi access to not include dormitories to encourage student interaction and limit social media distractions. (Standard III.C.4)

Policies and procedures are promoted and followed with regard to the appropriate use of technology in the teaching and learning processes. These are developed through the College's shared-governance pillar and approved by administration and the Board as appropriate. (Standard III.C.5)

Conclusion

The College meets the Standards and related Eligibility Requirements.

Standard III.D – Fiscal Resources

General Observations

Deep Springs College (DSC) clearly plans and manages its financial affairs with integrity and in a manner that ensures financial stability. The ongoing reserves for the College have consistently been at 20% or higher. The College community is included in the planning of the annual budget to ensure it supports all institutional planning.

The College does not rely on public funding, but instead relies on its alumni and other significant donors for financial support, along with expert investment practices to ensure that revenues support the College's expenditures.

Findings and Evidence

Planning:

The College's financial resources are sufficient to support and sustain its academic program, labor program, and student support services. The College does not rely on public funding and is not affected by the state's economy. Instead, it relies on its donor base and the endowment for the annual costs of operation. (Standard III.D.1, ER 18)

Financial planning is fully integrated with the College's mission and supports institutional planning. The Trustees of Deep Springs (TDS) review the budget and expenditures at each of its board meetings. Additionally, the Trustees are provided the quarterly spending report for review. The tentative annual budget is approved by the Trustees at its spring meeting, and the final annual budget is approved at its fall meeting. Monthly spending reports are made available to the community. (Standard III.D.2)

The team verified that DSC clearly follows its guidelines and processes for financial planning and budget development. All constituencies of the College participate in the development of institutional plans and budgets. The budget cycle starts in January with a review of the actual expenditures for the last five years and the current year spending report. The community input is sought for developing the annual budget. The College has maintained an ongoing reserve of 20% of its annual budget. (Standard III.D.3)

Fiscal Responsibility and Stability:

College planning includes all available resources, including the endowment, donations, and grants. The College makes changes in its planning whenever shifts in financial resources occur. The College maintains an operating reserve of 20% of its annual budget. (Standard III.D.4)

DSC undergoes annual external audits to ensure its financial integrity. Previous audits received an unqualified opinion from the auditors for the College's financial statements. The

final audit report is received and reviewed by the Trustees. The College's Investment Committee meets quarterly and reports to the Trustees semi-annually. (Standard III.D.5)

The College's financial documents, including the budget, have a high degree of credibility and accuracy and reflect appropriate allocation and use of financial resources to support its academic programs and services. A review of the College's quarterly spending report (as of December 31, 2016) shows expenditures of less than 50% of its annual budget. (Standard III.D.6)

There were no external audit findings and recommendations for the last three years. (Standard III.D.7)

The College's financial and internal control systems are evaluated and assessed for validity and effectiveness, and the results of this assessment are used for improvement. As evidenced from external audits, which are completed every year, there were no findings on the integrity of financial management practices. (Standard III.D.8)

DSC has sufficient cash flow and reserves. The College maintains an operating reserve equal to 20% of the annual budget. Also, the College has an unrestricted liquid assets equal to at least three years of projected expenses for annual operations. The President has appropriate contingency funds to deal with unforeseen circumstances, as validated from interviews with both the CEO and the Chief Financial Officer (who is also a Trustee). (Standard III.9)

The College has designated responsibilities for oversight of finances to appropriate Trustee committees and ensures the work of these committees through external audits. (Standard III.10)

Liabilities:

The College clearly identifies, plans, and allocates resources for payment of liabilities and future obligations. The College carries no long-term debt except purchase agreements between the College and the Telluride Association. Specifically, the Telluride Association has the right to sell its interest in the LLC to the College for the sum of \$1.8 million (in 1998 dollars), adjusted for annual CPI increases. The Telluride Association cannot exercise this option prior to August 31, 2019. Payment on the option is due August 31, 2026. An interview with the College President validated that the College is prepared for the exercise of this option. (Standard III.D.11)

The College has no Other Post-Employment Benefit (OPEB) liabilities. (Standard III.D.12)

The College does not have any local debt instruments. (Standard III.D.13)

As evidenced in the June 30, 2016 and 2015 external audit, resources were allocated appropriately, and there were no adjustments made to the College's annual financial statements. (Standard III.D.14)

The College does not participate in Title IV. (Standard III.D.15)

Contractual Agreements:

Contractual agreements with external entities are consistent with the mission and goals of the College. There are no external contracts for ongoing operations. However, the College maintains a contractual arrangement for management of its investments. Additionally, the College has signed a contract with an architectural firm to plan the renovation of the Boarding House. (Standard III.D.16)

Conclusion

The College meets the Standards and related Eligibility Requirements.

Standard IV – Leadership and Governance

Standard IV.A – Decision-Making Roles and Processes

General Observations

The College has developed processes that encourage the broad participation across campus to promote student success, academic quality, and improvement of teaching and learning processes. Students are incorporated into the governance of the college at all levels and provide significant input into operations and decisions. This level of responsibility and authority is not seen in other colleges and provides for a unique educational environment at Deep Springs College (DSC).

The College is built upon three pillars: academics, labor and self-governance. All three pillars are orientated toward the college mission, which has an emphasis on service and was described by faculty to train students to “do good in the world.” These three pillars actively permeate the entire institution. Students are challenged to reflect upon the ideal of doing good work in its practical meaning. Furthermore, because of the level of responsibility given to students in college governance, students are intentionally given the room to fail and learn how to improve from their mistakes. The team found evidence of this environment, which was described by one student as a place where very little judgement is passed when challenging or disagreeing with others, or when deciding upon the many aspects of the college governance. The result is a unique holistic education where students grow into becoming better persons in the world.

The administrative structure is built to support the above ideals. The President reports to the Trustees of Deep Springs (TDS) and has ultimate oversight of the daily operations of the College. A functional reporting structure includes staffing not only for the academic component of the College but also the labor pillar required of all students. Campus committees make recommendations to the appropriate dean or director, who in turn, provides the recommendation to the President. The Trustees have given daily authority to the President, but are involved in questioning and communicating with students about governance decisions that are brought forward. One example found by the visiting team included discussions about updating the farm irrigation system and questioning if modernizing the system would adhere to the College’s mission of “sound principles of teaching and learning” and “to solve real problems, both practical and social.”

The College governance includes a labor committee that decides upon the division of the work for the farm and associated operations. This is student-run committee provides the labor necessary for operations of the college from maintenance, facilities, and farm operations.

In relation to governance for academic matters, students actively participate in approving curriculum, hiring faculty, performance evaluations of all academic staff including the President, and determining which student applicants are accepted and retained by the College. While students are active participants, and have the responsibility for many academic recommendations, there does exist a series of checks-and-balances to provide an oversight of these processes for institutional memory and historical context.

Appropriate policies exist to provide structure to the ongoing governance and decision-making of the College. However, the team did not find evidence that these were actively used in committee orientation, called Passover, nor daily operations and discussions. The team did observe a fully functional college that has an exceptionally strong governance process, however, the visiting team was concerned that past history and policies were missing from student governance discussions. The visiting team discovered that similar recommendations for institutional improvement were noted in the 2011 visiting team report and that this project is a welcome component of the 2017 Quality Focus Essay.

Findings and Evidence

The College governance process includes three standing committees: the Curriculum Committee, Review and Re-invitation Committee, and Application Committee. Students play a significant role in each of these three committees, determining the agenda and work product. The aforementioned committees provide the structure for DSC and make recommendations to administration, who in turn through the President, report to the TDS. The Trustees have three standing committees: Academic Affairs, Succession, and Budget & Operations. Because of the deep level of participation and ownership of committee work from students, ideas are encouraged which may improve practices, programs, or services. Changes in policy flow to the TDS in multiple ways depending upon the content. For example, legal policies are usually initiated by administration while curriculum or day-to-day safety issues originate from student-run efforts in committee discussions. (Standard IV.A.1; IV.A.2)

The visiting team found evidence of extensive student participation, alongside administration and faculty involvement into the policies and practices of DSC. Students participate in the beneficial ownership of the administrative and decision-making of the college's operations. For example, if a student wants to deviate from the normal class load through special projects or independent study, this must be approved by the Curriculum Committee, which in turn is made up of several students and one faculty/dean position. The student-lead Curriculum Committee also has responsibility for determining the upcoming curriculum and courses offered, ensuring that they fit into the college requirements. Further, students and departments are intimately involved with budgetary development to support college operations in various avenues from open campus discussions about the proposed budget all the way up to the two students who occupy full voting rights as members of the Trustees. (Standard IV.A.2; IV.A.3)

Faculty, administrators, and students all have roles, delineated through policy and procedures, for recommendations about curriculum and student learning programs and

services. The Curriculum Committee evaluates proposals for proposed courses, then determines the upcoming schedule of classes while ensuring college requirements are met and there are available courses in the three required areas of humanities, social science, and natural science. Faculty propose potential courses and topics to the Curriculum Committee and each course must meet the objectives of DSC through the Goals of Deep Springs Academic Program (GODSAP) evaluation process. These processes are detailed in the Academic Policy and approved by the Academic Affairs Committee of the board. Such collaborative processes were also discussed in the annual meetings of the Curriculum Committee and Faculty Committee to evaluate academic policy and recommend changes to the TDS. Such discussions are provided to the TDS in the regular Academic Affairs Report. (Standard IV.A.4)

The visiting team observed processes for orientation of student leadership on various committees through a “Passover” activity where incoming student chairs are provided information, decisions, and learn the purpose of each committee. Formal faculty meetings are held at least once per semester, and the Dean utilizes a template for such meetings to determine structure and decisions. Finally, relevant academic policies are reviewed annually by the Curriculum Committee and at faculty meetings. Decisions and recommendations are discussed with the Trustees at the spring meeting to inform new policy for the upcoming fall semester. (Standard IV.A.5)

It was observed that decisions and recommendations were found to be well established in all committees on campus. The visiting team found evidence that all campus community members were aware of the structure, the responsibility of each committee, and the structure of decision-making at DSC. The visiting team also found that the committee reports to the Trustees were the main avenue for communicating and documentation decisions. The lack of a formal process for disseminating decisions was purposeful because it encouraged the communal nature and isolation goals of the campus. Given the high expectation of student partnership in college governance, this set the stage that was described by one faculty member as “allowing students a lot of latitude to make mistakes and learn how to problem solve from such governance mistakes.” On the other hand, the visiting team observed that past history and structure was absent in student governance discussions and decisions, leading to processes that were defined by the campus as “informal” by many individuals. DSC might benefit by determining how to institutionalize such processes and bring them into daily operations in a manner that does not deter from the student beneficial ownership concept, yet provides some consistency in processes and structure from the turnover of students and visiting faculty after a few years. The visiting team found that previous recommendations for institutional improvement in the 2011 report included similar statements related to (a) integration of existing planning processes and develop clear ways in which all planning processes are institutionalized as well as (b) developing an evaluation process for the self-governance pillar. (Standard IV.A.6; IV.A.7)

Since the last comprehensive evaluation report, DSC has created comprehensive evaluation processes for its academic programs (GODSAP) and the labor program (GODSLAP). The Quality Focus Essay and planning documents note the intent to create a parallel evaluation

process for the College's self-governance and the team found evidence of this planning agenda for the next few years. (Standard IV.A.7)

Conclusion

The College is encouraged to develop the self-governance evaluation instrument and processes as described in the Qualify Focus Essay. In addition, the College is encouraged to revisit the two recommendations for institutional improvement noted in the 2011 report.

The College meets the Standards and related Eligibility Requirements.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

In order to improve institutional effectiveness, the team recommends the College document and effectively communicate the purpose, discussion, recommendations, and decisions of College committees and meetings. (Standard I.B.1; I.B.6; IV.A.6)

Standard IV.B – Chief Executive Officer

General Observations

The President of Deep Springs College (DSC) is charged with the overall operations of DSC. The position works closely with the Trustees of Deep Springs (TDS) to provide structure, policies, and oversight for all college operations. The team found evidence that the President is fully committed to the mission of the College, and in particular, the extensive student involvement in the governance of DSC. The visiting team found that the role of the president supports decision-making and leadership throughout all levels of DSC.

The College is currently involved in a legal challenge in its effort for a policy that would allow for admissions without gender restrictions. The President and Trustees of Deep Springs College, in their roles at DSC, are involved in the litigation.

Findings and Evidence

The DSC President has the unique role of oversight of college policies and programs while also ensuring the students' beneficial ownership of the College's mission and decision-making processes. The President is given this authority in policy and practice by the Trustees. A job description is kept current and models both practical and goal-oriented directions for the President. The President is responsible for college processes, which involve mission-appropriate student governance leadership. These processes include elements for institutional organization, budgeting, selecting and developing personnel, and assessing institutional effectiveness. For example, the retention process operates in a manner not found at other colleges: the student-led Review and Re-invitation Committee facilitates the evaluation of both the teaching effectiveness and individual achievement in a manner that is completely non-anonymous. This allows students both the responsibility for evaluating important aspects of the college, but also in developing communication methods and leadership qualities that are necessary when living communally with all students, staff, and faculty in an isolated location. Annual Academic Affairs Reports to the TDS are the main mechanism that the TDS monitors and assures academic quality. (Standard IV.B.1)

The organizational structure and staffing patterns have been directed, through campus and trustee input, by the President over the past several years. The team found ample evidence that the President delegates appropriate authority to committees and individuals to complete the work of the College consistent with the mission and ideals of beneficial student ownership. Curricular offerings, admissions, retention, labor assignments and policies all include significant student responsibilities and oversight, while at the same time providing recommendations in the shared-governance process to the eventual responsibility of the President. (Standard IV.B.2)

DSC has a unique structure that essentially relies on three campus committees, all of which are student-led and include participation by permanent faculty members. For example, faculty members present course proposals to the Curriculum Committee as this student-directed committee provides recommendations for courses to be offered in the upcoming

semester and as importantly, to evaluate the courses to ensure mission-appropriateness and academic integrity of learning outcomes. The President is involved in the final recommendation and approval from the TDS in his role as being ultimately responsible for the operations, yet including students per the mission and goals of DSC.

The president is responsible for implementation of policies and ensuring that decisions are consistent with the DSC mission. The team found evidence of extensive student and campus input into policies and the operations of the College, and further that such practices aligned with the mission. Two examples include the Academic Affairs Report and the Dean's Report to the TDS. The Trustees hold the president accountable through such avenues as a standing board agenda reports from all college committees, staff reporting on their efforts in supporting the DSC mission, and in reviewing the President's job description. (Standard IV.B.3; IV.B.5)

The responsibility of the President for accreditation standards and requirements is detailed in the job description and pertinent college policies. The President has delegated relevant tasks across campus, including student involvement, in meeting accreditation guidelines, while providing appropriate oversight and approval. The President also informs the TDS through the President's Report and the Accreditation Report. (Standard IV.V.4)

The team found evidence that DSC refers to its community as the current campus and previous students. The President communicates with external constituents through regular newsletters and announcements. The President communicates internally through informal processes, and all campus members eat three meals per day in a common dining hall, live communally on campus, and invoke an isolation ideal so that all staff, students, and faculty are in constant communication. (Standard IV.B.6)

The team found intermittent evidence of references to policy in committee discussions and encourages DSC to find ways to institutionalize other policies in discussions throughout campus without adversely impacting the beneficial student ownership of the College.

Conclusion

The College meets the Standards and related Eligibility Requirements.

Standard IV.C – Governing Board

General Observations

The Trustees of Deep Springs (TDS) are appointed by the board using a selection criteria described in the Trustees of Deep Springs College Handbook under Policy: “Succession and Orientation.” The board members actually serve in two board capacities. Some of the members are part of the “Trust” board, while all board members are part of the “Corporation” board. The board only meets twice a year (2-3 day meetings at each session). One formal meeting takes place in the spring and the other takes place in the fall. Special board meetings may be called only as needed, and are usually called by the CEO. Much of the Delegation of Authority is given to the CEO due to the limited number of face-to-face board meetings that take place. The level of authority is described in the President’s job description. Committee reports and quarterly financial reports are sent to each board member on a regular basis. Members of the TDS sit on one of three board sub-committees: 1) Budget and Operations Committee; 2) Succession and Orientation Committee; 3) Academic Affairs Committee. The 2-3 day campus visit by the TDS include board sub-committee meetings culminating with the formal board meeting for that term.

The CEO is evaluated by the board on an annual basis after the students evaluate the CEO in the months of January and February. This evaluation is provided to the Succession Committee before it is presented to the CEO and subsequently to the board. Once this process is complete, the board conducts the formal evaluation of the CEO. In discussions with both the CEO and selected members of the board, the CEO has recently asked the board to formalize a policy on the Evaluation of the CEO and a formal Board Policy should be developed by the next board meeting in spring, 2017.

The TDS conducts an annual Self-Evaluation. This process is stated in a Board Policy. Annual self-evaluation is conducted during the fall meeting of the Board of Trustees. This self-evaluation occurred in 2016, but not during the previous two-year period due to litigation at the Board level.

The visiting team found evidence that the Board’s role in academic quality, integrity, and effectiveness of learning programs and services, and financial stability was operationalized in The Trustees of Deep Springs College Handbook. In interviews with a number of Trustees, it was evident that the majority of the board members have academic experience in higher education and that this knowledge base ensures the quality, integrity, and effectiveness of learning programs and services, as well as financial stability. Many of the members of the board are former students and/or faculty members of Deep Springs College (DSC). The Chief Financial Officer for the College is also a member of the Board of Trustees. The inclusion of two student trustees as full voting members also adds value to ensure the academic quality, integrity, and effectiveness of learning programs and services.

As for evidence that the board acts as a collective entity, policy in the Trustees of Deep Springs Handbook exists that clearly states this requirement and evidence observed by the visiting team suggests that the members of the TDS follow this policy.

The review of the Institutional Self Study documents suggests the institution is in compliance with Eligibility Requirement (ER) 7 in that the “governing board is an independent, policy-making body that reflects the public interest in the institution’s educational quality. It advocates for and defends the institution and protects it from undue influence or political pressure”. The Code of Ethics Policy clearly identifies this responsibility.

Findings and Evidence

DSC has a governing board that has authority and responsibility for policies to assure the academic quality, integrity, and effectiveness of the student learning programs and services and the financial stability of the institution. These policies are found in the “Trustees of Deep Springs College Handbook.” The indicated policies include sections on the Code of Ethics, Committee Structure and Responsibilities, policies and procedures for maintaining quality of all college programs, and to ensure the financial stability of the institution. The Annual Academic Affairs Report to the TDS is another vehicle for the Trustees to assure academic quality and integrity. (Standard IV.C.1; ER 7)

As described in the Trustees of Deep Springs College Handbook, the “Trustees shall act only on the basis of the best interest of Deep Springs as a whole, not interests promoted by individuals or groups.” This was further validated by interviews with board members, including interviews with the two sitting student trustees. (Standard IV.C.2)

The current practice related to the evaluation of the CEO by the board involves the evaluation of the CEO, in addition to other administrators, by the students in the Review and Re-invitation Committee. This annual evaluation is conducted in January/February of each year and is then forwarded to the Succession and Orientation Committee in a letter format. This is then forwarded to the board chair by the CEO. The annual evaluation of the CEO is then conducted during the spring of the Board of Trustees. This process is not formalized in any policy, however the CEO plans to develop a formal policy recommendation for the board to consider at the spring, 2017 board meeting. The policy should include a process to include goals for the CEO as a secondary evaluation method to include in the formal CEO evaluation. The statements in the self-study related to the process of the Evaluation of the CEO by the Board of Trustees were validated through interviews with both the CEO and select members of the TDS. (Standard IV.C.3)

The TDS clearly operate as an independent policy-making body reflecting public interest with regard to educational quality. The members of the board are appointed and most have clear expertise in higher education and finances. Many of the Trustees are former students and/or former faculty members. One member of the board serves as the Chief Financial Officer for the College. The Trustees Code of Ethics Policy found in the Trustees of Deep Springs College Handbook and validated by interviews with the CEO and selected board members, includes a conflict of interest statement to avoid conflict between the interest of the College and individual financial, personal, or political interest or pressures from any Trustee. (Standard IV.C.4; ER 7)

The TDS policies are designed to ensure the oversight of various services and resources and the quality, integrity, and improvement of student learning programs as outlined in the Trustees of Deep Springs College Handbook. A subcommittee of the board, the Academic Affairs Committee, is responsible for the review and updating of policies to ensure the quality, integrity, and improvement of student learning programs leading to the development of a full report. These reports are discussed by the full board, in conjunction with the Dean's report to ensure that this standard is clearly met. The governing board is an independent board and its actions are final and not subject to the actions of any other entity. The statements in this section of the College's Self-Study report were validated by interviews with selected board members. (Standard IV.C.5)

A review of The Trustees of Deep Springs College Handbook clearly identifies that the Bylaws and policies specify the size, duties, responsibilities, structure, and operating procedures of the board. This handbook is kept in a community accessible file server on the campus of DSC. (Standard IV.C.6)

The TDS annually conduct a board self-evaluation. This process is clearly outlined in board policy. The annual self-evaluation includes the evaluation of their performance with respect to oversight of the College programs, financial stability, and executive leadership. Discussion of these goals are centered on individual Trustee evaluations and are used in the development of the whole board evaluation process. Board goals are derived from these subsequent evaluations and are assessed annually. The board self-evaluation is conducted at the fall board meeting. (Standard IV.C.7)

The oversight of policies regarding student success are incorporated in the TDS policies as part of the board's Academic Affairs sub-committee report and the Dean's report which summarizes the state of quantitative and qualitative learning outcomes, goals and strategies. The President's Report to the Trustees is another example of the CEO's role in planning, budgeting, developing personnel, and institutional effectiveness. These statements found in the institution's self-study were validated through interviews with selected board members and the Dean. (Standard IV.C.8)

The policies on Succession and Orientation are included in the Trustees of Deep Spring College Handbook and include a policy for orientation of new members of the Board of Trustees. This section also includes the procedure for the board member search process, selection criteria, review of prospective members, and nomination and re-election (re-appointment) of board members. The Orientation Policy covers the process for mentoring new members by the Chairman of the Board, Vice-Chairman, and the Chairs of the standing committees of the board. In addition, all new board members are required to meet with the College's general counsel to review their duties and responsibilities as an orientation. Board members are not elected by public but appointed to the board under the criteria described above. (Standard IV.C.9)

Through interviews, the team observed that board policies and written bylaws clearly establish a process for board evaluation. The evaluation assesses the board's effectiveness in promoting and sustaining academic quality, integrity, and institutional effectiveness. The

governing board evaluates its practice and performance, including full participation in board training and makes these results public. The board self-evaluation is also used to set annual board goals to be evaluated annually. Due to existing litigation regarding co-educational admissions, the self-evaluation did not occur during 2014 and 2015, but was conducted in 2016. (Standard IV.C.10)

As reflected in the Deep Springs College Self-Study, the governing board upholds its code of ethics and conflict of interest policies. Individual board members adhere to this code as validated by interviews with selected members of the Board of Trustees. The board has a clearly defined policy for dealing with behavior of board members that violate its code. In interviewing selected board members, these policies are, in fact, upheld. The fact that members of the board are not elected by the public easily allows for the adherence of the code of ethics and were affirmed by the board members interviewed. In the appointment process of new board members, the policy upholds the requirement that the majority of the board members have no employment, family, ownership, or other personal financial interest in the institution. (Standard IV.C.11; ER 7)

The responsibilities of the CEO are outlined in the Policy on the President's duties. Included in these duties are the following section: "The President is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the board, and is responsible for seeing that trustee policies, decisions and directives are implemented...he or she is held responsible by the board for the results, and is granted commensurate authority by it."

Examples of how the board holds the CEO accountable are found in the discussion and dialog of active board meetings during the fall and spring terms. In addition, e-mails and phone conversations take place between the CEO and the board between the formal annual meetings held in the spring and fall of each academic year. In terms of the financial oversight of the College, the board regularly holds discussions at the formal TDS meetings on the budget centered around the board's sub-committee of Budget and Operations. During these discussions, the board reviews the proposed vs. the actual expenditures at the end of the fiscal year. These statements were validated by interviews of selected board members. (Standard IV.C.12)

Board members are informed about the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, Commission Policies, the accreditation process, and the College's status through reports provided by the CEO and from ongoing discussions at the formal board meetings that occur twice per year. Each TDS meeting extends for a total 2-3 days on campus where Board sub-committees meet to discuss various reports. The President's Report to TDS includes items on accreditation and results in discussion with Trustees. (Standard IV.C.13)

The Strategic Plan of Deep Springs College is revised every 2-5 years. The latest Strategic Plan was provided to the team and will be adopted by the board at the spring, 2017 meeting. In addition to serving as a vehicle to evaluate and provide evidence of quality, integrity, and improvement of student learning programs and the resources necessary to support them, this plan provides further evidence of how the College meets the standards of accreditation. (Standard IV.C.13)

Conclusion

The College meets the Standards and related Eligibility Requirements.

Recommendations

Recommendation 4

In order to improve institutional effectiveness in the process of the board's evaluation of the CEO, the team recommends that the board establish a policy to describe the formal, systematic evaluation of its CEO to include criteria and goals. (Standard IV.C.3)

Quality Focus Essay Feedback/Advice

The Deep Springs College Quality Focus Essay (QFE) is a reflective plan, identifying three action projects:

1. Evaluation/Self-Evaluation of the Student Self-Governance
2. Renovation of the College's Boarding House
3. Creation of a centralized physical database of organizational information

The QFE established a framework for these action projects. The College begins with identifying the mission as the base for the action projects and the need for pertinent data in decision-making. The visiting team observed that the projects and action plans are appropriate and were identified as needs of the College. In particular, with the establishment of the Goals of Deep Springs Academic Program (GODSAP) review and the Goals of Deep Springs Labor Program (GODSLAP), the third pillar of the college, self-governance, is a natural extension to formally evaluate and integrate the results into college operations and planning.

The second planning document involves an improvement to campus infrastructure. DSC has incorporated this planning into their operations and identified potential sources of funding. Renovation supports the three pillars and will enhance the learning environment.

The third planning document has been noted in previous self-evaluation reports. Due to the high turnover of students every three years, coupled with visiting professorship and permanent faculty who stay at DSC for a maximum of six years, it is important that DSC preserve institutional memory for processes and procedures. However, more important, is that DSC preserve its collegial atmosphere with students having substantive ownership of college operations. The visiting team observed that the campus culture should not be impacted by developing onerous processes or procedures. Nevertheless, it is important to maintain some institutional memory, history, and processes. The challenge for DSC will be to develop a structure that does not inhibit the student freedom allowed in ownership of the College.