2024 Assurance Argument for Reaffirmation of Accreditation
by the Higher Learning Commision

RockValleyCollege

Mission: to empower students & community through lifelong learning

Assurance Argument

Rock Valley College

Review date: 10/14/2024

1 - Mission

The institution's mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution's operations.

1.A - Core Component 1.A

The institution's mission is articulated publicly and operationalized throughout the institution.

1. The mission was developed through a process suited to the context of the institution.
2. The mission and related statements are current and reference the institution's emphasis on the various aspects of its mission, such as instruction, scholarship, research, application of research, creative works, clinical service, public service, economic development and religious or cultural purpose.
3. The mission and related statements identify the nature, scope and intended constituents of the higher education offerings and services the institution provides.
4. The institution's academic offerings, student support services and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission.
5. The institution clearly articulates its mission through public information, such as statements of purpose, vision, values, goals, plans or institutional priorities.

Argument

1.A.1. The mission was developed through a process suited to the context of the institution.

Rock Valley College's (RVC) mission is to "empower students and community through lifelong learning." This mission was developed through a collaborative process with internal and external stakeholders to align with the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) mission, "[t]o provide high-quality, accessible, cost-effective educational opportunities for the individuals and communities they serve."

The current version of the RVC mission and related statements (see the table below) was reviewed in 2014 by a Mission Review Committee, which included faculty, staff, students, a trustee, and representative members of the community. Revisions recommended by this committee were approved by the Board of Trustees on July 28, 2015, with the goal of affirming the mission and related statements annually during their annual reorganization meeting.

Mission Statement	Rock Valley College empowers students and community through lifelong learning.
Vision Statement	Rock Valley College empowers the community to grow as a society of learners through well-designed educational pathways, leading to further

	education, rewarding careers, cultural enrichment, and economic - technological development.
Core Values	Learner-centered Community: Rock Valley College is dedicated to providing affordable lifelong learning opportunities that foster student success: Mutual Respect: At all times, Rock Valley College upholds the dignity of each individual by being ethical, respectful, fair, and courteous in communications and actions. Excellence: Rock Valley College maintains high expectations for teaching and learning and holds itself accountable for promoting continuous improvement. Diversity: Rock Valley College promotes, celebrates, and embraces differences, including cultural and ethnic diversity and diversity of thought. Collaboration: Rock Valley College fosters innovative, enriching partnerships within the college community and among others that serve the region. Innovation: Rock Valley College is a forward thinking institution that explores creative approaches for the future. Public Trust: Rock Valley College honors and upholds its commitment to the community through integrity of action and efficient use of resources.

During the midcycle review, the college noted that while the Board of Trustees engaged in annual affirmation, a formal, systematic process of regular review of the mission and related statements was needed to ensure their currency and relevancy. The plan to address this was delayed by COVID-19.

1.A.2. The mission and related statements are current and reference the institution's emphasis on the various aspects of its mission, such as instruction, scholarship, research, application of research, creative works, clinical service, public service, economic development and religious or cultural purpose.

In May 2023, the HLC Steering Committee and Criterion 1 Subcommittee provided a recommendation to the President's Cabinet outlining the need for this process and possible timeline for ensuring its regular completion. Upon consideration, Cabinet requested that a standard operating procedure be developed that connected the review and potential revision of

the mission and related statements to the maintenance cycle of the college strategic plan. Key elements of the standard operating procedure are a consistent timeline, committee composition and responsibilities, and steps for approval of any recommendations for revisions. This procedure will be implemented with the revision of the current Strategic Plan, so a committee will be formed in 2025 to initiate the mission review process.

The mission and related statements reference the College's emphasis on being the community's college by supporting lifelong learning for those who live within the service district. As noted in the vision statement, the college addresses this through credit and non-credit academic and training pathways that lead to further education and gainful employment, as well as providing opportunities for cultural enrichment.

1.A.3. The mission and related statements identify the nature, scope and intended constituents of the higher education offerings and services the institution provides.

The college mission and related statements are operationalized through the college's strategic plan. College Leadership convened a series of townhall meetings with the Cabinet in the spring of 2022 to unveil the strategic plan to employees and students and gather their feedback and worked with Studer Education to create a scorecard that summer to track progress in achieving its strategic goals.

The 2022-2027 RVC Strategic Plan was unveiled to the College at the Fall 2022 Professional Development Day. The 2022-2027 Strategic Plan is built around four guiding pillars. In alignment with the college's mission and related statements, these pillars highlight the importance the college places on providing all district residents with:

- improved access to college, training, and careers (Pillar I: Access);

- high-quality certificates, degrees, and co-curricular programs to meet district/community and regional needs and improve student success (Pillar II: Education);

- high-quality training and professional development to align to college, district/community, and regional needs and where employees and learners can make progress towards their educational and career goals (Pillar III: Training); and

- a diverse, equitable, and inclusive campus that improves campus culture and accessibility, promotes accountability for the campus DEI effort, and increases the cultural competence of all employees, learners, and other stakeholder groups (Pillar IV: Diversity).

The Strategic Plan is supported and further detailed by division-specific plans, including the Academic Plan, Strategic Enrollment Management Plan, Industry Partnership & Community Engagement Plan, and Professional Development Plan. A crosswalk between these division-specific plans and the pillars of the College Strategic Plan illustrates the alignment between the division-specific plans and the Strategic Plan.

The College also has an [Equity Plan](#) that shares the institution's efforts to address diversity, equity, access, and inclusion throughout its operations. This Equity Plan provides additional detail to how the College plans to address and monitor efforts aligned with Pillar IV of the College Strategic Plan.

Furthermore, the [Facilities Master Plan](#) provides an outline of the College's priorities for the on-going maintenance and development of its facilities, grounds, and IT infrastructure. Beyond emergent needs, the priorities of the Facilities Master Plan are designed to support priorities identified in the College Strategic Plan and discipline-specific plans.

1.A.4. The institution's academic offerings, student support services and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission.

The 2022-2027 Strategic Plan and college's [organizational structure](#) illustrate that its education offerings and services are designed to address the lifelong learning of residents across the district. These education offerings and services include credit and non-credit options to meet learners where they are in their learning. General education course, transfer degree programs, and career and technical education programs for those seeking college credit and credentials. In addition, non-credit programs support the college's mission through programs such as Adult Education, Center for Learning and Retirement, Community Education, Continuing Education, Whiz Kids, and Workforce Development Customized Training to support the personal and career development of district residents.

The College also provides various support services to promote student success, including, but not limited to the following:

- Academic Advising
- Career Closet
- Career Services
- Disability Support Services
- EAGLE (Canvas) Support
- Eagle's Nest Food Pantry
- First Year Experience
- Grant-funded wrap-around services and tuition support
- Intercultural Student Services
- Math and Science Labs
- Personal & Success Counseling
- Testing Center
- TRIO Student Support
- Tutoring
- Writing Center

Additionally, the Estelle M. Black Library housed on the main campus not only serves the College, but is also identified as a community library, ensuring that this resource is available to all residents within the district. Currently there are 244 Community Patron accounts in the

library system. Each of these "Community Patrons" are residents of the RVC service district who have signed up for library cards because they were not already eligible as students or RVC employees. These patrons are often residents of rural parts of the district with no local public library access, and this service is free to them as district residents.

Additionally, based on data collected, the library decided to invest in more robust virtual resources and reduce some of the lesser-used physical collections in favor of more comfortable and usable spaces. Opening up the library space has also allowed for integrating the Writing and Tutoring Centers into the library. This means students can now receive reference services, writing center guidance, and tutoring all on the first floor of the library.

Enrollment is monitored through various data briefs (e.g., Student Profile), compliance data sets (e.g., Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) Annual Enrollment Compliance Report (A1)), and daily enrollment monitoring reports. These data provide insight into the College's efforts to address its mission to support lifelong learning and provide higher education offerings and services to the community as a whole.

1.A.5. The institution clearly articulates its mission through public information, such as statements of purpose, vision, values, goals, plans or institutional priorities.

RVC consistently articulates its mission to students, faculty, employees and the general public by documenting and operationalizing it through various materials, such as the following:

- College website,
- College Catalog (About the College section),
- Student Handbook,
- Employee Handbook, and
- Board Policy Manual

Sources

- C1_HLCSC_Recommendations_MVCV_051023
- C1_HumanResources_FY25Employee Handbook
- C1_IE-StrategicPlanning_ReviewMissionVisionValues_StandardOperatingProcedures
- C1_InstitutionalEffectiveness_StrategicPlanCrossWalk
- C1_InstitutionalEffectiveness_Student-Profile-Report-Fall-2023
- C2_BoTPolicy-RVC-Board-Policy-Manual
- C5_Academic Affairs_AcademicPlan2021-2024
- C5_DEI_EquityPlan2022-2027
- C5_HumanResources_OrgChartGraphical-Jan-3-2024
- C5_HumanResources_ProfessionalDevelopmentPlan2022-2027
- C5_InstitutionalEffectivenes_Scorecard
- C5_Operations_RVC District Wide Facilities Master Plan - Compressed
- C5_StudentAffairs_StrategicEnrollmentManagementPlan2022-2024
- C5_WorkforceDevelopment_IndustryPartnershipsAndCommunityEngagementPlan

1.B - Core Component 1.B

The institution's mission demonstrates commitment to the public good.

1. The institution's actions and decisions demonstrate that its educational role is to serve the public, not solely the institution or any superordinate entity.
2. The institution's educational responsibilities take primacy over other purposes, such as generating financial returns for investors, contributing to a related or parent organization, or supporting external interests.
3. The institution engages with its external constituencies and responds to their needs as its mission and capacity allow.

Argument

1.B.1. The institution's actions and decisions demonstrate that its educational role is to serve the public, not solely the institution or any superordinate entity.

RVC is a two-year public institution that is recognized by the Illinois Community College Board. It's mission, vision and core values provide a framework for how the College will take action and make decisions to demonstrate its educational role to serve the community. Furthermore, the College demonstrates its intent to be its community's college by further articulating its mission, vision and core values through the goals and actions of its Strategic Plan and regularly reporting out on the progress made via the scorecard to the Board of Trustees and the College community.

1.B.2. The institution's educational responsibilities take primacy over other purposes, such as generating financial returns for investors, contributing to a related or parent organization, or supporting external interests.

As a public community college, the College does not generate financial returns for investors or contribute to a related or parent organization. As previously noted, the educational role identified in the mission, vision, and core values are consistent with and aligned to the mission and public agenda for Illinois community colleges.

The Rock Valley College Foundation is a separate 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation that supports educational responsibilities of the College through scholarships and program support. Contributions to the College go through the Foundation to minimize exposure to potential external interests.

1.B.3. The institution engages with its external constituencies and responds to their needs as its mission and capacity allow.

RVC seeks to engage with its constituents to better understand their needs and make those needs the priority when making administrative and academic decisions. This is reflected in the

numerous collaborative initiatives with stakeholders to address evolving regional needs and ensuring resources more widely accessible throughout the community, as well as providing opportunity to share concerns about the business of the College.

Addressing Regional Economic Need

The College uses assessment processes to determine strategic priorities. A needs assessment done in 2019 led to an ongoing establishment of a re-instated [Human Services program](#). The assessment was conducted by two faculty members based on workforce needs and trends. As a result of the 2019 needs analysis, a decision was made to re-establish a Human Services program at RVC. After COVID-related delays, a Human Services Advisory Board was established to assist the staff in developing the program. Local experts in the field were solicited and the result was a committee of community stakeholders who meet monthly to help get the program established.

RVC also responded to trends in electrical vehicle purchases through the region and the state by establishing [three new courses](#) to address the anticipated demand for electric car mechanics. Beginning in fall 2023, the college started offering courses in Hybrid and Electric Vehicle Powertrain, Advanced Vehicle and Chassis Systems and Hybrid and Electric Vehicle Battery Systems.

All of the Career and Technical Education programs at the College have Advisory Committees that include external constituents representing the industries of those programs. The Advisory Committees provide an opportunity for two-way communication between program coordinators and faculty and industry representatives with the intent of maintaining the currency of program offerings to meet the existing and future industry needs.

Ensuring Wider Access to Resources throughout Community

A [partnership](#) between the Winnebago County Sheriff's Office and Rock Valley College was established to provide manufacturing skills and education to inmates beginning in 2021. The partnership was born out of an effort to impact the lives of inmates and improve their likelihood of success upon release.

In response to evolving workforce development demands, RVC opened a new [Advanced Technology Center (ATC)](#) in 2022 housing programs such as Welding, CNC Machining, and Mechatronics. This commitment of resources was made to offer credit and non-credit programs, including certificate programs and stackable credential models, to help students advance academically and more readily prepare for local workforce.

Sharing Concerns about RVC

RVC is governed by an elected [Board of Trustees](#) that conducts its business for the College in monthly public meetings per the Open Meetings Act. The Board holds a Committee of the Whole meeting at the beginning of each month with a Regular Meeting a couple of weeks later toward the end of the month. At each of these meetings, opportunity is provided for public

comment. Furthermore, opportunities are provided annually to comment and question on topics such as the budget.

Sources

- C1_News_E-Vehicle Repair Program
- C1_News_RVC Opens New Technology Training Center
- C1_News_Winnebago County Sheriff
- C1_RVCWebiste_RVC Foundation
- C1_RVCWebiste_RVC Foundation - Scholarships
- C1_RVCWebsite_Board of Trustees
- C1_RVCWebsite_Human Services
- C5_InstitutionalEffectivenes_Scorecard
- C5_InstitutionalEffectiveness_StrategicPlan2022-2027

1.C - Core Component 1.C

The institution provides opportunities for civic engagement in a diverse, multicultural society and globally connected world, as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.

1. The institution encourages curricular or cocurricular activities that prepare students for informed citizenship and workplace success.
2. The institution's processes and activities demonstrate inclusive and equitable treatment of diverse populations.
3. The institution fosters a climate of respect among all students, faculty, staff and administrators from a range of diverse backgrounds, ideas and perspectives.

Argument

1.C.1. The institution encourages curricular or cocurricular activities that prepare students for informed citizenship and workplace success.

Rock Valley College students have the opportunity to develop as informed citizens and be prepared for future workplace success through both curricular and co-curricular activities. Beginning during the first week of the semester, students are welcomed through events such as Welcome Week. This event sets the tone for engagement in college and helps students acclimate and connect with peers. Throughout the academic year, Student Life continues to offer diverse opportunities for involvement, such as during midterm and finals weeks, where stress-relief activities and support services are provided to help students manage academic pressures effectively. Wellness Wednesdays also contribute to information for students to become successful. Clubs and organizations, including academic clubs, such as Philosophy Club, and the clubs organized through the Campus Activities Board (CAB), foster a sense of belonging and encourage the development of leadership and teamwork. Phi Theta Kappa (PTK), the international honor society for two-year colleges, provides students with opportunities to develop leadership skills, engage in community service, and access scholarships and academic resources. The Student Government Association (SGA) offers students a platform to voice their opinions and influence campus policies, nurturing a sense of civic responsibility and democratic engagement. In Fall 2024, student leaders have been working with faculty and staff to encourage other students to vote in the November 2024 election.

Rock Valley College's athletic programs are competitive in nature and provide value beyond sport. Student-athletes learn to balance training schedules with academic responsibilities, instilling time management skills and a strong work ethic. In addition to athletics, student awards at Rock Valley College celebrate outstanding achievements in academics, leadership, and service. Internships and clinical experiences are an extension of the classroom and add curricular experiences that lead to successful professions. These opportunities allow students to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world settings, gain practical skills and professional insights. By working closely with industry professionals, students develop a deeper understanding of their fields, build professional networks, and enhance their employability upon graduation. Likewise,

student worker positions on campus provide similar skills. Student workers, like student athletes, learn to balance work responsibilities and academic commitments.

STU 103 is a course designed to equip students with strategies for academic and personal success. This course covers essential skills such as goal setting, time management, and effective study techniques which empower students to take control of their educational journeys and achieve their academic and career goals. Tech Connect is a series of workshops that equip students with essential technological skills that are crucial for student success.

Internships and clinical experiences are an extension of the classroom and add curricular experiences that lead to successful professions. Rock Valley College also has its own Dental Clinic to, not only provide a service to the community, but also give students valuable work experience. Additionally, our non-credit CNC-098 takes weekly field trips to explore local machine shops where students meet with potential employers and learn about a variety of career paths within manufacturing. Also, workplace skills are built into our CTE courses and programs. These opportunities allow students to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world settings, gain practical skills and professional insights. By working closely with industry professionals, students develop a deeper understanding of their fields, build professional networks, and enhance their employability upon graduation.

Rock Valley College offers a variety of student worker positions in a range of career fields for students to gain experience, build connections, find mentors, and learn about workplace etiquette. During the 2023-2024 Academic Year, the Co-curricular Assessment Committee developed learning outcomes for student workers.

1.C.2. The institution's processes and activities demonstrate inclusive and equitable treatment of diverse populations.

The College demonstrates inclusive and equitable treatment of diverse populations through established equitable hiring practices; diversity, equity, and inclusion training for faculty and staff; offering credit and non-credit educational programming that is marketed to and for underserved populations; the validation and promotion of many diverse populated campus groups and committees for students, faculty, and staff. In 2024 RVC was designated as a Hispanic Serving Institution, which reflects the work the College does to enroll and retain Hispanic students.

The College encourages the hiring of diverse candidates through its recruitment and search processes in an effort to develop a faculty and staff that reflects the community served, including but not limited to diversity of thought, background, and experience; gender, gender identity, and sexual orientation; and race and ethnicity. As stated in the College's Equal Opportunity Statement, the College will, "provide equal opportunity in its admissions, employment and educational programs and activities consistent with federal and state law. Notification of the Equal Opportunity Statement and Americans with Disabilities Act are also found on the Employment Opportunities page of the College website and page 15 of the Employee Handbook. Search Committee training is required for all supervisors and others who will be part of the hiring process. This training includes a section on implicit bias.

1.C.3. The institution fosters a climate of respect among all students, faculty, staff and administrators from a range of diverse backgrounds, ideas and perspectives.

Rock Valley College is committed to fostering a climate of respect for all. In fall 2021, a campus climate survey was conducted to better understand the perceptions and experiences of faculty and staff. During the following semester, the results of the survey were shared campus-wide and opportunities to pose questions anonymously were provided. Rock Valley College's administration proposed to engage in surveying the climate every two years in efforts to both identify areas in need of improvement and provide opportunities for employees to offer feedback. The most recent employee climate survey (2023) revealed that as an institution we have made progressive steps in the areas of diversity. Although scores improved in all areas, communication from Cabinet was identified as an area still in need of improvement. As a result, Cabinet implemented three action steps. First, Board meetings are now streamed, recorded, and viewable on the Board of Trustees YouTube Channel. Second, monthly leadership updates are sent from the President and published to the College Intranet after each Regular Board Meeting. These updates include Board actions, Trustee comments, and leadership updates. Finally, Cabinet is rotating its weekly meeting among campus locations and including opportunities for employees to interact and ask questions.

Additionally, pursuant to Pillar IV: Strategic Goal One of RVC's Strategic Plan; a commitment to improving the campus culture by fostering a sense of belonging for all is an institutional priority. Sense of Belonging has been an intentional theme of professional development for two consecutive years. Furthermore, the College has implemented two efforts to assess and increase employee cultural competence toward a healthier and collaborative environment: the Intercultural Developmental Inventory (IDI) and the DiSC personality and behavioral assessment tool.

Gauging the diverse experiences and perceptions of students has been equally important. Centering the student voice in our practices has been evidenced in various ways from student panels during faculty development and implementing broad and narrowly focused climate surveys. For example, in 2022 the student experience was gauged by implementing the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) climate survey. In 2023, the Community College Survey of Engagement was administered. This past spring the View Finder climate survey, which focused on gauging students' sense of belonging, was administered.

Finally, the Eagle Awards of Excellence in DEI is an annual ceremony that highlights those who have contributed to the College's DEI effort. Beginning in the Spring semester, a campus wide process was opened where nominations are submitted in three categories: Outstanding Student, Staff/Faculty, and Community Partner. Our resident social justice committee, Promoting an Inclusive Community (PAIC), selects the recipient of the Peace and Justice award. This past spring marked the third year of the Eagle Awards of Excellence in DEI. Each year this ceremony grows and has become a great way the College celebrates the diversity of and within its internal and external communities.

Sources

There are no sources.

1.S - Criterion 1 - Summary

The institution's mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution's operations.

Summary

The College's mission statement, "Rock Valley College empowers students and community through lifelong learning," encompasses the broad educational opportunities outlined by the State's mission for community colleges. Through the supporting evidence provided, the College has demonstrated that its mission is clearly and publicly articulated and that it guides the institution's operations. The statements below summarize the College's strengths, challenges, and actions as a result of the comprehensive review with respect to Criterion 1.

Strengths

1. The College continues to have a well-published, clearly defined mission document that is consistent with the mission for community colleges as defined by the State.

2. The College mission document is operationalized and supported by additional public documents including, but not limited to the College Catalog; Student, Faculty, and Employee Handbooks; and strategic planning documents.

3. Credit and non-credit learning opportunities, as well as student support services, address and support the College's mission.

Challenges

1. While the mission was reviewed and revised through a Mission Review Committee in 2015 and the Board approved such revision in 2016, the College lacked a formal procedure for the regular review and affirmation of its mission.

2. The College has procedures and potential to develop a more diverse workforce. While recent data indicates that hiring and retention practices have increased the diversity of faculty and staff to better represent the community served, the College continues to seek additional improvement upon existing hiring and retention practices to realize additional representation of the community served.

3. While the College continues to offer learning opportunities addressing diverse learning needs, the scope of the mission of a community college in concomitance with the educational and training needs of the community challenge the resources of the College.

Actions as a result of the comprehensive review

- The College developed a process for review and affirmation of the mission.

Sources

There are no sources.

2 - Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

2.A - Core Component 2.A

The institution establishes and follows policies and processes to ensure fair and ethical behavior on the part of its governing board, administration, faculty and staff.

1. The institution develops and the governing board adopts the mission.
2. The institution operates with integrity in its financial, academic, human resources and auxiliary functions.

Argument

2.A.1. The institution develops and the governing board adopts the mission.

As noted in the previous sections addressing Criterion 1, the Rock Valley College mission has been developed and refined by the institution and regularly affirmed by the governing board during its annual reorganization meeting.

RVC being committed to the wholeness and coherence of its mission developed a collaborative committee of internal and external stakeholders to review the mission and related documents in 2014. In 2015, the Board of Trustees adopted the mission and related documents and has reaffirmed them annually in their reorganization meeting.   As noted in Criterion 1.A.1 of this document, a standard operating procedure was created for regular review and revision to ensure that this process remains current and transparent.

2.A.2. The institution operates with integrity in its financial, academic, human resources and auxiliary functions.

Guided by its core values, Rock Valley College is committed to ethical and responsible behavior across all sectors of the college in accordance with policies established by the Board of Trustees and in compliance with state laws. These policies are easily accessible to the community in the Board of Trustees' Policy Manual, a version of which is also published on the College website.

Financial Functions
Rock Valley College's finances reflect high standards of professionalism and integrity.   The policies are spelled out in Article 5 of the Board of Trustees' Policy Manual, which is published on the website. Some of the policies that have been revised or added since the last comprehensive review include the following:

 Article 5: Finance

- [5.10.080 Investment](#)
- [5.10.120 Purchasing](#)
- [5.10.130 Travel Reimbursement](#)
- [5.10.140 Diverse Vendor Enterprise Use](#)
- [5.10:150 Bond Record Keeping Policy](#)
- [5.10.160 Operating Fund Balance](#)
- [5.10.170 Bond Disclosure Compliance](#)

Additionally, the [Annual Comprehensive Financial Report](#) is published on the college website and is available for public review and comment. Moreover, the financial statement is published in a local paper, in accordance with section 2.22.2 of the Illinois Public Community College Act.

RVC's financial policies and processes have led to responsible budgeting practices and, as a result, the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) has awarded Rock Valley College its Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting Award every year since 2007.

Academic Functions
The College establishes and follows fair and ethical academic policies and processes. These policies are contained in Article 4 of the Board of Trustees' Policy Manual. Several of the policies pertain to ethical behavior and transparency. Some of the policies that have been revised or added since the last comprehensive review include the following:

Article 4: Students

- [4.10.020 Prohibiting Sex-Based Misconduct](#)
- [4.10.260 Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion](#)
- [4.10.270 Service and Other Animals Policy](#)

These and other policies are explained to students in the [Student Handbook](#).

Human Resource Functions
The College establishes and follows ethical personnel policies and processes. These policies are contained in Article 3 of the Board of Trustees' Policy Manual. These policies enable all college employees to be aware of their rights and responsibilities. Some of the policies that have been revised or added since the last comprehensive review include the following:

Article 3: Human Resources

- [3.10.020 Prohibiting Sex-Based Misconduct](#)
- [3.10.030 Access to Personnel Files](#)
- [3.10.160 Remote Work Policy](#)
- [3.10.270 Service and Other Animals Policy](#)
- [3.30.090 Family and Medical Leave](#)

- [3.30.110 Victims' Economic Security and Safety Act (VESSA)](#)
- [3.30.150 Bereavement Leave](#)

Human Resources oversees training and professional development opportunities and works to ensure employees are in compliance with state requirements, such as ethical conduct, annual sexual harassment, and Clery Act training. Human Resources also implemented a new onboarding process for new employees during the Spring/Summer of 2022 that included a handbook and more information about accessing needed policies and procedures. Additionally, they instituted training for managers and others on campus. In October 2023, Human Resources launched the Golden Eagles Professional Development Academy; furthermore, all supervisors were required to complete a multi-part training series. In Spring 2024, Human Resources also mandated new training for all employees who plan to serve on search committees.

Since the last comprehensive review, the College completed a comprehensive job study to promote a more equitable, competitive pay structure and to promote employee retention. This process included multiple meetings for employee questions, and every employee received a letter that informed them of their pay grade in the new system and laid out the grade levels for position at Rock Valley College.

Auxiliary Functions
The College establishes and follows fair and ethical policies and processes for auxiliary functions. These policies are contained in Article 2 of the Board of Trustees' Policy Manual. Recently revised policies include:

- [2.10.100 Acceptance of Contributions Policy](#)
- [2.30.06 Cyber and Information Security Policy](#)

Also, as a result of an audit of RVC's use of data and technology, the IT department instituted multi-measure authentication for accessing data and scheduled a series of data governance meetings with a consultant of Ellucian to develop a plan for more efficient ERP data management.

Sources

- C2_BoTPolicy_2-10-100-Policy-Acceptance-of-Contributions
- C2_BoTPolicy_3-10-020-Policy-Prohibiting-Sex-Based-Misconduct
- C2_BoTPolicy_3-10-160-Policy-Remote-Work
- C2_BoTPolicy_3-10-270-Policy-Service-and-Other-Animals
- C2_BoTPolicy_3-30-090-Family-And-Medical-Act
- C2_BoTPolicy_3-30-110-Victims-Economic-Security-Safety-Act
- C2_BoTPolicy_3-30-150-Bereavement-Leave
- C2_BoTPolicy_4-10-020-Policy-Prohibiting-Sex-Based-Misconduct
- C2_BoTPolicy_4-10-260-Diversity-Equity-Inclusion

- C2_BoTPolicy_4-10-270-Service-Animal-Policy-Students
- C2_BoTPolicy_5-10-080-Investment
- C2_BoTPolicy_5-10-120-Purchasing
- C2_BoTPolicy_5-10-130-Travel-Reimbursement
- C2_BoTPolicy_5-10-140-Diverse-Vendor-Enterprise-Use
- C2_BoTPolicy_5-10-150-Bond-Record-Keeping-Policy
- C2_BoTPolicy_5-10-160-Operating-Fund-Balance
- C2_BoTPolicy_5-10-170-Bond-Disclosure-Compliance
- C2_BoTPolicy-RVC-Board-Policy-Manual
- C2_RVCWebsite_Financial Reports
- C2_RVCWebsite_PoliciesNProceduresManual
- C2-BoTPolicy_2-30-060-Policy-Cyber-And-Information-Security-Policy
- C2-BoTPolicy_3-10-030-Policy-Access-to-Personnel-Files

2.B - Core Component 2.B

The institution presents itself clearly and completely to its students and to the public.

1. The institution ensures the accuracy of any representations it makes regarding academic offerings, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, governance structure and accreditation relationships.
2. The institution ensures evidence is available to support any claims it makes regarding its contributions to the educational experience through research, community engagement, experiential learning, religious or spiritual purpose and economic development.

Argument

2.B.1. The institution ensures the accuracy of any representations it makes regarding academic offerings, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, governance structure and accreditation relationships.

Academic Offerings
Rock Valley College ensures the accuracy of its academic offerings by annually updating its Catalog which can be found on the RVC website, recently redesigned to improve the user experience for current and prospective students.   For example, Get Started steps are provided for the following types of students: current high school, new to college, returning student, transfer, international, and veteran. to provide clear pathways for each student group to have clear guidance on how to enter. The website also makes it easy to explore programs by area of study (e.g., Aviation Maintenance). There has been a concerted effort to include information, such as student testimonials that highlight programs from a student perspective.

The College recently introduced a new electronic version of the college catalog which allows for a more effective way to reflect changes to academic programs, and the academic programs are clearly identified on the website. The catalog, along with the Student Handbook that defines policies and procedures, as well as elaborates on resources available to students, are easily accessible from the "MyRVC" area of the college website.

Requirements
As a result of the web redesign, academic program requirements (e.g., Dental Hygiene) were included in the template for program pages to promote consistency. Certain programs, especially in healthcare fields, require prerequisites and testing prior to admission. These are detailed the college catalog and on the department website. Academic programs are requested to review these pages on a regular basis. The Student Handbook is updated annually providing enrollment requirements and ensuring their accuracy. Other requirements, such as testing and placement, are also available on the website and catalog.

Faculty and Staff
Faculty qualifications are included in the College Catalog. Department pages of the RVC website include contact information.

Cost to Students

Cost of attendance are predominately displayed on the Tuition and Fees page of the website which is updated annually. Additional information is available on program pages and in Self-Service when students are exploring and registering for courses (e.g., Nursing and Mechatronics).

The last assurance argument revealed that, while tuition and fees were published, it was difficult for students to locate the information. In the past year, Academic Affairs reviewed the course fees and restructured them. Furthermore, course costs were made more apparent in Self Service, the online portal that students can view the schedule, register for classes, and see their invoice. These actions were designed to improve the transparency of college policies and costs.

Governance Structure

The institution ensures accurate representation of its governance structure on the Board page of the RVC website which includes meeting agenda, minutes, and schedule. Board meetings are also streamed live via YouTube and recordings are available. Contact information for each Board member is also available as well. This web page includes a tool to allow for public comment.

Additionally, the Office of the President has a web page that provides contact information for him and the members of his Cabinet. This page also links to the College's Strategic Plan.

Accreditation

The institution accurately represents its accreditation status on the Accreditation & Recognition page of the RVC website. Links to program pages that contain program accreditation information can also be found on this page. This webpage also provides the Higher Learning Commission link to verify accreditation status.

2.B.2. The institution ensures evidence is available to support any claims it makes regarding its contributions to the educational experience through research, community engagement, experiential learning, religious or spiritual purpose and economic development.

With its vision statement, RVC claims that it "empowers the community to grow as a society of learners through well designed educational pathways, leading to further education, rewarding careers, cultural enrichment, and economic-technological development." RVC provides evidence that educational pathways lead to further education as part of its Transfer Rates KPI Report. The College recently created a new KPI Report to demonstrate that educational pathways also lead to rewarding careers.

RVC provides cultural enrichment to the community through Community and Continuing Education, the Center for Learning in Retirement, and Starlight Theatre.

RVC is a center for economic-technological development as evidenced by its response to industry needs when creating new programs. The College monitors these needs through the

annual [State of the College](#) and meetings with advisory committees. In addition, the College hosts a [Small Business Development Center](#) that helps entrepreneurs start and maintain successful businesses.

The College leadership has made great efforts to be transparent, town hall meetings and President Office Hours. Additionally, Board of Trustees minutes and meeting agendas are clearly posted on the college web page. Efforts to formalize standard operating procedures, as noted in 2.A, are ongoing.

Sources

- C2_CCE-Schedule
- C2_CLR-Schedule-Fall-2024
- C2_Self Service_MEC103
- C2_Self Service_NRS
- C2_Small Business Development Center
- C2_webpage_Accreditation and Recognition
- C2_webpage_Areas of Study
- C2_webpage_Aviation Maintenance
- C2_webpage_Board
- C2_webpage_Cabinet
- C2_webpage_Get Started Early College
- C2_webpage_Get Started International
- C2_webpage_Get Started New
- C2_webpage_Get Started Returning
- C2_webpage_Get Started Transfer
- C2_webpage_Get Started Veteran
- C2_webpage_My RVC
- C2_webpage_Program Requirements Dental Hygiene
- C2_webpage_Startlight Theatre
- C2_webpage_Tuition and Fees
- C4_InstitutionalEffectiveness_KPI-Transfer-Feb-2023
- C5_InstitutionalEffectiveness_StateOfTheCollege2022-2023

2.C - Core Component 2.C

The governing board of the institution is autonomous to make decisions in the best interest of the institution in compliance with board policies and to ensure the institution's integrity.

1. The governing board is trained and knowledgeable so that it makes informed decisions with respect to the institution's financial and academic policies and practices; the board meets its legal and fiduciary responsibilities.
2. The governing board's deliberations reflect priorities to preserve and enhance the institution.
3. The governing board reviews the reasonable and relevant interests of the institution's internal and external constituencies during its decision-making deliberations.
4. The governing board preserves its independence from undue influence on the part of donors, elected officials, ownership interests or other external parties.
5. The governing board delegates day-to-day management of the institution to the institution's administration and expects the institution's faculty to oversee academic matters.

Argument

2.C.1. The governing board is trained and knowledgeable so that it makes informed decisions with respect to the institution's financial and academic policies and practices; the board meets its legal and fiduciary responsibilities.

The Board of Trustees endeavors to operate in a spirit of transparency in accordance with the state of Illinois' Open Meetings Act. This practice is assisted by posting agendas and minutes on the College's website to allow the public to gain an understanding of the College's business. Additionally, the website includes a tool to allow the public to make comments on the College and its operations. Meetings include budget and expense information, which is useful in demonstrating the College operates in an open and fair manner. The Board's webpage includes a tool that allows the public to submit comments.   The Board is sensitive to complaints and concerns, and they make every attempt to ensure they are following the laws and regulations governing a public board. For example, when a complaint was filed regarding the conduct of a closed meeting, the College's attorney investigated the complaint and determined that the closed meeting was conducted properly, as noted under New Business in the Board of Trustees Committee of the Whole meeting minutes of June 13, 2023.

The Board's page of the College website confirms that each board member has completed the state-mandated leadership training, and they also participate in a yearly Board Retreat to learn more about their responsibilities. The Board of Trustees' information can be found on the College website.

The Board is a member of the Illinois Community Colleges Trustees Association and participates in training offered they offer.

2.C.2. The governing board's deliberations reflect priorities to preserve and enhance the institution.

As previously noted, the Board of Trustees is an elected governing body that holds a restructuring meeting each April. As part of this restructuring, officers of the Board are selected and a Board Liaison is appointed to one of three areas:

- Teaching, Learning & Communication
- Finance
- Operations

The Board conducts its business for the College in monthly public meetings, a Committee of the Whole meeting at the beginning of each month with a Regular Meeting a couple of weeks later toward the end of the month. At each of these meetings, the agenda contains a section for business in each of these three areas (e.g., Committee of the Whole Meeting Agenda, July 9, 2024 and Regular Meeting Agenda, July 23, 2024), reflecting the priorities of the Board to preserve and enhance the institution.

2.C.3. The governing board reviews the reasonable and relevant interests of the institution's internal and external constituencies during its decision-making deliberations.

The RVC Board of Trustees regularly reviews the interests of the College's stakeholders as it deliberates and makes decisions. As noted above, this is demonstrated in the structure of the Committee of the Whole and Regular meetings of the Board and provided to the community through agenda and minutes that are posted per the Illinois' Open Meetings Act, including on the Board Meeting Information page of the College website. Decisions made by the Board that demonstrate its consideration of internal and external constituencies in recent years include those described below.

The Board approved a new Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion policy to guide campus DEI practices. Consequently, the allowed the administration to hire a Vice President of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, who then was able to hire DEI specialists.

The Board has been responsive to employee needs, such as continuing summer FLEX days, granting the return to time off between Christmas and New Year's Day, approving new campus holiday to celebrate Juneteenth, expanding the Bereavement Leave Policy to more widely define immediate family and household, and supporting a Work from Home policy.

The Board also make decisions that address the needs of Rock Valley College's service area. For example, the Advanced Technology Center (ATC) was created to address the high-tech training needs of the industrial sector, a key economic cornerstone of the Rock River Valley. While the decision was made in public, the selection of the Belvidere location for the Advanced Technology Center (ATC) caused controversy and caused tension with some Rockford political leaders.
The Board, committed to an expanded downtown presence in Rockford, purchased land that will house several career and technical education programs.

2.C.4. The governing board preserves its independence from undue influence on the part of donors, elected officials, ownership interests or other external parties.

The [Board of Trustees' Bylaws](#) include explicit statements with regard to ethical conduct. The Bylaws note, "The Board of Trustees will conduct themselves in accordance with the State Officials and Employees Ethics Act (Public Act 93-615, effective November 19, 2003, as amended by Public Act 93-617, effective December 9, 2003), which is a comprehensive revision of State statutes regulating ethical conduct, political activities and the solicitation and acceptance of gifts by State officials and employees." Additionally, in 2019, the Board updated the Conflict of Interest policy.   This includes a requirement to disclose any interests that could jeopardize impartial decisions with regard to business and real estate transactions. Each Trustee must provide a copy of the State of Economic Interest, a document required by Winnebago County, to RVC's Human Resource Office no later than July 1st each year.

2.C.5. The governing board delegates day-to-day management of the institution to the institution's administration and expects the institution's faculty to oversee academic matters.

As noted in the [Board of Trustees Bylaws](#), "As the governing body of Community College District No. 511, the Board of Trustees is responsible for the development and adoption of Board policies and for making decisions related thereto. The Board's authority in this area is final, subject to applicable statutory and regulatory limitations. The President is responsible for developing appropriate administrative procedures to effectuate Board policies." Therefore, the Board delegates day-to-day operations to the President and Chief Executive Officer and their designees.

The leadership team of the College advises the President and implements policies by developing administrative procedures. The President's leadership team—the Cabinet--includes the following:

- Vice President of Liberal Arts & Adult Education/Chief Academic Officer
- Vice President of Student Affairs
- Vice President of Operations/chief Operations Officer
- Vice President of Finance/Chief Financial Officer
- Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness & Communications
- Vice President of Human Resources/Chief Human Resources Officer
- Vice President of Diversity Equity and Inclusion/Chief Diversity Officer
- Vice President of Industry Partnerships & Community Engagement
- Assistants to the President

Academic matters are guided by procedures created by Academic Affairs and the academic divisions in concert with faculty. Procedures related to students are developed by Student Affairs with the support of Academic Affairs and the faculty.

Sources

- C2_BoTMeeting_2024-07-09-COTW-Agenda
- C2_BoTMeeting_2024-07-23-Regular-Agenda
- C2_BoTPolicies_Trustees-Bylaws

2.D - Core Component 2.D

The institution is committed to academic freedom and freedom of expression in the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning.

Argument

Academic Freedom is a cardinal principle in American higher education and, as such, it is explicitly stated in the 2021-2026 Faculty Collective Bargaining Agreement in Article V, Section 5.1. Furthermore, Section 5.4 addresses intellectual property, defines institutional materials and instructional materials, and differentiates between what is college-owned and faculty-owned.   Faculty members own "instructional materials" which they create; these materials can take many forms, including written work, video or audio media, or artistic creations. Faculty members can sell, lease, assign, or transfer ownership rights to instructional materials, as long as they notify the college in advance. Section 5.4.2.3 of the document goes on to say that an Intellectual Property Committee, consisting of both faculty and administrators, can arbitrate issues when there are jointly owned materials.

The freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in learning is also an important part of the student experience. The Student Government Association exists to represent the students, to be their voice to the college administration, and they include in their bylaws language that indicates that one of their cornerstone purposes is to "advocate for the rights, freedoms, and responsibilities of all students…."

Freedom of expression is represented in many ways, including:

- The First Tuesday lecture series, that showcases faculty expertise and research. Recent topics include "The Politicization of History" (2022), "Calling 'BS': How to Fight the Misinformation War" (2022), "Mamas, Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up to be Cowboys: A History of American Country Music as a Reflection of American Cultural Trends" (2023), and "Is an Electric Vehicle a Good Fit for Me?" (2024). These lectures are open to the public and are also livestreamed via Zoom. Most are then made available on RVC's YouTube Channel for later viewing.
- A variety of other lectures, such as the David M. Caskey Memorial Lectures, a lecture series that features prominent outside speakers on a variety of subjects (e.g., critical race theory and illegal immigration) and the Visiting Writer Series.
- Student organizations regularly exhibit their research or sponsor speakers that promote understanding of many topics (e.g. the Honors in Action showcased organized by the Omicron Eta Chapter of Phi Theta Kappa and the international Showcase organized by the Multi-Cultural Club).
- Various art shows, concerts, and film screening, including films created by students in our mass communications program
- The student newspaper, The Valley Forge, allows for a variety of news stories and viewpoints in editorials; and Voices, a creative writing publication, that showcases prose, poetry, and sometimes art from members of the RVC community.

Sources

- C2_RVCWebsite_Student Government Association
- C3_AcademicAffairs_Faculty-CBA-FullyExecuted
- C3_AcademicAffairs_Faculty-CBA-FullyExecuted (page number 14)

2.E - Core Component 2.E

The institution's policies and procedures call for responsible acquisition, discovery and application of knowledge by its faculty, staff and students.

1. Institutions supporting basic and applied research maintain professional standards and provide oversight ensuring regulatory compliance, ethical behavior and fiscal accountability.
2. The institution provides effective support services to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice conducted by its faculty, staff and students.
3. The institution provides students guidance in the ethics of research and use of information resources.
4. The institution enforces policies on academic honesty and integrity.

Argument

2.E.1. Institutions supporting basic and applied research maintain professional standards and provide oversight ensuring regulatory compliance, ethical behavior and fiscal accountability.

Board of Trustees Policy 2.30.010 Conducting Institutional Research outlines that expectation, "...that research conducted at, for, or through the College properly protects the rights of research participants and safeguards the College."   Institutional Research and Effectiveness provides oversight for this policy at RVC.

The College established an Institutional Review Board (IRB) to develop and ensure implementation of procedures for the review of research, especially that involving the use of human subjects. The IRB consists of the Vice President of Institutional Research; the Vice President of Student Affairs; faculty members from both science and non-science disciplines; and a community member unaffiliated with the College. Rock Valley College's IRB procedures and resources are found on the Institutional Research and Effectiveness page of the College website. The IRB resources include clear guidelines for research involving the use of human subjects, a checklist for review of research requests, a research request form, and an informed consent template.

2.E.2. The institution provides effective support services to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice conducted by its faculty, staff and students.

As noted above, the College has established an IRB to oversee and support research efforts. The tools provided on the webpage can be used to support the research process.   Additionally, Institutional Research and Effectiveness staff support faculty, staff, and students with research from the conception and design stage through the stages of implementation. They can also provide assistance with data collection and provide Data Request link on the Institutional Research and Effectiveness page that allows individuals to request College data.

2.E.3. The institution provides students guidance in the ethics of research and use of information resources.

Rock Valley College provides students with guidance on the ethics of research and use of information and use of information in a variety of ways. English Composition instructors provide comprehensive training to students in their classes, and they have created resources regarding academic honesty that have been shared across campus, including with instructors of the STU100, many of whom elect to use it as part of their academic success module. Instructors in the sciences and social sciences also provide guidance in ethical research. Furthermore, the library staff regularly offer training and provide research guides, and the First Year Experience Office and the Writing Center have offered success workshops about academic integrity and avoiding plagiarism.

2.E.4. The institution enforces policies on academic honesty and integrity.

Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values in higher education, and, as a result, Rock Valley College treats those issues accordingly. Expectations are laid out clearly in the College Catalog (p. 45) and the Student Handbook (pp. 49-50). All instructor course syllabi also must include the academic honesty statement.

Students who commit any of the forms of academic dishonesty are subject to the penalties and sanctions agreed upon by the faculty and administration. Detailed procedures are outlined in the Student Handbook. Additionally, faculty report the incident and the penalty assessed to the Dean of Students Office, which uses a student complaint management system called Maxient. When this process happens, the Dean of Students Office can monitor the number of incidents across campus and for individual students. If a student is a repeat offender, the Dean of Students meets with the student to discuss the severity of the offense.

However, not all faculty members are documenting all academic dishonesty issues as some deal with the situation informally and others may consider the infraction minor. As such, some incidents are not getting reported to the Dean of Students Office in Maxient. The inconsistency will be addressed through information and professional development opportunities for all full- and part-time faculty so that the College can have a better understanding of the overall level of academic misconduct, as well as the types of issues that could be more formally address through information and learning opportunities for all students. .

Additionally, the pandemic increased the number of online classes, which has created a general sense that academic honesty may be more of a problem, especially in that learning environment. An ad hoc committee consisting of the Executive Director of Instructional Design, Teaching, and Innovation, the Dean of Students, and faculty who teach online courses has begun crafting an academic integrity policy specific to online classes. Additionally, the College purchased Honorlock for remote test proctoring needs. Students sign into their course through the College's learning management system using their unique username and password. While taking a proctored exam, Honorlock records a student's screen and webcam via Chrome. Students are required to verify their identity by taking a photo of themselves and showing their student ID. Once the proctored exam has ended, Honorlock's access to the student's screen and webcam

ends. A special space and computer have also been made available in the College's library to accommodate students who do not want to grant access to their own computer or do not have the technology or home space to support using Honorlock.   Faculty have been offered training on Honorlock at professional development day in both the fall and spring semesters.

Sources

- C2_Library_LibGuides at Rock Valley College
- C2_RVCWebsite_First Year Experience
- C2_RVCWebsite_Institutional Research Effectiveness
- C2_RVCWebsite_Institutional Research Effectiveness_DataRequest

2.S - Criterion 2 - Summary

The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

Summary

Through the evidence provided, RVC has demonstrated that it is an institution that acts with integrity and that its conduct is ethical and responsible. The statements below summarize the College's strengths, challenges, and actions as a result of its comprehensive review of Criterion 2.

Strengths

1. Rock Valley College does a good job of promoting academic integrity. While there is work to be done, the college has responded admirably to the large increase in online classes and challenges posed by artificial intelligence by purchasing software to help protect academic integrity.
2. The College continues to provide strong oversight to guarantee ethical conduct of research via our Institutional Research Office.
3. The College has demonstrated a commitment to greater transparency by supporting an overhaul of both the college's webpage and the intranet used by employees.

Challenges

1. While the college has worked to make various policies and procedures more transparent, it is sometimes difficult to find the information and it can be challenging to tell which policy is the most current.
2. While tuition and fees are listed on the website, it can be difficult to determine the actual cost of a class because fees can vary.
3. While leadership is working on improvements to communication and transparency in decision making, there is still work to do.

Actions as a result of this comprehensive review

- Work to standardize procedures and find a way to centralize them in the Intranet. This is in progress.
- Develop a cost calculator that will allow students and others to determine the exact cost of a class before registering for it.

Sources

There are no sources.

3 - Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources and Support

The institution provides quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.

3.A - Core Component 3.A

The rigor of the institution's academic offerings is appropriate to higher education.

1. Courses and programs are current and require levels of student performance appropriate to the credential awarded.
2. The institution articulates and differentiates learning goals for its undergraduate, graduate, post-baccalaureate, post-graduate and certificate programs.
3. The institution's program quality and learning goals are consistent across all modes of delivery and all locations (on the main campus, at additional locations, by distance delivery, as dual credit, through contractual or consortial arrangements, or any other modality).

Argument

3.A.1. Courses and programs are current and require levels of student performance appropriate to the credential awarded.

The second goal of the College's Academic plan is to develop programs and pathways that respond to community needs. The College serves this goal through the scope and currency of both its general education programming as well as its Career and Technical Education (CTE).

Scope

The College offers over 27 degree programs and over 51 course disciplines that can lead to transfer degrees and/or certificate and apprenticeship programs that provide specialized training. The curriculum development and revision process is ongoing at RVC and is managed within Academic Affairs with decision-making conducted through the faculty-led Curriculum Committee. Changes to the scope of courses and programs since the last comprehensive review include the following:

To better support community needs, the College launched in the Fall of 2022 a [fully online Associate of Arts (AA)](). The online AA is a two-year accelerated sequence of courses which allows students maximum flexibility while maintaining the academic integrity of the program and leading to transfer opportunities. This degree is designed so that courses last between 4 and 8 weeks with students enrolled in two courses at a time.

Additionally, the new General Education Core Curriculum (GECC) Credential was launched in Fall of 2022. Aligned to the Associate of Arts, the GECC is a 37 credit hour transfer credential intended for students interested in completing a distribution of courses designed to satisfy the first two years of a baccalaureate degree at most four-year colleges or universities.

The College has also added certificates such as those in mechatronics, supply chain management, medical assistant, multimedia journalism, and cyber security, as well as courses in electric vehicle repair, to broaden offerings in response to community needs.

Currency

RVC course and program/discipline offerings remain current through regular program review, consistent with Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) guidelines, and curricular assessment. These continuous improvement processes are discussed in greater detail in Criterion 4.

Courses within transfer degree programs are aligned, as appropriate, through the Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI), which is a statewide transfer agreement. Faculty panels, which have expertise in the major field of study review and approve these courses, establishing an appropriate level of performance for students.

Courses within CTE degree and certificate programs are responsive to changes in both industry standards and industry need. The College utilizes advisory committees and program accreditation to consider industry changes. Each RVC CTE program has an advisory committee which consists of faculty and community members in related industries and educational institutions with a common purpose (e.g., high school counselors or other higher education faculty and staff). For example, in addition to department faculty, the advisory board for Nursing regularly includes members from the following: K-12 educational systems (e.g., Rockford Public School District 205 Health Science Academy), employers (e.g., Mercy Health Hospital, Swedish American Hospital, OSF Hospital), Higher Education (e.g., Indiana Wesleyan University (IWU), Northern Illinois University (NIU), Olivet-Nazarene University (ONU), St. Anthony College of Nursing (SACN), University of IL-Chicago (UIC)), students (e.g., one current student from each semester); three graduates of the College's program and other RVC Employees (e.g., Early College representative, Division Advisor, and Perkins Team representative).

RVC also changes its programming in response to changing industry standards. For example, Respiratory Care has recently revised the scope and sequence of its curriculum based on feedback from the American Association for Respiratory Care. Similarly, the Early Childhood Education program has undergone changes in scope and sequence due to changes in requirements by the State of Illinois. The program is now seeking accreditation through the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) which has guided additional efforts to ensure that the program is current with industry standards.

Appropriate Levels of Performance

The College graduation requirements for degrees and certificates are posted on the website and in the College Catalog. Students pursuing a degree or certificate must fulfill all requirements. In the College's transfer degree programs, the Associate of Arts and Associate in Science both require at least 64 credit hours, while the Associate in Engineering Science requires a minimum of 65 credit hours and the General Education Core Curriculum certificate requires at least 37 credit hours. The Associates in Applied Science Degrees require a minimum of 64 credit hours. CTE certificate credit hour requirements vary, but many are at least 16 credits so that students can use Federal Financial Aid. Planning guides for each degree and certificate are available to students through Academic Advising.

Additionally, industry standard exams identify appropriate levels of performance for many of the College's CTE programs. Automotive Service Technology, Aviation Maintenance Technology, Dental Hygiene, Certified Nursing Assistant, Nursing, Phlebotomy Technician, and Respiratory Care are examples of programs connected to industry exams.

3.A.2. The institution articulates and differentiates learning goals for its undergraduate, graduate, post-baccalaureate, post-graduate and certificate programs.

RVC is an institution that articulates institutional student learning outcomes (ISLO) that provide the framework for all curricular and co-curricular student learning. Furthermore, each Career and Technical Education (CTE) program and Liberal Arts and Science (LAS) discipline has student learning objectives and course-level student learning objectives for each of their courses. Alignment between these three levels of outcomes is being mapped and transferred to Planning & Self-Study, which the College uses to document continuous improvement processes including assessment for student learning. They are also published on Master Course Syllabi and Instructor Syllabi; new templates for the Master Course Syllabus and Instructor Syllabus were implemented in the 2023-2024 academic year to support this process.

Institutional Outcomes
As a part of this comprehensive review, it was determined that the ISLO should be formally reviewed to determine if they continued to reflect the College's priorities in defining student learning outcomes for all students pursuing educational opportunities at RVC. To this end, during the 2022-2023 academic year, the ISLO of Analytic Reasoning, Communication, Global Awareness and Responsibility, and Personal Responsibility were reviewed in a series of virtual roundtable discussions. Employees from around the college (e.g., faculty, administration, professional staff, and senior leadership) were invited to participate, and those attending ultimately decided to revise the ISLO.

Through additional virtual roundtable discussions, participants decided upon and recommended three new ISLO that were shared out to the College, ultimately adopted, and implemented in the Fall of 2023. The new ISLO are Communication, Flexible Thinking, and Cultural Competency. These three ISLO are further operationalized through AAC&U VALUE Rubrics as illustrated in the table below. The rubrics inform curriculum mapping to the ISLO, which in turn will be used to inform ISLO assessment (See Section 4.B of this document for further information of this process).

Communication	Flexible Thinking	Cultural Competency
Students will exchange ideas effectively in different settings and modalities.	Students will expand their mindset by using experience, reason, problem solving, ingenuity, and research and data.	Students will develop an awareness of their own cultural values and how they differ from the cultural beliefs and values of others in a variety of contexts both local and global.
At RVC, Communication includes: 1.1 Written Communication 1.2 Oral Communication 1.3 Information Literacy 1.4 Quantitative Literacy 1.5 Teamwork	At RVC, Flexible Thinking includes: 2.1 Critical Thinking 2.2 Creative Thinking 2.3 Ethical Reasoning 2.4 Inquiry and Analysis 2.5 Problem Solving 2.6 Integrative and Applied Learning	At RVC, Cultural Competency includes: 3.1 Global Learning 3.2 Intercultural Knowledge and Competence 3.3 Civic Engagement

Program/Discipline Objectives

Each CTE program and LAS discipline has faculty-developed learning objectives that map to the subcomponents of the ISLO. Mapping to the newly adopted ISLOs occurred during the 2023-2024 academic year. Each of the courses within the program/discipline align to the program/discipline objectives. All objectives are expected to meet criteria as outlined by a checklist created and maintained by the assessment committees. These criteria are (1) student-centered (clear to/focused on students), (2) measurable/observable (action-oriented), and (3) simple (measure one element at a time). For example, Philosophy's outcomes are aligned to the new ISLO in the table below.

Philosophy Discipline Outcomes	ISLO Alignment
PO1: Students will analyze components of different philosophical frameworks	1.3 Information Literacy 2.1 Critical Thinking
PO2: Students will evaluate differences between philosophical frameworks.	1.3 Information Literacy 2.1 Critical Thinking 2.4 Inquiry and Analysis 2.5 Problem Solving

	2.6 Integrative and Applied Learning
PO3: Students will create well-reasoned, fact-based arguments.	1.1 Written Communication 1.3 Information Literacy 2.1 Critical Thinking 2.2 Creative Thinking 2.4 Inquiry and Analysis 2.5 Problem Solving 2.6 Integrative and Applied Learning

Programs which offer a degree and/or certificates have program-level objectives for the degree and for each certificate. In many programs, the degree and certificate objectives overlap to ensure that certificates can be stackable. Additionally, each program and discipline have developed a spreadsheet that is used to map their curriculum and inform their multi-year assessment plan. The curriculum mapping in this spreadsheet shows the alignment while also distinguishing the knowledge and skill level (Introduce (I), Reinforce (R), or Mastery (M)) expected to be developed for each program/discipline objective. Examples of these documents for Respiratory Care and Mathematics are provided below.

Respiratory Care Curriculum Map	Outcome 1: Students will apply multiple diagnostic methods to assess patients.	Outcome 2: Students will communicate effectively with patients and other health care providers.	Outcome 3: Students will integrate didactic and clinical knowledge to treat patients.	Outcome 4: Students will collaborate with patients and other health care professionals to formulate a comprehensive, patient-centered respiratory care plan.	Outcome 5: Students will modify patient treatment.
Course(s)					
RSP-111	I	I			
RSP-112	I	i		i	
RSP-113	I		i		
RSP-114	R	R	R	R	R

RSP-121	I	I	I	I	I
RSP-122	I	R	R	R	I
RSP-123			R		R
RSP-131	I	I			
RSP-132	R	R	I	I	I
RSP-221			R	R	R
RSP-222			R	R	
RSP-223	I	R	R	R	R
RSP-224	R				
RSP-225	M	M	M	M	M
RSP-231	R	R	R	R	R
RSP-232	M	M	M	M	M
RSP-240	M	M	M	M	M

Mathematics Curriculum Map	Mathematics Outcome 1: Students will be able to perform skills and procedures accurately using correct notation.	Mathematics Outcome 2: Students will be able to solve application problems in other disciplines using mathematical reasoning or procedures.	Mathematics Outcome 4: Students will be able to use appropriate forms of technology to enhance mathematical understanding or to solve problems.	Mathematics Outcome 3: Students will be able to communicate mathematical thinking coherently using appropriate language and vocabulary.
Course(s)				

MTH 115	I		R	
MTH 120	I		R	
MTH 125	R		M	
MTH 132	M		I	
MTH 135		I		R
MTH 235		R		M
MTH 236		M		I
MTH 211	R		M	
MTH 216		I		R
MTH 217		R		M
MTH 220	M		I	
MTH 240		M		I

Course Objectives

Every course has learning objectives that must align to at least one of the program/discipline objectives and at least one ISLO. Course-level objectives must also adhere to the same criteria standards of student-centeredness, measurability, and simplicity. The table below provides the alignment of PHL 150: Introduction to Philosophy's course objectives to the Philosophy Discipline Outcomes and ISLO. This information is now required to be included on each Master Course Syllabus and Instructor Syllabus.

Course Outcome	Alignment to ISLO	Alignment to PO
CO1: Students will recognize a variety of theories in response to fundamental philosophical questions		

1.3 Information Literacy 2.1 Critical Thinking	PO1: Students will analyze components of different philosophical frameworks

CO2: Students will recognize philosophical arguments.
1.3 Information Literacy
2.1 Critical Thinking
PO1: Students will analyze components of different philosophical frameworks
CO3: Students will apply analytical skills in order to evaluate philosophical arguments.
1.3 Information Literacy
2.1 Critical Thinking
2.4 Inquiry and Analysis
2.5 Problem Solving
2.6 Integrative and Applied Learning
PO1: Students will analyze components of different philosophical frameworks

PO2: Students will evaluate differences between philosophical frameworks.
CO4: Students will create quality arguments of their own as a response to selected philosophical questions
1.1 Written Communication
1.3 Information Literacy
2.1 Critical Thinking
2.2 Creative Thinking
2.4 Inquiry and Analysis
2.5 Problem Solving
2.6 Integrative and Applied Learning
PO3: Students will create well-reasoned, fact-based arguments.

3.A.3. The institution's program quality and learning goals are consistent across all modes of delivery and all locations (on the main campus, at additional locations, by distance delivery, as dual credit, through contractual or consortial arrangements, or any other modality).

RVC ensures that its program quality and learning goals are consistent across all modes of delivery and locations through its curriculum processes that are operationalized on a day-to-day basis through Master Course Syllabi and expectations for their use and implementation as guided by the Instructor Course Syllabus template.

The College offers courses in the following modalities: face-to-face, hybrid, and online. Face-to-face courses are taught at the following RVC locations: Main Campus, Advanced Technology Center (ATC), Aviation Career Education Center (ACEC), Samuelson Career Education Center (SCEC), and RVC-Downtown (RVCD).   Additionally, RVC offers Early College options with local school districts in its service region. Details about dual credit are provided in 4.A.4.

To ensure consistency, RVC requires the use Master Course Syllabi for each course offered regardless of where or how the course is delivered. Included in these syllabi are the course

number, course title, course description, number of credit hours, course objectives, and course topic outline. Additionally, RVC requires course instructors to use the Instructor Syllabus template. Instructors are provided these documents for the courses they are assigned to teach. Copies of instructor syllabi for all faculty, adjuncts and dual-credit instructors are required to be submitted to the appropriate division office at the beginning of each semester. Instructor Course Syllabi are reviewed for consistency with the Master Course Syllabi and the guidelines of the Instructor Course Syllabus template.

Instructors are not allowed to change the Master Course Syllabus on their own, but they are encouraged to propose, and develop as appropriate, changes needed to their Academic Chair, Dean, and ultimately the Curriculum Committee. All course-level changes must go through this faculty-governed committee. The Curriculum Committee uses Watermark's Curriculum Management to support its efforts. This committee affirms and approves new courses, course revisions, course withdrawal, new programs, program revisions, and program withdrawal.

To further ensure and maintain quality across the various modalities, RVC provides a course template in Canvas, the College's LMS. This course template is based on Quality Matters Certification standards and principles of Universal Design for Learning. While not currently a requirement, by providing this template and encouraging faculty, adjuncts, and appropriate dual-credit instructors to use it, the College can promote consistency in the content, structure, and organization of course materials. Such consistency facilitates student learning. RVC is committed to expanding the use of Quality Matters as a model of course development and has recently moved from an internal review process to submitting courses to Quality Matters for formal review and consideration for certification. This has led to two courses receiving Quality Matters Certification – ECE 100: Introduction to Early Childhood Education and ECE 202: Family Community Relationships – and a third course – SPN 102: Continuation of Beginning Spanish – currently under review for certification. Additional courses are going through this process with the intent to expand courses within and across programs that obtain and maintain this designation of quality.

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3.B - Core Component 3.B

The institution offers programs that engage students in collecting, analyzing and communicating information; in mastering modes of intellectual inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments.

1. The general education program is appropriate to the mission, educational offerings and degree levels of the institution. The institution articulates the purposes, content and intended learning outcomes of its undergraduate general education requirements.
2. The program of general education is grounded in a philosophy or framework developed by the institution or adopted from an established framework. It imparts broad knowledge and intellectual concepts to students and develops skills and attitudes that the institution believes every college-educated person should possess.
3. The education offered by the institution recognizes the human and cultural diversity and provides students with growth opportunities and lifelong skills to live and work in a multicultural world.
4. The faculty and students contribute to scholarship, creative work and the discovery of knowledge to the extent appropriate to their offerings and the institution's mission.

Argument

3.B.1. The general education program is appropriate to the mission, educational offerings and degree levels of the institution. The institution articulates the purposes, content and intended learning outcomes of its undergraduate general education requirements.

The College ensures that the general education program is a foundational component of the undergraduate experience, designed to equip students with broad knowledge, intellectual skills and a deeper understanding of diverse cultural perspectives. To this end, the General Education Statement of Philosophy, found in the College Catalog guides the College's approach.

The General Education Program at Rock Valley College is designed to develop the knowledge, skills, and habits reflected in the lives of educated persons and basic to all professions so that RVC students are capable of leading rewarding and responsible lives as productive, global citizens. The General Education Program offers varied opportunities for students "to develop the breadth of knowledge and the expressive skills essential to more complex and in-depth learning throughout life" (adapted from the Illinois Articulation Initiative, 2000).

Aligned with the institutional mission to empower students and the community through lifelong learning, the Colleges general education program prepares students for successful transfer and competitive employment. The General Education Core Curriculum is clearly stated in the College Catalog, which also includes lists of courses that satisfy the general education requirements for each degree (e.g., Associate of Arts Degree and Associate in Science Degree).

The College articulates the purpose and intended outcomes of the general education program through the course catalog, course-level syllabi, curricular and cocurricular assessment

committees, the college website and through visually displaying the [Institutional Student Learning Outcomes](#) (ISLO's) prominently throughout campus.

3.B.2. The program of general education is grounded in a philosophy or framework developed by the institution or adopted from an established framework. It imparts broad knowledge and intellectual concepts to students and develops skills and attitudes that the institution believes every college-educated person should possess.

The College's Institutional Student Learning Outcomes (ISLO) provide a framework for all courses, but especially the general education curriculum. As discussed in further detail in section 3.A.2 of the assurance argument, the College's ISLO have been revised and adopted starting in the 2023-2024 academic year. The ISLO provide a framework that outlines areas for expected development of all of the College's students.

- ISLO1: Communication - Students will exchange ideas effectively in different settings and modalities.
- ISLO 2: Flexible Thinking - Students will expand their mindset by using experience, reason, problem solving, ingenuity, and research and data.
- ISLO 3: Cultural Competence - Students will develop an awareness of their own cultural values and how they differ from the cultural beliefs and values of others in a variety of contexts both local and global.

As discussed in detail in section 3.A.2, every credit course has course objectives aligned to these three ISLO, which is included on all [master course syllabi](#) and each [instructor syllabi](#). In doing so, the connection between the classroom, course learning expectations, and the ISLO framework is made clear to all students.

Students completing *STU 100: Planning for Success*, which includes all undecided and transfer program students, complete an assignment that requires them to reflect on the ISLO and how they will master them through coursework at the College. The [College Catalog](#) and [Student Handbook](#) provide information on the ISLO, and posters identifying them are visible throughout College locations and classrooms.

In addition to the framework provided by the ISLO, the College also participates in a statewide articulation effort, the [Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI)](#). Through IAI, a [General Education Core Curriculum (GECC)](#) is identified. The GECC provides a list of general education requirements that are accepted for transfer by all participating colleges and universities. These general education requirements include communications (9 credits), humanities and fine arts (9 credits), mathematics (3-5 credits), Physical Sciences and Life Sciences (9 credits), and Social and Behavioral Sciences (9 credits).

The courses that have been articulated and approved by the IAI governing panels to meet the above requirements are listed in the [College Catalog](#) and on the [GECC page of the College website](#). They are also identified in self-service as students register, and IAI codes are provided on the master course and instructor syllabi for each course.

3.B.3. The education offered by the institution recognizes the human and cultural diversity and provides students with growth opportunities and lifelong skills to live and work in a multicultural world.

Human and cultural diversity is specifically addressed as Institutional Student Learning Outcome (ISLO) 3: Cultural Competency, which states "students will develop an awareness of their own cultural values and how they differ from the cultural beliefs and values of others in a variety of contexts both local and global."

Transfer-seeking students are required to complete general education courses that further provide foundational opportunities for students to develop knowledge, understanding, and skill to better prepare them for living and working in a diverse world. The listings of education core courses are outlined by degree in the College Catalog and illustrate the variety of curricular opportunities for exploring and understanding the human and cultural diversity of the world. Several of these courses expose students to diverse experiences and perspectives while also fulfilling the Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI) requirements as a non-western culture course, including but not limited to the following:

- Introduction to Cultural Anthropology (ANP 103)
- Introduction to Non-western Visual Art (ART 141)
- African History Survey to 1600 (HST 151)
- History of Eastern Civilization to 1500 (HST 182)
- Introduction to Non-western Humanities (HUM 125)
- Introduction to Non-western Literature (LIT 154)
- Introduction to Non-western Music (MUS 106)
- Introduction to Non-western Philosophy (PHL 151)
- World Religions (PHL 155)
- Non-western Culture (SOC 295)

Many of the Career and Technical programs include practica or internships to prepare students for employment in a diverse work environment. For example, one of the program learning outcomes for the Nursing program is, "Students will incorporate cultural variance to provide client-centered care." Additionally, the Engineering and Manufacturing program has two program learning outcomes dedicated to professional skills in a diverse setting. They are as follows:

- Program Outcome 3: Students will demonstrate effective communication with a range of audiences.
- Program Outcome 4: Students will recognize ethical and professional responsibilities in engineering situations and make informed judgments, which must consider the impact of engineering solutions in global, economic, environmental, and societal contexts.

In addition to the College's curricular commitment to diversity, RVC has developed co-curricular educational opportunities to inform students. With the recent formation of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) office, RVC has held numerous events for students and the community. This includes, but is not limited to the following:

- Community forums on poverty, housing justice, and women in technology and manufacturing.
- Symposiums on neurodiversity, sense of belonging, African American student success, and the racial wealth gap.
- Events for identity history months such as Hispanic Heritage Month, Black History Month, Women's History Month and LGBTQA+ History Month.

3.B.4. The faculty and students contribute to scholarship, creative work and the discovery of knowledge to the extent appropriate to their offerings and the institution's mission.

The College's faculty members contribute to scholarship and creative work in a variety of ways:

- First Tuesday lectures are faculty lectures open to the community held monthly during the academic year; topics presented are culturally and historically relevant or timely.
- The faculty organize and support the David Caskey Memorial Lecture series, an annual lecture bringing a top scholar to present to the community.
- Many faculty have presented at national conferences, (e.g., Dr. Robert D'Alonzo, International James Joyce Symposium in Belgium and Dr. Danielle Hardesty, AAC&U Conference on Global Learning).
- Many faculty also publish journal articles and books, (e.g., Dr. Bob Betts, Journal of African American Studies, September 2020 and Dr. Sarah Etlinger, several books of poetry).

Students also have several opportunities to contribute to scholarship and creative works at the College, including the following:

- Capstone projects in Accounting, Engineering and Technology, Entrepreneurship, and Mechatronics
- Publication of the creative literary magazine, *Voices*
- Writing and publication of the College's student newspaper, *The Valley Forge*
- Participating in the production of musicals and plays through Starlight Theatre
- Traveling to national conferences such as the College Media Advisors or the Associated Writing Programs
- Choral and instrumental performing arts performances
- Serving in student organizations such as Student Government or Phi Theta Kappa

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3.C - Core Component 3.C

The institution has the faculty and staff needed for effective, high-quality programs and student services.

1. The institution strives to ensure that the overall composition of its faculty and staff reflects human diversity as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.
2. The institution has sufficient numbers and continuity of faculty members to carry out both the classroom and the non-classroom roles of faculty, including oversight of the curriculum and expectations for student performance, assessment of student learning, and establishment of academic credentials for instructional staff.
3. All instructors are appropriately qualified, including those in dual credit, contractual and consortial offerings.
4. Instructors are evaluated regularly in accordance with established institutional policies and procedures.
5. The institution has processes and resources for assuring that instructors are current in their disciplines and adept in their teaching roles; it supports their professional development.
6. Instructors are accessible for student inquiry.
7. Staff members providing student support services, such as tutoring, financial aid advising, academic advising and cocurricular activities, are appropriately qualified, trained and supported in their professional development.

Argument

3.C.1. The institution strives to ensure that the overall composition of its faculty and staff reflects human diversity as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.

RVC utilizes Ellucian/Colleague as its Human Resources Information System (HRIS) to track data related to employees. In addition to tracking legally required personal data such as social security numbers and birthdates in the HRIS, employees have the ability to self-identify other personal information such as gender, race, and ethnicity. With this information, the Human Resources team is able to report demographics of RVC's employee base and compare it against community data and that of RVC's student body with the end goal to have faculty, administrators, and staff that are representative of the community and students. Data analyzed as part of the annual State of the College (page 36) have identified equity gaps for Black/African American and Hispanic individuals.

When vacancies occur, the Human Resources team works with leadership from the hiring department to determine suitable means to advertise the vacancy which will allow the college to reach a robust and diverse applicant pool. When there are identified gaps between the demographics of the existing employee base to that of the local market, additional investments in advertising are made to attract under-represented applicant populations. Under the leadership of

the Human Resources team, a Diversity in Hiring Committee was formed to identify and implement effective initiatives that will allow RVC to connect with diverse employee populations. The committee is collaborative and includes members from the Office of Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI), Academic Affairs, and Student Affairs. Other initiatives the Human Resources team has launched include the implementation of competency-based interview guides, which helps to reduce bias in the selection process. The Human Resources team, in conjunction with the DEI team, is actively updating the entire search and selection process to ensure that all applicants, including those in under-represented populations, have a fair and equitable opportunity to be considered for employment at RVC. Training for search committees now includes implicit bias training, and RVC will have diversity champions on every search committee.

3.C.2. The institution has sufficient numbers and continuity of faculty members to carry out both the classroom and the non-classroom roles of faculty, including oversight of the curriculum and expectations for student performance, assessment of student learning, and establishment of academic credentials for instructional staff.

During each fiscal year, the Cabinet forecasts the anticipated need for employee headcount within their respective departments/divisions. Many factors are considered such as historical and anticipated enrollment, anticipated retirements, potential new programs, and new, continued, and discontinued grant projects/funding. If an increase is needed, the increase may be achieved through additions to the operational budget or a shift of vacant headcount within or between departments/divisions. The Cabinet convenes weekly throughout the fiscal year, and a standing agenda item is to discuss any new vacancies that have occurred during the prior week. The Cabinet considers whether or not it is necessary to backfill a particular vacancy or to shift the budgeted vacancy to a different role (within or between departments/disciplines) to a more necessary position that will better serve RVC students. Depending on the timing of a vacancy, or uncertainty of future enrollment in a particular division, the College may also elect to hire temporary full-time faculty for a particular semester or year to ensure that the needs of students are met in the immediate term. Oftentimes the pool for temporary full-time faculty comes from the existing adjunct faculty pool. These individuals already have a connection to the campus and our community, which ensures continuity with students.

Currently, the College has 115 full-time faculty (including library faculty) and 165 adjuncts. As [part of the January 2024 State of the College presentation](#), it was noted that in Fall 2019, 77% of the faculty FTE was comprised of full-time faculty, which means that at least 77% of credit hours were taught by full-time faculty (more if faculty carried overload). This percentage exceeds the peer average of 63% and the State average of 56%. In Fall 2022, 55% f the faculty FTE was comprised of full-time faculty, which means that at least 55% of credit hours were taught by full-time faculty (more if faculty carried overload), a rate which was now the lowest of peer institutions and lower than the state average of 60%.

The [2021-2026 Collective Bargaining Agreement of the Faculty Association](#) guarantees that full-time faculty have priority in class selection (Section 6.8, p 25), have at least 15 credit hours (Section 6.3.1, p 22) with opportunities for overload (Section 6.4, p 22). Academic chairs aide in the hiring of adjunct faculty as well as mentoring and evaluating adjunct faculty (Section 6.15.1, p 30). All full-time faculty are required to participate in assessment of student learning (Section

5.11, p 20) which is organized by the academic chairs (Section 6.15.1, p 30). Academic chairs are also required to lead their program/disciplines in the program review process (Section 6.15.1, p 30). Full-time faculty also have oversight of curriculum (Section 6.21, p 32). This includes developing new and revising exist curriculum. Faculty also serve as chairs, co-chairs, and members of many College committees, including Academic Council, Curriculum Committee, Curricular Assessment Committee, Co-curricular Assessment Committee and Promoting an Inclusive Community (PAIC). Faculty also have key roles in the Center for Instruction Design, Teaching, and Innovation, aiding in the creation of professional development materials, workshops, posters, breakout sessions and newsletters as well as mentoring new and adjunct faculty. Some faculty also serve as advisors for a number of student clubs.

3.C.3. All instructors are appropriately qualified, including those in dual credit, contractual and consortial offerings.

As outlined in Section 6.1 (p 22), faculty determine the minimum qualifications to teach in their respective disciplines, which is generally based on education, equivalent experience and/or other related required credentials. Academic Affairs maintains the list of currently offered courses and the faculty qualifications to teach each of those courses.

As outlined in the Early College standard operating procedure, any instructor who teaches at a partner high school that would like to teach a dual credit course must be approved to teach the course(s) they are interested in by submitting an application. The Dean of Early College reviews the application to see if the minimum qualifications to teach the course have been met. Then, the application is reviewed by the appropriate Academic Chair for recommendation, which is then reviewed by the appropriate Academic Dean, and finally the Chief Academic Officer.

3.C.4. Instructors are evaluated regularly in accordance with established institutional policies and procedures.

Section 5.9 (p 17) outlines the procedure and schedule for the evaluation process of both probationary and tenured faculty. All faculty complete an annual professional development report to be reviewed by their Dean. Deans conduct classroom observations annually for probationary faculty and tri-annually for tenured faculty. Additionally, probationary faculty submit an annual portfolio and are annually reviewed by a tenure committee of their peers.

As explained in Appendix B (p 53) of this contract, faculty are evaluated on instructional role, college service, development in area of expertise, and community service. Appendix D (p 57) details the three types of reports for face-to-face classroom observations, observations of library faculty, and online classroom observations.

Students also evaluate faculty through anonymous evaluations every semester for probationary faculty and annually for tenured faculty. The student evaluation, the structure of which is provided in Appendix E (p 60), is now delivered to students through Watermark's Course Evaluations and Surveys directly to their courses in Canvas, allowing the College to have students evaluate faculty electronically for both face-to-face and online courses. After grades

have been submitted each semester, instructors can view the results of these evaluations through their own access to Course Evaluations and Surveys.

Per the Dual Credit Quality Act, the College began implementing classroom observations for all dual credit instructors in the 2023-2024 academic year. The CAO or a designee will complete classroom observations using an observation rubric similar to the one used to evaluate adjunct faculty. This will provide the College with an opportunity to open an important feedback loop with dual credit instructors.

3.C.5. The institution has processes and resources for assuring that instructors are current in their disciplines and adept in their teaching roles; it supports their professional development.

Section 8.2 (p 41) ensures that faculty are provided $500 each annually for professional development. Faculty are allowed to use these dollars for professional development activities (e.g., registration, travel, and materials at conferences or workshops) or materials related to their program or discipline (e.g., membership in professional organizations, books, subscription, and publications, or technology). Faculty may also share any portion of their $500 with any other faculty member to help cover costs that exceed this dollar amount.

In addition to this professional development allowance, $200 per faculty member is placed into a Supplementary Professional Development Fund. Faculty can apply for these funds for additional support for professional development activities and materials. The Supplemental Professional Development Fund Committee, a faculty-led committee, reviews these applications and determines the distribution of funds.

After a minimum of six years of full-time service, full-time faculty are eligible to apply for sabbatical leave. As explained in Section 8.5.7 (p 57), faculty may apply for a full semester leave or an academic year leave at half time. Types of sabbatical leave includes leave for formal study, leave for research or independent study, leave for educational travel, or leave for a creative study or useful service. For example, Dr. Danielle Hardesty, Associate Professor of Philosophy, took a half-time academic year sabbatical leave during the 2023-2024 school year to complete research equity-centered assessment practices in theory and in application at the College. In order to be awarded a sabbatical, applicants are chosen by the Faculty Sabbatical Leave committee and the Administrative Sabbatical Leave Committee. Their recommendations are forwarded to the Chief Academic Officer who then makes recommendations to the College President. The President then presents a list of applicants recommended to the Board of Trustees who has the final decision in granting sabbatical leave.

Per Section 6.7.3 (p 24), all full-time faculty will participate in three professional development days per academic year. These are designed and organized by the Center for Instructional Design, Teaching, and Innovation (CITI), specifically the professional development specialist for faculty, Terry Wandtke, in conjunction with the professional development committee. Each year, a theme is identified by the committee and plenary and breakout sessions are built around that theme. Sessions cover a variety of topics including Universal Design for Learning,

microaggressions, use and support of our learning management system, instructional design, learning theory, assessment, and community resources.

The College's CITI also supports new faculty and new academic chair orientation and development. These are year-long opportunities that cover essential duties and skills such and assessment, the learning management system, learning theory, instructional design, and college policies. The development is provided in either hybrid or online-delivery through the College's learning management system, EAGLE, and involves faculty mentors. Additionally, a new adjunct academy launched in the 2023-2024 school year that specifically aids adjunct faculty in understanding their responsibilities and providing resources for the adjuncts to use.

Given the significant increase in online courses since 2020, CITI has created professional development for faculty that must be completed prior to teaching online. Currently faculty have four options to select from to complete the training for online teaching. All of these options are online training courses. Two are offered through Quality Matters, and two are offered through ION. Each course has a start/completion date, and assigned tasks to enhance your learning. Faculty are only required to complete one training. In addition to completing the training, online faculty are required to have their course design internally reviewed.

Faculty were also provided the opportunity to participate in two separate cohorts that worked with consultants from CAST to develop understanding of Universal Design for Learning. As a part of the year-long cohort, faculty participants were challenged to identify elements of universal design that could be used within their courses and classrooms to support the learning of all students. As a result of participating in the cohort, several participants have gone on to lead professional development opportunities for other faculty and staff based on what they learned and how they implemented it in their teaching and the learning environment.

3.C.6. Instructors are accessible for student inquiry.

Per Section 6.7.1 (p 23), all full-time faculty must hold 250 minutes of office hours weekly, 100 minutes of which may be online, during the Fall and Spring semesters. During the Winterim and Summer semesters, faculty must be available by appointment. Regular office hours must be posted on the faculty office doors, on the instructor syllabi, and on the learning management system. Instructor syllabi must also include instructor contact information including RVC email, office location, and office phone number. As explained in Section 5.13, faculty must respond to student communications within 48 hours, with the exception of weekends and other days when class is not in session.

While adjuncts are not bound by the faculty contract guidelines, adjuncts are expected to offer office hours when possible and, at a minimum, be available by appointment for students. Each classroom building has a designated adjunct office space suitable for meeting with students.

3.C.7. Staff members providing student support services, such as tutoring, financial aid advising, academic advising and cocurricular activities, are appropriately qualified, trained and supported in their professional development.

All College positions require minimum qualifications set forth by hiring managers that correspond to the level of education and experience necessary for success (e.g., Tutor Supervisor, Academic Transfer Advisor, and Athletic Coach). These minimum qualifications are outlined in the position description for each position.

All staff participate in development days and mandatory Human Resource training on issues such as Title IX, ethics, and diversity. Staff in areas such as financial aid and disability support services attend conference and trainings as required to keep up with the changes in laws and regulations. Staff can request to attend conferences and training when opportunities arise provided funds have been allocated and are available through appropriate departments.

Additionally, during the 2023-2024 academic year, the College developed professional development for supervisors called the Golden Eagle Leadership Academy. Ten employees finished the first Blue cohort, which included emerging leaders and managers meeting once a month to learn leadership development concepts. The Gold Cohort included deans and directors that were nominated by vice-presidents, who in addition to the leadership training are working on a capstone project.

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3.D - Core Component 3.D

The institution provides support for student learning and resources for effective teaching.

1. The institution provides student support services suited to the needs of its student populations.
2. The institution provides for learning support and preparatory instruction to address the academic needs of its students. It has a process for directing entering students to courses and programs for which the students are adequately prepared.
3. The institution provides academic advising suited to its offerings and the needs of its students.
4. The institution provides to students and instructors the infrastructure and resources necessary to support effective teaching and learning (technological infrastructure, scientific laboratories, libraries, performance spaces, clinical practice sites and museum collections, as appropriate to the institution's offerings).

Argument

3.D.1. The institution provides student support services suited to the needs of its student populations.

The College provides an array of support services relevant to its student population. In addition to academic services (which are discussed in section 3.D.2) and advising services (which are described in section 3.D.3), RVC offers economic, personal, cultural, and social support services for its students.

Economic support is offered through the College's Financial Aid office, which provides assistance to students who are applying for financial aid. In addition to its physical campus presence, the Financial Aid Office provides detailed, step-by-step information on applying for [Financial Aid on its website](#), including information on setting up a StudentAid.gov account, providing consent for using tax information to determine financial eligibility, and providing financial data, and determining eligibility for Pell grants. Through the RVC Foundation, scholarships are made possible by donations from individuals, businesses, families, groups, and local family foundations. In the 2023-2024 academic year, the foundation awarded $705,704 to 349 applications. Additionally, the RVC Foundation has a [Student Emergency Relief Fund](#) dedicated to students experiencing a financial crisis. The College also operates the [Eagles Nest Food Pantry](#) to combat food insecurity as well as a [Career Closet](#) to provide professional clothing to students for interviews. To assist students who cannot afford textbooks, a librarian from the Estelle M. Black Library sends a request each semester to faculty, asking them place course materials on reverse in the library for student use. During the Fall 2023 semester, 190 titles in 21 disciplines were on reserve for students.

Personal support is offered in the form of [personal and success counseling](#) which offers both academic and personal counseling services. In addition, through the Dean of Students office, the [Behavioral Intervention Team (BIT)](#) is an interdisciplinary group with members from

Counseling, Disability Support Services, Student Conduct, the RVC Police. When concerning student behaviors are reported by students, staff, or faculty, the BIT team follows up on the referrals to assess each situation and develop and implement appropriate responses. The College's Disability Support Services Office (DSS) provides advocacy, guidance, and support to students with disabilities. DSS also operates RAISE, an inclusive and supportive post-secondary educational program for young adults who have intellectual disabilities and who desire to participate in a comprehensive college experience.

Cultural and social support is offered through the Student Life Office, which oversees a variety of student organizations, student government, and intercultural student services.

TRIO Student Support Services (SSS) at RVC serves over 240 low-income, first-generation students, and/or students with disabilities each year. The program provides holistic and comprehensive advising and instructional support to help undergraduate students be successful at and graduate from RVC. TRIO Complete supports first-generation, low-income, and/or students with disabilities. TRIO Achieve focuses on support for students with disabilities.

The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) office provides resources and strategies for promoting an inclusive campus. It maintains a DEI Student Ambassadors program, sponsors the EAGLE Awards of Excellence in DEI and campus events such as the DEI – Social Capital Presentation and a Spring DEI Symposium, and workshops and training for faculty and staff. The office maintains a network safe zones and allies to support LGBTQAI+ members of the campus community and promotes the use of preferred pronouns and chosen names and makes information on all-gender bathroom available.

3.D.2. The institution provides for learning support and preparatory instruction to address the academic needs of its students. It has a process for directing entering students to courses and programs for which the students are adequately prepared.

The College has several supports to serve students' academic needs, including the Tutoring Center, the Writing Center, the Math Lab, and the Science Resource Room. The Tutoring Center employs approximately 20 tutors, all of whom undergo training to become certified through the College Reading and Learning Association (CRLA). The Tutoring Center itself is also CRLA certified. In Fall 2023, the Tutoring Center began the embedded tutoring system offering 9 class sections with embedded tutors. Embedded tutors work with faculty to support students by attending class sessions and by tutoring students outside of class. Additionally, the College offers tutoring through Upswing, online tutoring system available through our Learning Management System. The College also pays for access to Study Edge for all RVC students. Study Edge is an asynchronous tutoring platform that offers help in subjects like math, science, economics, and business.

The College's Writing Center currently employs four English instructors working as writing coaches and a few full-time faculty members in Composition and Literature donate their office hours. In addition, a full-time faculty member in Developmental Education also works in the Writing Center, specifically with Developmental English students in the Writing Center and

those who are working through EdReady programming, for one hour per week. The [Math Lab](#) is staffed by faculty and students.   Finally, the [Science Resource Room](#) is a place for science students to study for their science courses. It provides models, computers, a printer, microscopes, reference books, and current textbooks.

The College website outlines procedures required for getting started and the placement procedures. The Testing Center stays current on placement testing recommendations from external bodies as well as State changes. Peer mentors are available to answer new student questions and help direct incoming freshman. All first-time students are required to meet with an academic advisor who will guide them in registering for appropriate classes based on their placement scores, academic plan, and personal needs.

In 2022, the College formed the new Division of Adult and Developmental Education. This new Division is a part of Developmental Education Reform measures being enacted by the College. The College revised its placement measures to include GPA.

The College has a defined developmental course sequence in mathematics, reading, and English for students identified as underprepared through placement measures. These pre-100-level courses are designed to assist students in gaining the skills necessary to become college ready and pursue their academic goals.

The College also provided new curricula in Math and English to allow those students close to the college-level to persist in transfer-level work with sufficient academic supports.   For example, in the summer of 2022, the English faculty wrote the curriculum for a new two-credit support course for English 101. The new course -- English 100 - Workshop for College Writing -- is a co-requisite for designated sections of English 101. While students whose placement suggested a need for remedial coursework would have previously been required to wait at least one semester before enrolling in English 101, *Workshop for College Writing* allows students to enroll concurrently in English 101 and English 100 and complete both courses in a single semester.

3.D.3. The institution provides academic advising suited to its offerings and the needs of its students.

Academic advising has recently moved to a new case management model, starting in October 2023. Under this model, all new students have been assigned to an academic advisor. Certain populations, such as Rockford Promise Scholars, are assigned by cohort, but most students are assigned by degree. Additionally, the responsibilities of retention specialists were now absorbed by academic, career, and transfer advisors. Currently, the College has 7 full-time transfer advisors, 2 career and technical program advisors, 4 recruiters, and 1 advisor for the Allied Health programs. Students can also use an online student planning software through Self-Service.

Students enrolled in STU 100: Planning for Success are required to complete a student academic degree plan. Instructors for this course walk students through the student planning software and

require students to complete an appointment with their academic advisor to go over their academic and career goals.

3.D.4. The institution provides to students and instructors the infrastructure and resources necessary to support effective teaching and learning (technological infrastructure, scientific laboratories, libraries, performance spaces, clinical practice sites and museum collections, as appropriate to the institution's offerings).

The College monitors its infrastructure and resources in order to provide optimal support for teaching and learning. Regular updates to the infrastructure are planned through the Facilities Master Plan and as need arises.

Technological Infrastructure. Students are provided with access to the College network at the time of enrollment, as are full-time faculty and adjuncts upon their employment. That access includes a College email account, access to Self-Service, and the College's learning management system, Canvas (a.k.a., Eagle).

The Center for Instructional Design, Technology, and Innovation (CITI) offers training, resources, and support to both full-time and adjunct faculty through EAGLE Support, the media lab, the instructional designer, and several breakout sessions at professional development days. Students are also supported by EAGLE Support through walk-in appointments and a series of boot camps delivered in conjunction with STU 100: Planning for Success. The College also operates a laptop and scientific calculator rental program for students.

Additional Information about infrastructure and resources is provided in Criterion 5 of the assurance argument.

Scientific laboratories. State-of-the-art laboratories are available to students enrolled in the Life and Physical Sciences at the main campus in the Jacobs Center for Math and Science. Additionally, students enrolled in the nursing and allied health programs use labs, including state-of-the-art simulation labs in the Health Science Center on the main campus. All of these labs allow students to prepare to engage in clinical practice sites throughout the college district.

Library. As noted in Criterion 1, the Estelle M. Black Library serves the College but is also a public library for the community. The first floor of the library has been reconfigured into a learning commons area to promote collaborative work and community between students in the library. The first floor now includes the RVC Writing Center, our collection of children's books, mobile whiteboards, and charging stations. The second floor provides quiet study areas around the traditional book stacks. Additionally the library space includes a computer commons, two teaching labs equipped with computers and Smart Room Technology, a podcast recording room, and the Media Lab.

Performance spaces. Currently available performance spaces include the Starlight Theatre, the Performing Arts Room (PAR) located on the lower level of the Educational Resource Center, and the Physical Education Center (PEC). Starlight Theater provides a venue for community

theater while the PAR is used for instrumental programs, practice spaces, and some performance events. The PEC hosts College athletics and regional athletic events, as well as College and regional high school graduation ceremonies and college and job fairs.

Sources

- C3_webpage_Behavioral Intervention Team
- C3_webpage_DEI Resources
- C3_webpage_Disability Support Services
- C3_webpage_Financial Aid
- C3_webpage_Food Pantry
- C3_webpage_Foundation Scholarships
- C3_webpage_Foundation Scholarships (page number 9)
- C3_webpage_Intercultural Student Services
- C3_webpage_Math Lab
- C3_webpage_Personal And Success Counseling
- C3_webpage_Personal And Success Counseling (page number 2)
- C3_webpage_RAISE Program
- C3_webpage_Science Resource Room
- C3_webpage_Student Government Association
- C3_webpage_Student Organizations
- C3_webpage_TRIO Programs
- C3_webpage_Tutoring
- C3_webpage_Writing Center

3.S - Criterion 3 - Summary

The institution provides quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.

Summary

Through the evidence provided, RVC has demonstrated that it is an institution that provides quality education across all locations and methods of delivery. The statements below summarize the College's strengths, challenges, and actions as a result of its comprehensive review of Criterion 3.

Strengths

1. The College has increased professional development opportunities, including the development of the CITI group, the additional professional development fund, DEI badges, UDL cohorts, and online course training.
2. The College has embraced Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion as part of the student learning process. This includes the creation of the DEI department, offering numerous co-curricular events and student clubs aimed at student inclusion, and an equity-centered approach to assessment. Additionally, the College has increased student learning support.
3. The College offers a variety of programs to meet the diverse needs of the community including workforce needs from local employers. The genesis of the ATC and its program offerings have helped meet employers' workforce needs. The vehicles of short-term training offerings, online and hybrid learning have helped us serve our community members optimally. We have also developed co-requisites in Math and English and transitional English courses in district high schools
4. STU 100 - Planning for Success emphasizes student engagement; personal and academic success strategies; strong connections among students, faculty, and staff; and academic advising with enhanced degree mapping activities.

Challenges

1. While measures hare currently being taken to improve this process, the college struggles to identify the optimal way to communicate across departments and to students.
2. Faculty demographics do not match the student population. The College is aware of this and is taking efforts to address it. They are exploring a Diverse Faculty Fellows Program.
3. While the College has streamlined the process to review dual credit syllabi and instructor qualifications, there needs to be improvement in dual-credit oversight and inclusion into assessment efforts. Dual Credit Ad Hoc Committee was formed to help ensure there is a collaboration between faculty and management to get all the essential work done for dual credit including assessment efforts. Classroom Observations have been completed for almost all dual credit instructors---something that has never been done before.

Actions as a result of this comprehensive review

- ISLOs we reviewed and revised.
- Disaggregation of data is becoming more prevalent.
- Transitioned to Case Management Model in Advising.
- Steps are being taken to diversify employees.
- Assessment committees continue to work toward a more pervasive culture of assessment.
- Dual Credit Ad Hoc Committee was formed to work alongside administration to get all the essentials completed for Dual Credit/Early College.

Sources

There are no sources.

4 - Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

4.A - Core Component 4.A

The institution ensures the quality of its educational offerings.

1. The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews and acts upon the findings.
2. The institution evaluates all the credit that it transcripts, including what it awards for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning, or relies on the evaluation of responsible third parties.
3. The institution has policies that ensure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer.
4. The institution maintains and exercises authority over the prerequisites for courses, rigor of courses, expectations for student learning, access to learning resources, and faculty qualifications for all its programs, including dual credit programs. It ensures that its dual credit courses or programs for high school students are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement to its higher education curriculum.
5. The institution maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes.
6. The institution evaluates the success of its graduates. The institution ensures that the credentials it represents as preparation for advanced study or employment accomplish these purposes. For all programs, the institution looks to indicators it deems appropriate to its mission.

Argument

4.A.1. The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews and acts upon the findings.

Rock Valley College engages in an annual, campus-wide program review that supports strategic campus-level planning and decision-making related to instructional programming and academic support services. This process improves programs and delivery of locally responsive, cost-effective, high-quality programs and services. This systematic, college-wide program review process provides a five-year Program Review plan that encompasses all required CTE, Academic, Cross-Disciplinary, and Student Support Service areas.

Academic program reviews are completed by chairs, who may in turn delegate elements to faculty peers with appropriate expertise to ensure a comprehensive review process. Non-academic program reviews are completed by area administrators and staff. Academic Affairs and

Institutional Research provide support in understanding of the program review process and documentation, as well as the critical analysis of data to discern program quality, need, efficiency, and effectiveness.

Data provided to support the program review process is provided by Institutional Research and include multi-year comparisons of disaggregated student demographics (e.g., average age, gender, race/ethnicity, first-generation status, and intent or goal at the College), student enrollment (e.g., unduplicated headcounts and credit hours overall and by course), and student success indicators (e.g., grade distribution and ABC success rates).

To help ensure the college stays current with program reviews and consistent with monitoring program progress, a process has been developed by which departments who have participated in Program Review will be able to document the actions taken to advance the action items identified in the Program Review. This process includes a one-year post program review completion, each program review area is required to provide a written summary of work completed and goals achieved in the past year. This work is to be documented in the Watermark Self Study software. Additionally, those program review leaders are requested to provide a presentation detailing any recent accomplishments or progress made. Examples include the Annual Program Review Updates for [Political Science](), [Multimedia Journalism](), and [Management]().

A process for annual monitoring of Program Review has also been implemented. The form to be completed will be shared out with Program Review completers in Year 1 following the submission of their Program Review. Each year, they will have until May 31st to update their progress and upload the form to Planning & Self Study. This will provide a schedule for the actions identified to continue.

During the Spring 2024 Professional Development Day, a poster session was held showcasing program reviews completed within the academic year. This allowed further opportunity for areas of the college to communicate detailed program information, recent progress made, and future improvements planned. The poster session was well-received and will be repeated for future reporting cycles.

Some of the improvements that have been made as a result of Program Review in recent years include the following:

- Welding noted improvements requested in earlier Program Review cycle were addressed with the move of the program to the ATC, including the addition of the Robotic Welding course.
- Music identified and equity gap in course enrollment, as well as the need for a replacement cycle for electric pianos used by the program and by Community Education. In response to the enrollment gap, a female Jazz clinician was added for the first time, and a multicultural Gospel choir was developed. Also, six of the 15 electric pianos in the lab were replaced within the first year of the replacement cycle.
- Developmental Education has experienced changes due to the Developmental Education Reform Act in the state. Redesigns were highlighted in Program Review and baselines

were established for monitoring results of change implementation. Annual reports will be able to assist with monitoring impact of changes on student success.
- The Media Production Specialist Advisory Committee grew, and the program added internship partnerships, both of which had been identified as gaps in the Program Review.

4.A.2. The institution evaluates all the credit that it transcripts, including what it awards for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning, or relies on the evaluation of responsible third parties.

The course approval process ensures that courses meet credit hour requirements outlined in the Credit Hour Determination Policy. New courses are proposed by faculty in the appropriate discipline, affirmed by the Curriculum Committee, and approved by the Chief Academic Officer before being submitted to the Illinois Community College Board for final approval. The Credit Hour Compliance Audit Form for each modality help faculty determine whether course components meet federal credit hour guidelines.

RVC evaluates all incoming transcripts for possible placement waivers and prerequisite waivers. Advanced Placement (AP) and College Level Examination and Placement (CLEP) transcripts that are sent to the institution are evaluated and credit is awarded appropriately. College transcripts are not initially evaluated unless a student submits a Transcript Evaluation Request Form, at which point their transcript(s) from regionally accredited institutions are evaluated for equivalent credit as well as elective credit. Students can be awarded up to 49 credit hours of transfer credit, to allow for the 15 credit hours of residency required for degree completion at RVC.

International transcripts must be sent through Educational Credential Evaluators (ECE) and then forwarded from ECE to RVC, at which point they are evaluated based on ECE's recommendations.

Military transcripts are sent through Joint Services Transcript (JST) and once received by RVC are evaluated based on American Council on Education (ACE) recommendations.

A Credit for Prior Learning Committee has been formed to review and document processes for awarding credit. The College has renewed membership in the Council for Adult Education and Experiential Learning (CAEL).

RVC also evaluates transcripts from the International Baccalaureate diploma. A process has been created to identify for which courses students may receive credit.

Some established opportunities for Credit for Prior Learning include:

Discipline	Prior Learning	Credits Awarded
Early Childhood Education	Gateways Child Development Associate Credential	6 credits awarded (ECE 100 & ECE 103)

Criminal Justice	Law Enforcement Academy Training/ Law Enforcement Training and Standards	A maximum of 12 credits (CRM 101, CRM 125, CRM 210, CRM 291)
Fire Science	Office of the state Fire Marshal, Illinois Fire Chiefs Association, National Fire Academy, etc. certificates (Policy 209)	Varies based on particular certificate
Manufacturing Engineering Technology	CNC 32-week Non-credit Program	6 credits (MET 110 & MET 111)

4.A.3. The institution has policies that ensure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer.

Students who have credits from another college and plan to earn a degree/certificate at RVC should submit an official transcript in a sealed envelope or electronically, directly from the issuing institution to the Records and Registration Office. A transcript evaluation request form must also be completed and submitted. Criteria for evaluation of transferable credits are available in the Transferring Credit to RVC section of the College Catalog and on the website.

When the Records and Registration office is still unable to find an equivalent RVC course, the appropriate Department Chair and/or Dean makes the final decision on course equivalency. Syllabi, and other supportive documentation if available, is requested from the student and submitted to the appropriate Chair/Dean for review. The Chair/Dean is to review this documentation and make a determination on whether the content fits an RVC course for equivalent credit, or if elective credit must be awarded.

In addition, RVC utilizes Transferology as a course review and articulation guide.

4.A.4. The institution maintains and exercises authority over the prerequisites for courses, rigor of courses, expectations for student learning, access to learning resources, and faculty qualifications for all its programs, including dual credit programs. It ensures that its dual credit courses or programs for high school students are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement to its higher education curriculum.

RVC maintains and exercises authority over prerequisites. While RVC is an open enrollment institution, the Admission Policy in the College Catalog states that students may enroll in any course as long as individual course prerequisites, placement procedures, and/or developmental admission requirements are met. The registrar places restrictions on course enrollment in Colleague, the student information system, based on prerequisites. According to the Catalog, students may be withdrawn if they are enrolled in courses not consistent with placement testing and course prerequisites.

RVC maintains and exercises authority over rigor through the course approval process described in section 4.A.2. Master Course Syllabi (MCS) standardize course objectives, course topic outlines, methods of assessment, and grading criteria across sections.

RVC maintains and exercises authority over expectations for student learning through course objectives (as stated on the MCS), program/discipline learning outcomes, and institutional student learning outcomes (ISLO). Program/discipline learning outcomes are developed within academic departments by subject matter experts. The ISLO were developed with faculty input. Course outcomes are aligned with program outcomes and ISLO on the MCS. This alignment, along with other expectations, is communicated with students through instructor course syllabi.

RVC maintains and exercises authority over access to learning resources. The College staffs its own library, learning management system support office, Tutoring Center, Writing Center, Math Lab, Testing Center, and Disability Support Services Office. When the in-person Tutoring Center is not open, student may access tutoring through Upswing. When the library is not open, students can access online resources through the library webpage. RVC maintains authority over the bookstore by carefully vetting third-party partners and carefully negotiating a contract that will fully support student needs.

RVC maintains and exercises authority over faculty qualifications for all its programs by following ICCB system rules which state that instructors "shall be selected, employed and evaluated by the community college" and "selected from individuals with appropriate credentials and demonstrated teaching competencies at the college level." Full-time faculty are ensured to have appropriate credentials through the hiring process, and adjunct faculty are ensured to have appropriate credentials by using the Adjunct Hiring Form. See 3.C for additional information about minimum qualifications to teach.

RVC ensures that its dual credit offerings for high school students are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement to its higher education curriculum. The IL Dual Credit Quality Act (DCQA) governs compliance of all dual credit programs offered by Illinois Community Colleges including Rock Valley College. The Act was updated in 2019 to further clarify dual credit instructor qualifications and establish required partnership agreements between high schools and the college. The DQCA outlines the standards required of all Illinois institutions offering dual credit in Sec. 20 of the Act (110 ILCS 27/20).

In order to document the process for ensuring course rigor and equivalence to classes offered at the college campus, the high schools begin by considering the master course syllabi and identifying potentially qualified high school faculty. As noted previously in Criterion 3, high school faculty are then directed to submit the Dual Credit Instructor Application that requires copies of college transcripts and resume outlining work experience. The application is reviewed in the following order to ensure instructor qualifications match the required ICCB and HLC minimums, as required by Illinois law, for the specific course type: Department Chair, Academic Dean, Dean of Early College, CAO.

The master course syllabus is provided to all approved dual credit instructors, which includes course description, learning outcomes, and RVC approved textbooks. Dual credit instructors are

also provided the Instructor Syllabus template and a sample instructor syllabus if available for the particular course. Once qualifying documents are verified through Human Resources at the school district, instructors are provided a college account so they can access the learning management system (EAGLE), library services, and college email. Professional learning communities have been created within EAGLE (see sample screen shots) to gather and retain resources related to the specific dual credit course that can be shared between RVC and all approved high school dual credit instructors for a given course. It also allows for a systematic submission of dual credit instructor syllabi that can be uploaded by an instructor and accessed by college faculty and dean for audit purposes. The EAGLE course shells were developed in 2021-2022 and will be implemented through the 2022-2023 academic year. Beginning with the 2023-2024 academic year, dual credit instructors must submit their syllabi for final approval by the Department Chair, academic dean, Dean of Early College, and Chief Academic Officer.

During the spring and summer months, dual credit workshops are hosted in partnership with Early College and academic faculty and deans. This provides dual credit instructors an orientation to college process and procedure, as well as an opportunity to review the college curriculum and expectations for upcoming dual credit courses (see sample agenda). This is offered to new and returning dual credit instructors. In spring 2022, Rock Valley College took necessary action to begin awarding CPDUs through Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) to high school faculty who attend professional development related to their dual credit instruction.

The Dean of Early College established monthly 1-on-1 meetings with each academic dean in spring of 2022 to discuss matters of dual credit, including instructor qualifications, needed workshops, dual credit course offerings and enrollment. These meetings are planned to carry through the 2022-2023 academic year and beyond to maintain a strong internal collaboration to ensure dual credit quality and rigor. This will also help keep Early College informed of impending curriculum changes and master course syllabi updates that need to be adopted by dual credit instructors.

Regarding the student experience of dual credit at high school classes – all students are provided college network accounts, so they have access to RVC technology resources, student email and learning management system, as well as library services. School districts are responsible for purchasing necessary software, equipment, and classroom sets of the RVC approved textbooks so that all necessary materials are accessible within the classroom setting.

During the 2023-2024 academic year, the following were undertaken to ensure the College maintains and exercises authority over dual credit:

- All dual credit courses being taught in the high school were part of a syllabi audit and re-approval process. Subsequent to the audit, course approval will be granted by the department chair, academic dean, Dean of Early College, and CAO on an annual basis.
- Peer observations within the high schools began in the 2023-2024 academic year. A total of 23 observations have been held in the fall semester, with an additional ten being held in the next month. Moving forward, peer observations will be held annually.
- Document procedures on-boarding procedures to help maintain consistency through staff transitions and ensure dual credit instructors receive consistent and thorough information.

- A K-20 summit was hosted at RVC, ensuring school district superintendents had the opportunity to collaborate and collectively plan dual credit opportunities.

A significant amount of dual credit opportunity and access for students has been created in partnership with local high schools. An emphasis on career and technical education pathways, backed by state legislation and Perkins V, resulted in a more than 500% increase in dual credit course section offerings at area high schools since 2017. Moving forward, emphasis should remain on ensuring quality dual credit is offered in the high schools. One specific area includes dual credit instructor development in collaboration with college faculty to ensure that course quality remains consistent regardless of whether a course is taught at a high school campus or the college campus.

In order to ensure assessment is being conducted in all dual credit courses, a plan has been designed during the academic year for implementation to begin in Fall of 2024.

Another area of focus beginning in 2022-2023 is developing a comprehensive data plan for reporting and tracking of dual credit enrollment, retention, persistence, and success and completion that can be compared to students' continued RVC enrollment or transfer to other institutions. RVC also committed to a regional data sharing partnership with Rockford Public Schools, Belvidere School District, and Northern Illinois University in 2021 that will assist in developing a regional data system for tracking students through middle school, high school and dual credit, higher education, and job placement. The hope is that this regional data system will be able to scale statewide.

4.A.5. The institution maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes.

At RVC, many Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs hold specialized accreditation, are recognized by professional organizations, or have licensure requirements. This information is posted on the College website directly on the program pages (e.g., Nursing, Dental Hygiene, Automotive Service Technology, and Welding) and linked to the Accreditation and Recognition page.

Since the last comprehensive review, the accreditation for two programs has changed in response to changes in industry standards and recommendations of an advisory committee and regional employers. Information about these programs is provided below:

- Nursing: In August of 2018, the nursing program became accredited by the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN). The next review is schedule to occur in Spring of 2025.

- Graphic Arts: In February of 2018, the graphic arts program engaged in a comprehensive review and site visit with the Accrediting Council for Collegiate Graphic Communications (ACCGC). While the program was successful in its efforts to obtain continued accreditation status, the College decided to not renew its accreditation. This program curriculum and certificates were being redesigned to reflect current needs in graphic arts regionally. Furthermore, it was determined that students did not benefit

within the program or subsequently in the workforce by participating in a program accreditation through ACCGC.

With its implementation, the College has begun to maintain accreditation documentation for its programs within Watermark's Planning & Self Study to provide a central, accessible repository, as well as improve the maintenance and currency of these process.

4.A.6. The institution evaluates the success of its graduates. The institution ensures that the credentials it represents as preparation for advanced study or employment accomplish these purposes. For all programs, the institution looks to indicators it deems appropriate to its mission.

Several Health Science programs are tasked with gathering post-graduation employment as part of the data supplied for accreditation. Dental Hygiene, Nursing, Respiratory Care, and other programs have woven such measures into their courses, designed as a career exploration activity for their students. However, the consistency to which similar data were being collected or used across the institution was less evident. As a result, the College identified as an initiative in the Academic Strategic Plan that, "The College will evaluate the effectiveness of programs and courses. The College is considering additional ways to obtain meaningful post-completion outcomes regarding graduates, including such platforms as GradCast." During the 2023-2024 academic year, Institutional Research assumed the responsibility of operationalizing GradCast, which will be run three times a year to reach students post-graduation to determine their post-completion employment**.**

Graduate success is also evaluated through two KPI reports. First, the [Transfer Rates KPI](#) includes information about subsequent enrollment at four-year institutions. Data to support this KPI come from the National Student Clearinghouse. Second, the Employment Outcomes KPI includes information about employment rates and earnings for degree and certificate completers. Data to support this report come from the [Post-Secondary Employment Outcomes Explorer](#).

Sources

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- C4_Assessment_Institutional Student Learning Outcomes (ISLO)
- C4_InstitutionalEffectiveness_Employment Outcomes

- C4_InstitutionalEffectiveness_KPI-Transfer-Feb-2023
- C4_StudentServices_AdmissionPolicies
- C4_StudentServices_Transcript-Evaluation-Request-Form
- C4_StudentServices_Transferring Credit to RVC
- C4_website_Accreditation and Recognition

4.B - Core Component 4.B

The institution engages in ongoing assessment of student learning as part of its commitment to the educational outcomes of its students.

1. The institution has effective processes for assessment of student learning and for achievement of learning goals in academic and cocurricular offerings.
2. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.
3. The institution's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty, instructional and other relevant staff members.

Argument

4.B.1. The institution has effective processes for assessment of student learning and for achievement of learning goals in academic and cocurricular offerings.

RVC has an assessment process that guides faculty and staff in the improvement of student learning within curricular (academic) and co-curricular learning spaces. This process is framed by the RVC Guiding Principles for Assessment for Student Learning and supported by the design principles of Understanding by Design, Universal Design for Learning, and Quality Matters and is used to inform curricular and co-curricular assessment for student learning across multiple levels.

At RVC, all curricular and co-curricular learning are framed by the Institutional Student Learning Outcomes (ISLO). The RVC ISLO identify the knowledge and skills that all students are expected to develop within their learning experiences at the College. Just as the ISLO provide the overarching frame for this learning, the preference is that data collected to inform assessment at the course, program/discipline, and institutional level will come from direct measures of student learning either in the classroom or through participation in events and activities at RVC.   This is described further in the sections below.

Institutional Assessment

The Curricular and Co-curricular Assessment Committees are responsible for the planning and implementation of assessment of the ISLO each year. To complete this process, a call for artifacts of student learning is sent to all faculty and adjuncts at the end of the fall and spring semesters. While these artifacts can be in various formats (e.g., papers, presentations, lab reports), it is expected that they represent an assessment measure used within the course. Samples received are randomized and organized based on their alignment with the ISLO. Faculty and staff wishing to participate in the ISLO assessment process, are provided training that includes an overview of the process, practice with the evaluation platform (Watermark's Outcomes Assessment Projects), and practice with the evaluation process. This process typically occurs over the summer, which is why the process of training evaluators and

subsequently completing evaluations has moved completely online in recent years. The Curricular Assessment Committee reviews the data and participation feedback survey data to determine what, if any, actions should be recommended. To date, the artifacts have come from curricular assessment, but the goal is to build capacity so that both curricular and co-curricular assessment data can inform the process.

Also, with the revision of the ISLO and the aligning of the curriculum from course to program/discipline to ISLO mentioned in Criterion 3, the College is building capacity to use data documented within Planning & Self-Study to provide additional insights to this level of assessment. This will be a topic of discussion at the 2024 Fall Assessment Retreat.

Curricular Assessment

In addition to ISLO assessment, academic areas also participate annually in program/discipline and course assessment. Each area has a multiyear assessment plan (e.g., Fire Science and Political Science) that outlines how all program/discipline objectives and courses will be assessed within a five-year period, which is designed to inform the program review cycle. The expectations for program/discipline assessment is that each area will assess at least one program/discipline objective each year so that all are assessed within a five-year period. For course assessment, the expectation is that each course will be assessed at least once within a 5-year period and that when a course is assessed, all of the objectives will be assessed at the same time. These expectations are outlined in the Assessment Tool Kit on the College's Intranet.

At the beginning of each academic year, a Curricular Assessment Timeline is shared with the College via email, Intranet news, and now on the Assessment Tool Kit. While the process and general time frame have remained the same since the last comprehensive review, small adjustments are made each year in an effort to improve efficiency and participation; the AY24 and AY25 provide examples of the level of change typically made. Furthermore, for those that access the timeline in the Assessment Tool Kit, links to how-to guides are also included to further support process completion.

Using the multiyear assessment plan and the timeline, faculty document assessment in Watermark's Planning & Self Study in the appropriate annual Program/Discipline Assessment Plan and Course Assessment Plan. The timeline is aligned with elements of these plan workspaces in an effort to assist faculty with documenting assessment as it happens throughout the academic semester rather than trying to wait and do so after it has been completed. Additionally, beginning in the 2022-2023 academic year, the Curricular Assessment Committee began the process of providing peer review on the annual Program/Discipline Assessment and Course Assessment Plans (e.g., Psychology and Welding). The purpose of the review was to provide support to faculty and staff on strategies for improving their overall assessment process, as well as recognizing the efforts to improve student learning that were being made. The committee noted that it was difficult to provide feedback to all areas and determined in the 2023-2024 cycle that it would revise the rubric and prioritize areas of the College from Academic Dean recommendations (e.g., Fire Science and Humanities). In an effort to provide this feedback to more areas, the committee is planning to start the review process for the 2024-2025 cycle during the Spring as soon as Fall results have been documented. This will

allow more time for providing feedback but could also have the advantage of providing more timely feedback upon with the area could act within the academic year.

In addition to this assessment documentation, the College also began to collect Sharing of Continuous Improvement Stories (SCILS) to complement its assessment narrative. SCILS have been collected from faculty in various departments (e.g., Automotive Service Technology, Biology, Developmental Mathematics, Engineering, Psychology, and Welding) and have been shared at Faculty Development sessions and through Assessment Updates. They are also been stored in the Assessment Tool Kit. These stories provide quick narrative that get to the everyday process used by many RVC faculty of identifying a problem in class or with a student, identifying a solution, trying the solution, and determining if that solution worked or if additional steps need to be taken, and faculty have reported appreciation for having this vehicle to hear about what their colleagues are doing and learning from them.

Co-curricular Assessment

Co-curricular areas also participate annually in program/unit and event/activity assessment. The expectations for program/unit assessment is that each area will assess at least one program/unit objective each year so that all are assessed within a five-year period. For event/activity assessment, the expectation is that each area will identify those events/activities that are aligned with the program/unit objective to be assessed and collect that event/activity data that year. These expectations are outlined in the Assessment Tool Kit on the College's Intranet.

Curricular assessment has just begun the process of developing a more formalized structure for assessment cycles for each area. As such, the 2024-2025 Co-curricular Assessment Timeline has been developed and has been shared with the College via email, Intranet news, and on the Assessment Tool Kit. This academic year, areas will also formalize multiyear assessment plans like those used in Curricular Assessment. Again, this structure is intended to support staff in its assessment efforts and work toward embedding the documentation into their regular work flow.

4.B.2. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.

Institutional Assessment

Results of artifact review in Watermark's Outcomes Assessment Project produce data reports for each ISLO, such as those provided in the table below.

Communication	Global Awareness and Responsibility	Analytical Reasoning
2021-2022	2021-2022	2021-2022
2022-2023	2022-2023	2022-2023

As noted above, the [Curricular Assessment Committee reviewed these data](#) reports in early fall to determine what, if any, actions should be recommended to other assessment leaders at the Fall Assessment Conference. At this time, the committees knew that the ISLO were in the revision process, so recommendations that moved forward from these discussions included stronger consideration of how artifacts would be assessed, and if they were to be assessed using VALUE Rubrics, how to build awareness about them across campus to improve development and alignment of course activities and assessment measures to the new ISLO and perhaps use VALUE ADD as a model to guide the process. Again, this recommendation will be revisited at the 2024 Fall Assessment Retreat now that courses are aligned to the new ISLO and some data have been collected from 2023-2024 to facilitate the conversation.

Curricular Assessment

The need for wide-spread, in-depth review of master course and instructor syllabi, particularly post-COVID, became evident in recent years. At the heart of this need was improving the currency and relevancy of the learning objectives and course content. By advancing curriculum mapping and alignment, several areas of the college engaged in this process that led to revised program/discipline objectives, course objectives, and curriculum within or across courses.

Annual Program/Discipline Assessment Plans and Course Assessment Plans have been opened in Watermark's Planning & Self-Study to assist in the documentation and monitoring of curricular assessment efforts. While workshops, how-to guides, and individuals support sessions have been offered, the College is noting continued resistance to documenting curricular assessment efforts. However, faculty and staff do report that once they have used the solution for documentation, they find it straight-forward and user-friendly.

During the past two academic years, the Curricular Assessment Committee has held Assessment Round-ups at the end of each semester to provide opportunities for faculty and staff to work on documentation and monitoring efforts with support. The addition of the Assessment Tool Kit has further enhanced in-time support for these activities. While the College is seeing more faculty participation in the process beyond the Academic Chair or Program Coordinator, continued support will be provided to enhance engagement with the assessment process throughout the academic year as outlined in the timeline.

The following sample reports illustrate efforts of some areas to use Planning & Self-Study:

- [Humanities](#)
- [Mathematics](#)
- [Welding](#)

Some areas of the College are also using SCILS to document assessment for student learning. Stories that demonstrate a change to improve student learning based on assessment data include the following:

- Engineering: story shared how assessment was used to change the instruction from lecture to a flipped model and how student reflection on their own learning was used to

improve student success in the course. The data suggest that the strategies helped with retention, but additional changes will be explored to see if a positive impact on course grades can also be evidenced.

- Psychology: story shared how review of assessment data indicated poor performance with items on a test related to a specific course objective. Reviewing instruction, the faculty noted a gap in addressing the content related to this topic other than having students read about it in the text, so they added direct instruction and a related assignment. This led to noticeable improvement in test performance on items aligned to that course objective.
- Welding: story sharing how feedback from a struggling student was used to provide content-specific study strategies and alternative methods of sharing knowledge gained fostered success

Since the last comprehensive review, the following represent a few of the improvements made based on the curricular assessment process:

- Several areas (e.g., CIS, Speech, Automotive Services Technology, Aviation Maintenance Technology) have revised learning objectives at the program/discipline and course level
- A few areas (e.g., Medical Assistant, Respiratory Care, Phlebotomy) have revised the scope and sequence of their curriculum.
- Several areas (e.g., Developmental Mathematics, Mathematics, Humanities) have or will be revising assessment measures to improve clarity of content and expectations for students.
- At least one area (Medical Assistant) is reviewing course pre-requisites.
- At least one area (Political Science) is reviewing classroom policies.

The peer review process of the annual curricular assessment plans has helped the Curricular Assessment Committee determine areas of support that need to be developed. For example, many of the reports submitted showed that faculty and staff have some difficulty moving from summarizing the data to analyzing it. Certainly, without good data analysis, identifying possible actions for improvement will be challenging. To address this, the committee developed additional materials for the Assessment Tool Kit that focus on analysis strategies. Members of the committee have also planned for a professional development session to be offered at the January 2025 Faculty Development Day that focuses in on moving from data to action, using these strategies, and then from action to monitoring for continuous improvement.

Co-curricular Assessment

As co-curricular assessment developed since the College's last comprehensive review, the focus shifted from individual programs, clubs, events, and activities, to considering larger units that impacted student learning outside of the classroom. To that end, the following developed learning outcomes to guide the co-curricular assessment process for others within their area and across the College:

- [Athletics](#) (developed Spring 2021)

- [DEI](#) (developed Fall 2023)
- [Student Life](#) (developed Fall 2023)
- [Student Employment](#) (developed Spring 2024)

An annual Co-curricular Assessment Plan has been opened in Watermark's Planning & Self-Study to assist in the documentation and monitoring of these assessment efforts. While workshops and individuals support sessions have been offered, the College is noting continued challenges to using this solution to support co-curricular assessment efforts. During the 2023-2024 academic year, the Co-curricular Assessment Committee decided to hold regular Data Days to provide opportunities for faculty and staff to work on documentation and monitoring efforts with goal of moving from data collection to acting on data to improve student learning in co-curricular learning opportunities. The following reports illustrate efforts of some areas to use Planning & Self-Study for this purpose:

- [Athletics](#)
- [DEI](#)
- [The Valley Forge](#)

The Co-curricular Assessment Committee will continue to hold Data Days each month and has also published a timeline to routinize this process and to expand information gathered, actions taken, and improvements made.

Since the last comprehensive review, the following represent a few of the improvements made based on the co-curricular assessment process:

- The Valley Forge, the college's student news, has been using assessment of student learning to improve the learning experience for its editors for a number of years. Over the past three years, the Valley Forge has primarily met their targets, but one change that they did make as a result of their assessment was to expand the wire services available to students.
- DEI presented to student groups on *sense of belonging*. Data collected as a result of this presentation indicated that a small number of students may have been confused by key constructs based on the order in which they were presented. These constructs were rearranged in the presentation to provide clarity between them.
- Student Life used video reflection to gather feedback on the impact of a trip on student learning. The response rate was high and the information provided was helpful to those that planned the event. The use of short video reflection was added to other experiential learning activity for student leaders to gather assessment data to improve program offering and quality.

4.B.3. The institution's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty, instructional and other relevant staff members.

Rock Valley College is committed to assessment practices that focus on improving teaching, learning environments, and student learning. As noted previously, the College designed [Guiding](#)

[Principles for Assessment for Student Learning](#) to faculty and staff with a clear understanding of the theoretical and best-practices foundation for assessment within our institution. These guiding principles are supported by Understanding by Design, Universal Design for Learning, and Quality Matters and emphasis assessment for learning or assessment of learning.

This College's commitment is further evidenced in the substantial allocation of resources to implement assessment for learning best practices so that results can and will be used for continuous improvement. For example, the College has a full-time Executive Director of Outcomes Assessment to provide daily leadership and support to Academic and Student Affairs leadership, faculty, and staff. Since the last comprehensive review, this Executive Director has worked on a team through monthly virtual meetings with the Vice Presidents of Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, Institutional Research and Effectiveness, and CTE and Workforce Development, as well as the Executive Director of Instructional Design, Teaching & Innovation to identify and monitor assessment goals and priorities.

The Executive Director of Outcomes Assessment also co-chairs two assessment committees, Curricular and Co-curricular, that are comprised of leadership, deans, faculty, and staff. The co-chair(s) of the Curricular Assessment Committee are faculty, and they receive a stipend for their work as chair. The co-chair(s) of the Co-curricular Assessment Committee are staff in Student Services or the DEI Office. These committees are responsible for implementation of the assessment goals and priorities while also providing support for colleagues in their development of assessment knowledge and skills. The committees meet virtually monthly throughout the calendar year except in July and when they have their combined committee Fall and Spring retreats.

In addition, Academic Deans are encouraged to spend time in their division meetings to review assessment documentation progress and share learning successes from the assessment process. Deans are supported in their meetings with the Vice Presidents of Academic Affairs and CTE and Workforce Development to be informed about the assessment goals and priorities, the assessment process and timeline, and strategies for supporting faculty and staff.

The College has also invested in the implementation of Watermark's Planning & Self-Study as a centralized, electronic location for documenting and monitoring continuous improvement processes, including assessment. Workshops on how to use this solution were provided to faculty and staff during the initial roll out and have been offered periodically since to the College as a whole, by division or department, and in one-on-one sessions. How-to guides are also available to all faculty and staff through the Assessment Tool Kit on the College's Intranet.

Further, the College has also demonstrated its commitment to assessment and assessment best practices by implementing assessment awards in the [2022-2023 academic year](#) and again in the [2023-2024 academic year](#). The College has six [assessment awards,](#) an Excellence in Assessment, Assessment Champion, and Emerging Assessment Star awards for both curricular and co-curricular assessment. These awards are based on the prior year's actions with each winner receiving an award and honorarium.

Sources

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- C4_News_2023 Assessment Awards Announced
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- C4_StudentEmployment_LearningOutcomes
- C4_StudentLife_LearningOutcomes

4.C - Core Component 4.C

The institution pursues educational improvement through goals and strategies that improve retention, persistence and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs.

1. The institution has defined goals for student retention, persistence and completion that are ambitious, attainable and appropriate to its mission, student populations and educational offerings.
2. The institution collects and analyzes information on student retention, persistence and completion of its programs.
3. The institution uses information on student retention, persistence and completion of programs to make improvements as warranted by the data.
4. The institution's processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing information on student retention, persistence and completion of programs reflect good practice. (Institutions are not required to use IPEDS definitions in their determination of persistence or completion rates. Institutions are encouraged to choose measures that are suitable to their student populations, but institutions are accountable for the validity of their measures.)

Argument

4.C.1. The institution has defined goals for student retention, persistence and completion that are ambitious, attainable and appropriate to its mission, student populations and educational offerings.

RVC has defined goals for retention, persistence, and completion as part of its Strategic Plan Scorecard. Goals for student success include:

- Improve on-time completion rate to 20% for first-time, full-time cohort by 2027.
- Improve IPEDS outcome measures (certificate/degree completion, still enrolled, transfer-out) to 65% by 2027.
- Achieve at least a 3.00 GPA yearly weighted average in fall semester at transfer destinations through 2027.
- Close equity gaps in graduation and transfer-out rates to zero (no difference) by 2027.

The current retention, persistence, and completion rate goals are **ambitious** given the historically marginalized populations (racially and economically diverse) it serves in Winnebago and Boone counties. Although ambitious, these targets are **appropriate** and **attainable.** Community colleges have an open enrollment model designed to serve all district residents. Pillar I (Exceptional Educational Opportunities) of RVC's Strategic Plan states that the College will "provide high-quality certificates, degrees, and co-curricular programs to meet district/community and regional needs and improve student success." RVC has a robust Student Affairs Division that includes a variety services and personnel such as academic advisors, TRIO

programs, Intercultural Student Services, Student Life, Enrollment Counselors, Disability Support Services, personal and success counseling and Career Services. Additionally, RVC provides embedded peer tutoring in developmental and college-level math, English and Chemistry courses. The College has a Math Lab, Writing Center, and Life/Physical Science Lab. To best accommodate the diverse needs of its students, the Tutoring Center provides both in-person tutoring and virtual tutoring options.

4.C.2. The institution collects and analyzes information on student retention, persistence and completion of its programs.

Student retention, persistence, and completion data are collected and reported by Institutional Research and Effectiveness (IRE). The annual Key Performance Indicator (KPI) reports published on the College website include Persistence and Retention Rates, Graduation Rates, and Transfer Rates. These student outcome reports allow the College to monitor and track student performance and identify achievement gaps.

Various groups analyze the data included in KPI reports for planning purposes and for promoting student outcome initiatives. For example, the Student Persistence and Retention Sub-Committee and Student Life and Intercultural Student Services Department worked collaboratively to identify and implement the Black Male Completion Initiative (BMCI).

Beginning July 1, 2021, the College instituted the Department of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Among many initiatives, this unit collects and analyzes data related to student retention. This data is disaggregated in order to detect the differences between various student populations such as gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, age, in addition to several other variables. The College also instituted a Retention Committee that further reviews enrollment, persistence, and retention data, the impact of campus engagement on retention, and ways to improve student on-time and goal completion processes.

IRE also publishes DFWI (Drop, Fail, Withdrawal, and Incomplete) data on the Intranet at the end of each academic term. These data are being used by the CAO to implement the Caring Campus Initiative. The primary tactic of Caring Campus is to identify faculty who teach courses with high success rates so that they can share their successful practices with others.

Program-level dashboards for enrollment, course completion, and program completion have been created for use by academic departments. These dashboards are reviewed annually by Deans and used to complete program reviews.

4.C.3. The institution uses information on student retention, persistence and completion of programs to make improvements as warranted by the data.
RVC uses student retention, persistence, and completion data to make improvements. Student success data presented in KPI reports and the 2022-2023 State of the College (page 27) suggest that, although RVC students are retained at a higher rate than students at peer institutions and other public 2-year institutions in Illinois and across the country, they take longer to graduate than students in all three comparison groups. The following action plans are being implemented to enhance student persistence, retention, and graduation rates:

- Case-management advising has been implemented to help students develop and adhere to a path toward completion within their program of choice.
- RVC created a Developmental Education department in Spring 2022 to address developmental education challenges.
- The Office of Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion offers campus-wide programming and opportunities towards creating a sense of belonging for all, which is a best practice and strong predictor for both persistence and retention.
- Academic Alerts are used to refer students who are not utilizing the appropriate student support services such as Math Lab, tutoring and writing centers, and the TRIO program.
- The Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) Plan includes multiple actions related to student retention.
- Academic Deans collaborate with Student Services Deans to schedule various modalities of classes at different times to serve diverse student populations.
- The Academic Strategic Plan identifies actionable steps that rely upon data from program reviews to ensure continuous improvement processes are in place to identify and close equity gaps among racial, gender and socioeconomic populations.

Furthermore, the College implemented CRM software that will better facilitate communication among advisors, faculty members, and academic support personnel. This approach will enable staff members to monitor and track student progress. For example. The Dean of Students office oversees the Early Alert procedures. This allows faculty members to provide an alert on any student enrolled in their courses who exhibit early signs of struggling, such as low test grades, poor attendance, not having books and supplies, as well as a host of other key performance indicators.

The use of disaggregated data has increased RVC's ability to both identify and assist various student groups. The Perkins Team created resource guides for special populations (e.g., students with disabilities, students experiencing homelessness, and English language learners. This information is available on the Helpful Resources Page of the college website. In addition, achievement gaps for Black/African American students are being addressed through the Black Mail Completion Initiative.

The College has implemented multiple measures for placement along with academic supports to encourage persistence and reduce time to completion. Students are placed in entry-level courses if any of the following metrics have been satisfied:

- Overall GPA of 3.0 or higher for applicable English and Math courses.
- ACT score of 19+ in Reading and English and an 18+ in Math,
- SAT score of 480+ in Reading and Writing, and 470+ in Math,
- GED of 165 in Language Arts and 165 in Mathematical Reasoning,
- OR Transcripts from other colleges for transfer students.

In addition, new processes have been identified that would provide more options for students to be successful. The College accepts AP credits, CLEP, and International Baccalaureate transcripts. Students who do not meet any of these conditions may defer placement. Placement

deferment requires students to fill out a Prerequisite Deferral Form and submit it to the Dean of Student Success for review. If approved, these students can enroll in entry-level/gateway courses such as General Education Math (MTH 115), College Algebra (MTH 120), College Algebra and Trigonometry (MTH-132), Math for Elementary Teachers I (MTH 216), and Elements of Statistics (MTH-220). Self-guided placement guidelines have been added to our website to assist new students. RVC strongly urge all new students to meet with an academic advisor to assist in selecting courses. These measures are essential to increase student success.

4.C.4. The institution's processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing information on student retention, persistence and completion of programs reflect good practice. (Institutions are not required to use IPEDS definitions in their determination of persistence or completion rates. Institutions are encouraged to choose measures that are suitable to their student populations, but institutions are accountable for the validity of their measures.)

RVC uses IPEDS definitions for retention, graduation rates, and outcome measures to facilitate comparison to peer institutions and other public 2-year colleges. The addition of IPEDS outcome measures that include part-time and transfer-in students has provided a more complete measure of student success for community colleges.

In addition to these widely accepted measures of student success, RVC analyzes persistence and retention of all students (not just the first-time, full-time student population). RVC defines student persistence as the percent of students enrolling in consecutive fall and spring terms (e.g., Fall 2020 and Spring 2021). RVC defines retention as the percent of students enrolling in consecutive fall terms (e.g., Fall 2020 and Fall 2021). RVC calculates student persistence and retention rates by dividing the number of students enrolled in both terms by the number of students enrolled in term one, less completers who subsequently left the College. These completers are not included in the calculation because they have achieved their community college goal and are not expected to return for subsequent terms. The persistence and retention rate reports that include all students also disaggregated data that helps determine which subgroups need additional interventions.

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4.S - Criterion 4 - Summary

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

Summary

Through the evidence provided, RVC has demonstrated its responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments and support services. The evidence also indicates that the College has in place and promotes continuous improvement processes that evaluate its effectiveness for teaching, support, and student learning. The statements below summarize the College's strengths, challenges, and actions as a result of its comprehensive review of Criterion 4.

Strengths

1. The College has woven the practice of analyzing disaggregated data with the process of program review.
2. The Academic Plan includes evaluating the effectiveness of programs and courses. This is through the process of course and program evaluation.
3. Processes have been established to evaluate the effectiveness of dual credit/dual enrollment.
4. The College has well-defined processes and timelines for course and program/discipline student learning outcomes assessment.
5. The College recently redesigned its institutional student learning outcomes.

Challenges

1. While faculty and staff participation in assessment has improved, more engagement is needed to ensure student outcomes are met.
2. More disaggregated data is needed to analyze intersectionality.
3. More understanding is needed of the importance of aligning all levels of assessment, including course, program and institutional.
4. Equity gaps exist for measures of student success (i.e., persistence, retention, and graduation rates).

Actions as a result of this comprehensive review

- Develop a process to ensure annual analysis of course completion data. The College is implementing the Caring Campus initiative, which will bring more attention to this data.
- The College is implementing the Black Male Completion Initiative to address retention and completion gaps.
- Increase advising outreach to all black/African American and Hispanic students.

5 - Institutional Effectiveness, Resources and Planning

The institution's resources, structures, processes and planning are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

5.A - Core Component 5.A

Through its administrative structures and collaborative processes, the institution's leadership demonstrates that it is effective and enables the institution to fulfill its mission.

1. Shared governance at the institution engages its internal constituencies—including its governing board, administration, faculty, staff and students—through planning, policies and procedures.
2. The institution's administration uses data to reach informed decisions in the best interests of the institution and its constituents.
3. The institution's administration ensures that faculty and, when appropriate, staff and students are involved in setting academic requirements, policy and processes through effective collaborative structures.

Argument

5.A.1 Shared governance at the institution engages its internal constituencies—including its governing board, administration, faculty, staff and students—through planning, policies and procedures.

There is not a common understanding of shared governance at RVC, which leads some internal constituents to believe they do not have a voice in decision making. This challenge is rooted in the history of administrative decision making. When shared governance is defined as a collaborative decision-making process, RVC absolutely engages its internal constituents though planning, policies and procedures. The governing board, administration, faculty, staff and students all have roles.

Governing Board
The elected Board of Trustees is the College's governing body. According to the [Board Policy Manual](#) (page 3), "[t]he job of the Board of Trustees is to govern, not manage, the College."

Further, "the Board of Trustees is responsible for the development and adoption of Board policies...The President is responsible for developing appropriate administrative procedures to effectuate Board policies."

The Board is comprised of seven (7) elected officials and one student trustee who is elected by the student body and serves as a liaison between the Student Government Association and the Board of Trustees. The Student Trustee has an advisory vote on all matters presented to the Board of Trustees. The regularly scheduled monthly Board Meeting include a Committee of the Whole and a Regular Board Meeting. Trustees also have a non-voting Trustee Liaison seat on the RVC Foundation Board of Directors where information is freely shared between the two boards. Trustees may also participate with Administration in negotiations with collective bargaining agreements, the HLC Committee Meetings, as well as other initiatives and campus events as their schedules permit.

The Board is responsible for hiring one college employee, which is the President, and holding that person accountable to mutually agreed upon goals.

Administration
The organizational structure at the College is mission-driven and designed to foster collaboration. The College welcomed a new president during the Fall semester of 2020, and under his leadership, the organizational structure was flattened to what is now referred to as the "Cabinet". Cabinet includes representation from all facets on campus, as evidence by the organizational chart, permitting all functional areas to be included in campus-wide decisions and improving communication of information between departments. This change in executive leadership and their vision and alignment of organizational support was an intentional effort to demonstrate a more inclusive approach to leadership.

Faculty
RVC faculty are represented by a union and have a collective bargaining agreement (CBA). During the last negotiation process, the Union and Administration worked together to enter into a longer than typical contract, an indicator of strengthening the relationship between faculty and administration. In efforts to engage with faculty, monthly contract review meetings are held with faculty representatives and administrators. Several decision-making and advisory committees are named in the faculty contract, ensuring input into planning, policies and procedures. These include:

- Labor-management
- Intellectual Property
- Bargaining
- Joint advisory committee to change faculty evaluation criteria
- Peer Review
- Contract Review
- Curriculum
- Academic Council
- Interview and hiring of adjunct faculty
- Search committees for college president and academic administrators

- Tenure
- e-Learning
- Health Insurance
- Professional Development
- Faculty Sabbatical Leave
- Administrative Sabbatical Leave
- Sick Leave Bank
- Faculty Association Council and Executive Council

The functions of some of these committees are described in 5.A.3. In addition, several cross-functional committees (e.g., Enrollment Management and the HLC Criterion Subcommittees) include faculty representatives.

Staff
Two staff groups (Police and Support Staff) also are unionized. The [CBA for the Fraternal Order of Police](#) ensures representation on the Health Insurance Committee and establishes a Risk Management Committee. The [CBA for the Support Staff Association](#) established a Safety Committee and a Sick Leave Bank Committee.

Although employees classified as Administration (ADM) and Professional Staff Association (PSA) are non-union, those two employee groups also meet regularly and influence planning, policies and procedures. For example, most administrators and some PSA employees are a part of the Leadership Development Institute (LDI) which focuses on coordination of leadership activities and execution of the strategic plan. The PSA elect officers who create monthly agendas, discuss topics relevant to their roles supporting our students, research recommendations about how to improve efficiencies at the College in support of RVC's strategic plan, and make recommendations to Cabinet.

Students
Engaging students in planning and committee work is an ongoing challenge for community colleges since their enrollment is short term and they do not reside on campus. Despite this challenge, RVC has a strong core of students who lead the Student Government Association, Campus Activities Board, and other clubs and organizations. The Student Trustee serves as a liaison among students, administration and the Board of Trustees, ensuring the student voice is considered in decision making. Student viewpoints also are gathered through surveys such as the Community College Survey of Student Engagement and Viewfinder. Student leaders were included in process of preparing the HLC assurance argument by conducting a series of workshops designed to gather student input on the criteria for accreditation.

In addition to the specific roles of each constituent group, several college committees have cross-functional membership and include representation from administration, faculty, staff, and sometimes trustees and students. These committees include Commencement, Curriculum, HLC Accreditation, Enrollment Management, Emergency Response Team, Promoting an Inclusive Community (PAIC), Employee Appreciation, Insurance, Special Populations Work Groups, and Professional Development committees. Furthermore, the DEI team leads several commissions with cross-functional membership including the Americans with Disability Act (ADA),

Women's, Race and Ethnicity, Safe Zone (LGBTQ+), and Hispanic Serving Institution commissions.

5.A.2. The institution's administration uses data to reach informed decisions in the best interests of the institution and its constituents.

Each year the administration prepares a State of the College, which includes data trends related to district demographics, enrollment, student success, employees, finance, and community. Data from the State of the College informed the 2022-2027 Strategic Plan and also measures progress toward strategic plan targets. Here are some examples of how the State of the College information allows the administration to make decisions in the best interest of the institution and its constituents:

- Educational attainment in the RVC district indicates a need to provide education and training opportunities for the adult student population. In 2023, only 33% of adults 25 and over had an associate degree or higher. In response, the College is working on pathways from adult education (e.g., ESL and GED) to college-level education, pathways from noncredit training to credit programs, and recruitment of nontraditional students (age 25 and over).
- Labor market projections show 8% growth in health care and social assistance jobs from 2023 to 2028. This industry is already one of the largest in the region. These data support implementation of the state-funded Pipeline for the Advancement of the Healthcare Workforce program and the College's decision to bring back the Human Services program.
- Enrollment trends help the College forecast financial trends and make staffing decisions.
- Students Success data that show high retention rates and low on-time completion rates support the decision to implement case-management advising.
- Equity gaps in student success support the decision to start a chapter of Student African American Brotherhood (SAAB) to support men of color as they work toward completion.
- Results of the 2021 Employee Culture Survey led to focus on professional development and communication. Improvements include implementation of the Golden Eagles professional development program and monthly leadership updates.
- Faculty demographic data compared to regional demographic data emphasized a need to diversify the faculty and some staff positions. As a result, search committee training was revised to incorporate implicit bias training developed by the DEI Department. The selection process also requires behavior-based questions, a standardized faculty interview guide, and standard DEI questions.
- Financial data are used to monitor compliance with the Operating Fund Balance Policy. In addition, district property tax projections, enrollment trends, and state planning are used to create budget forecasts.

In addition to the annual State of the College, Institutional Research and Effectiveness publishes several data briefs and key performance indicator reports on its webpage. Data published in these reports also are used to make decisions in the best interests of the institution and its constituents. For example, the AAC&U Truth & Racial Healing Committee Onboarding used these reports to

understand the current student profile and equity gaps so they could create a vision for their work.

Labor market data are used to ensure relevant academic programs. Every two years, RVC writes a [Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment](#) to inform Perkins grant programming and budget are aligned with community needs. [Program Development and Review Reports](#) from Lightcast are used to review academic programs on a five-year program review cycle and to research evidence of need before introducing new programs. In addition, industry advisory boards are consulted when developing and redesigning programs. This work has resulted in [50 program changes between 2014 and 2024](#).

In 2022, the College worked with a consultant to conduct a [Compensation Study](#) Position descriptions were evaluated for internal equity and compared to similar positions at other organizations to determine external equity. As a result, a new salary matrix was created, positions were re-graded, and $368,000 were allocated to pay increases for FY2024.

Financial reporting is readily available through Self-Service on Colleague where budgets managers and others with access can see current budget, actual, encumbrance information and have the capability to drill down into the numbers for the details of the transactions. In addition, the Finance Department has implemented Prophix for the budget process and will be continuing to levy that resource to provide additional information.

5.A.3. The institution's administration ensures that faculty and, when appropriate, staff and students are involved in setting academic requirements, policy and processes through effective collaborative structures.
Administration ensures that faculty are involved in setting academic requirements, policies and processes through Academic Council, Curriculum Committee, the e-Learning Committee, and Curricular Assessment Committee.

Academic Council
Academic Council was established to open lines of communication between faculty and administration. The council is co-chaired by two faculty, and membership includes:

Administration	Faculty
Chief Academic Officer	Two Faculty Co-chairs
Vice President of Student Services	Three Faculty-at-large Representative
Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness & Communications	Art & Social Sciences Representative
Executive Director of Instructional Design, Teaching & Innovation	Learning Support Representative

Dean of Arts & Social Sciences	Nursing & Allied Health Representative
Dean of Students	Math & Sciences Representative
Dean of Enrollment Services	Adult & Developmental Education Representative
Dean of Advising & Retention	
Curriculum Coordinator	
Executive Assistant to the CAO	

Faculty representatives gather agenda items and report back to their faculty constituents. Monthly meetings allow for conversations about faculty concerns and opportunities to provide input into academic requirements, policies and processes. Sample agenda from FY2024 include the following discussion topics:

- Impact of Schedule Adjustment Period on Student Success
- Retention Alerts
- Observer Status in Learning Management System
- Artificial Intelligence
- Academic Calendars
- Equity Plan
- Search Committee Training and Resources

Curriculum Committee
Section 6.21, Curriculum Development, of the Faculty Collective Bargaining Agreement establishes faculty oversite of curriculum and describes the purpose of Curriculum Committee. The CBA (page 39) states that "affirmation of new or revised courses, certificates, programs and degrees shall be determined by a majority vote of the faculty membership of the Curriculum Committee" before they are sent to the CAO for approval. The Curriculum Committee is comprised of faculty, staff and administrators. Faculty members are carefully selected so that each division has representation. When a faculty member leaves the committee, the appropriate dean is contacted to request a replacement.

Staff & Administration	**Faculty**
Chief Academic Officer	Two Career Technical Education Division Faculty

Executive Assistant to CAO	Two Nursing & Allied Health Division Faculty
Manager of Academic and Transfer Advising	Two Nursing & Allied Health Division Faculty
Director of Financial Aid	Two Communication & Humanities Division Faculty
Executive Director of Outcomes Assessment/HLC Liaison	Two Math & Sciences Division Faculty
Curriculum Coordinator	Two Arts & Social Sciences Division Faculty
Executive Director of Instructional Design, Teaching & Innovation	One Adult & Developmental Education Division Faculty
Instructional Designer	One Instructional Support Services Division Faculty
Vice President of Student Affairs	
Vice President of Career Technical Education & Workforce Development	
Registrar	
Coordinator Records & Registration	
Academic Program Specialist - Arts & Social Sciences	

e-Learning Committee
The e-Learning Committee ensures quality of online and hybrid courses by qualifying instructors to teach such courses. Faculty interested in teaching online must prepare and present an online course to the committee for peer review.

Assessment
The purpose of the Curricular Assessment Committee is to set expectations and provide support for course, program, and institutional assessment. Members of this committee include faculty,

staff, and administrators. In 2022, faculty were also included in revision of the Institutional Student Learning Outcomes through a series of roundtable activities.

Occasionally, academic requirements, policies and processes are prescribed by state or federal laws. Two recent examples include the Illinois Developmental Education Reform Act and the Illinois Dual Credit Quality Act. When this happens, faculty and appropriate staff are included in implementation planning.

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5.B - Core Component 5.B

The institution's resource base supports its educational offerings and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future.

1. The institution has qualified and trained operational staff and infrastructure sufficient to support its operations wherever and however programs are delivered.
2. The goals incorporated into the mission and any related statements are realistic in light of the institution's organization, resources and opportunities.
3. The institution has a well-developed process in place for budgeting and for monitoring its finances.
4. The institution's fiscal allocations ensure that its educational purposes are achieved.

Argument

5.B.1. The institution has qualified and trained operational staff and infrastructure sufficient to support its operations wherever and however programs are delivered.

Operational Staff
Operational staff are qualified and trained to support operations. Job descriptions are created for all positions, and minimum qualifications are included in each job description. During the talent selection process, Human Resources evaluates applicants to ensure that minimum qualifications are met by applicants so that only those who are qualified are advanced in the selection process and considered for employment.

New hire onboarding includes 30/60/90 Day Check-ins to be completed by the supervisor and employee. Each year, supervisors conduct stay-interviews and expectation planning and review meetings with their direct reports. As part of the expectation review process, leaders work with their direct reports to create development plans to ensure that employees have the skills necessary to perform their job duties in support of the college mission.

Professional development opportunities for staff include two professional development days each year and the Golden Eagles Academy. Professional development days include keynote speakers and breakout sessions. The Golden Eagles Academy was launched in 2023 and includes three tiers (Gold, Blue, and Gray) designed for various levels of development. In addition, the College hired Studer Education to assist Cabinet, Deans, Executive Directors, and Directors perform at their highest level. Cornerstone, an online resource loaded with over 3,000 training opportunities, is available as an on-demand training tool for staff. The Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion provides trainings and workshops and hosts campus and community events available to all employees.

Faculty have access to many of the same professional development opportunities as operational staff. Qualifications to teach are addressed in Criterion 3.A.3.

Technological Infrastructure

The College's technological infrastructure is sufficient to support its operations wherever and however programs are delivered. While RVC has offered online courses for several years, the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the growth of online offerings and the adoption of tools that facilitate remote learning and operations. These tools include Zoom, Teams, MS Office 365, Amazon Work Services (AWS), and Virtual Desktop Interface (VDI) with software such as CAD. Hyflex meeting spaces are available in the Student Center and Educational Resource Center for hybrid meetings.

Students have virtual access to course materials within the learning management system (Canvas) and remote access to library resources via the college website. Students and employees have 24-hour access to several operational resources within Colleague Self Service. Students can register for classes, see their schedule, and check their grades. Employees can clock in and out, request and approve leave time, and manage budgets.

Within the past five years, the College has invested in several technology tools to ensure efficient operations. The Salesforce Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system allows recruiters to customize messages to potential students and advisors to implement case-management advising. Watermark tools are used for assessment, accreditation, and curriculum management. Ad Astra is used for planning and monitoring the academic course schedule.

Physical Infrastructure
The College has a [Facilities Master Plan](#) to ensure facilities are sufficient to support operations and program delivery. In fall 2015, the Aviation Career Education Center opened at the Chicago-Rockford International Airport. This space is four times larger than the previous aviation facility, allowing for increased enrollment and a partnership one of the world's largest maintenance, repair and overhaul companies. In January 2022, the Advanced Technology Center (ATC) opened in Belvidere, IL. The ATC is the first location outside of Rockford and houses many of the College's Career and Technical Education programs, including CNC Machining, Mechatronics, Welding, and Truck Driver Training. The ATC flex lab was designed to be converted as needed for various programs and events. The College plans to open a downtown location in fall 2026 to better serve residents on the west side of the district. Programs planned for this new location include automotive and e-vehicle maintenance, collision repair, truck driver training, police training, early childhood education, human services, adult education, and refugee and immigrant services.

The [Capital and Construction Summary](#), presented to the Board in December 2023 provides an example of recent capital expenditures that support operations whenever and wherever programs are offered.

5.B.2. The goals incorporated into the mission and any related statements are realistic in light of the institution's organization, resources and opportunities.

The College's mission states that "Rock Valley College empowers students and community through lifelong learning, and the vision states that "Rock Valley College empowers the community to grow as a society of learners through well-designed educational pathways, leading to further education, rewarding careers, cultural enrichment, and economic-technological

development." These statements are supported by core values of learner-centered community, mutual respect, excellence, diversity, collaboration, innovation, and public trust.

These statements and values are brought to life by the 2022-2027 Strategic Plan, which is supported by four pillars:

- Pillar I: Access
- Pillar II: Exceptional Educational Opportunities
- Pillar III: Exceptional Training Opportunities
- Pillar IV: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Alignment and cascading goals allow the mission, vision, core values and strategic plan to become realistic given the institution's organization, resources, and opportunities. Budget managers are required to align their annual requests with the strategic plan pillars, and supervisors are required to align their divisional objectives with strategic plan pillars during the expectation planning (i.e., annual goal setting) process. Cabinet members and many other leaders develop 90-day actions aligned with their annual goals and cascade these actions throughout the institution.
This approach ensures that the College's strategic goals are not only visionary but also are achievable.

Strategic plan updates offered during Board meetings, employee town halls, and professional development days provide evidence of success related to the plan.

- April 2023 Professional Development Day
- May 2023 Committee of the Whole
- August 2023 Committee of the Whole
- March 2024 Professional Development Day
- May 2024 Committee of the Whole
- September 2024 Professional Development Day

5.B.3. The institution has a well-developed process in place for budgeting and for monitoring its finances.

The College is committed to well-developed financial and budgetary processes.

The annual budget is completed using zero-based budgeting and is built from the bottom-up with parameters in place. Budgets are prepared by each budget manager and reviewed by the respective vice president. The Chief Financial Officer provides final approval. This process permits the individual departments to have direct input on their annual budget. Budget managers are required to include justification of their requests, as well as provide strategic plan pillar alignment. Budget managers should be making their requests for funding to support educational programming. If the expenditure is considered a capital expenditure, it should be brought to the appropriate Vice President's attention and brought to the Cabinet for discussion regarding funding the item and incorporated in the Capital Expenditure Plan.

Each month a [Cash and Investment Report](#) is prepared and presented to the Board of Trustees. This report provides information regarding cash and investment balances demonstrating the coverage for future expenses. Additionally, a [Quarterly Financial Report](#) is also prepared and presented to the Board of Trustees which reflects actual revenue and expense, as well as additional information regarding compensation, and health insurance costs.

In addition to the annual audit, Rock Valley College also participates in the Government Financial Officers Association Certification of Achievement program and prepares the [Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR)](#). The College has been the recipient of the [Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Report from the Government Finance Officers Association](#) for 17 consecutive years. The Annual Comprehensive Financial Report is evidence of transparency and full disclosure to readers, so they have the information to evaluate the financial health of the College themselves.

The College is also required to prepare several reports for the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB). Some of these reports are included in the Annual Financial Comprehensive Report (e.g., [Uniform Financial Statements and Certification of Chargeback Reimbursement](#) - page 92, [Consolidated Year End Financial Report (CYEFR)](#) – page 109, and [Schedule of Enrollment Data and Reconciliation of Total Semester Credit Hours](#) – page 144).

Systems are in place to manage expenditures to budget throughout the fiscal year. For example, expenditures paid through accounts payable are checked against the purchase order or blanket purchase order and the budget to ensure that resources have been allocated. If there is insufficient budget for an expenditure, the department is notified and must identify a budget transfer from another line to maintain the College's overall budget.

At the end of calendar year 2022, the Finance Department began implementation of Prophix for budgeting, forecasting and financial reporting. Prophix was used in the preparation of the FY2024 and FY2025 budgets. It provides budget managers access to their budget workbook in a format that feels like Excel. It provides two years of prior history, the current original budget and adjusted budget (after any budget transfers), and current actual balances. Budget managers are asked to enter their budget for the next fiscal year, including [comments justifying expenses](#) and how their budget ties to the strategic plan. Once the budget has been entered, the budget moves through an approval process, which includes approval by the divisional vice-president and the chief financial officer. Budget managers have the capability to export their budget from Prophix into Excel to retain for reference.

In addition, a [Capital Expenditure Plan](#) is presented to the Board of Trustees when excess revenues are available to be transferred to the Capital Fund (Fund 03) for larger expenditures to maintain the College's facilities, fixtures and equipment. This is included in the budget for the next fiscal year.

5.B.4. The institution's fiscal allocations ensure that its educational purposes are achieved.
Fiscal allocations are determined through the creation of the annual operating and capital budgets. Academic department budgets are developed by deans and directors to ensure expenditures align with the strategic plan and current educational needs of the college. The

College places an emphasis on academics as demonstrated in the [audited financial statements for fiscal year 2023](#). Instruction and academic support received 30.4% of the Operating expenses. Student services and institutional support received 28.1%. The remaining FY23 expenditures are attributed to scholarships, grants and waivers (8.5%), plant and operations (8.3%), public service (10.6%), auxiliary services (2.0%), and depreciation (12.1%).

The college is fortunate to receive grants that support strategic and critical initiatives. These grants can be utilized for technical/instructional equipment, training for faculty and staff, and student support. One example of this is Perkins. Perkins provides funding for curriculum development for CTE programs and ensures that the programs have industry standard equipment. Perkins funds have been used to
purchase instructional equipment for Fire Science (e.g., mine safety appliances, self-contained breathing apparatuses and personal protective equipment). Perkins also provides professional development such as travel to conferences or trainings and provides funding for mentors of new faculty and adjuncts to ensure they are supported in their transition to teaching.

Other grants received through the Illinois Community Colleges Board (ICCB) also provide opportunities to purchase equipment needed for academic programs. These grants include the Workforce Equity Initiative (WEI), Pipeline for the Advancement of the Healthcare Workforce (PATH), and Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity (ECACE). The WEI grant was able to purchase a Reach Truck for Logistics and Supply Chain courses. The PATH grant purchased a SimBaby Manikin for training in Nursing and Respiratory Care. ECACE was used to purchase children's furniture for the Early Childhood classroom.

The RVC Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation supports activities of the College through fund raising from private sources, faculty and staff. The RVC Foundation manages endowment funds established by donors that are intended to assist with the continued maintenance or assist in the acquisition of fixtures and equipment. The Rock Valley Foundation builds regional relationships to secure resources that advance our student population. Donations and scholarships provide support for both current and future students. The Foundation also is utilized by the College to assist in fundraising for large capital expenditures. A recent example of this would be for the RVC Tech Bus. Fundraising paid for the transformation of the bus and the computers and other technology required as well as operation for the first year.

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5.C - Core Component 5.C

The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning and improvement.

1. The institution allocates its resources in alignment with its mission and priorities, including, as applicable, its comprehensive research enterprise, associated institutes and affiliated centers.
2. The institution links its processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning and budgeting.
3. The planning process encompasses the institution as a whole and considers the perspectives of internal and external constituent groups.
4. The institution plans on the basis of a sound understanding of its current capacity, including fluctuations in the institution's sources of revenue and enrollment.
5. Institutional planning anticipates evolving external factors, such as technology advancements, demographic shifts, globalization, the economy and state support.
6. The institution implements its plans to systematically improve its operations and student outcomes.

Argument

5.C.1. The institution allocates its resources in alignment with its mission and priorities, including, as applicable, its comprehensive research enterprise, associated institutes and affiliated centers.

Rock Valley College allocates its resources in alignment with its mission and priorities. This is evidenced by the allocation of operational and grant budgets to support each of the four Strategic Plan Pillars.

Pillar I: Access
In Fall 2026, the College will open a new location, RVC Downtown West, which will greatly enhance access to higher education and workforce training. The site was carefully chosen to be embedded in an underserved area of the district. In addition, the site is served by four existing bus routes and is within walking distance from the Rockford Mass Transit District transfer center.

College leaders are aware that building facilities does not guarantee access to education. Many students experience financial barriers and competing priorities, so several grants have been secured to cover the cost of tuition and provide wrap-around services (e.g., TRiO and the Workforce Equity Initiative). TRiO grant budgets support access for low-income, first-generation, and students with disabilities. The Workforce Equity Initiative (WEI) grant covers tuition for students working toward employment in the areas of automotive maintenance, CNC operation, dental assisting, mechatronics, nursing aid, truck driver training, and welding. At least 60% of students in WEI programs must be African American. Additional grants support students pursuing careers in the trades, early childhood education, and healthcare.

Pillar II: Exceptional Education Opportunities
In 2022, the College opened its Advanced Technology Center to provide exceptional educational opportunities in the areas of CNC Machining, Mechatronics, Welding, and other Career Technical Education programs. This state-of-the-art facility includes CNC equipment selected with input from industry experts, a welding lab that supports hands-on experience with several welding tools and techniques, and a flex lab that can be used for a variety of educational programs and events. In December 2020 ([BR#7778](BR#7778)), the Board approved the ATC Sponsorship Program, committing $1.5 million to cover tuition in programs offered at the new facility. This program was extended in December 2021 ([BR#7883](BR#7883)) and March 2023 ([BR#8022](BR#8022)) and implemented until all funds were expended. The ATC Sponsorship Program also supports Pillar I: Access.

RVC also allocates resources to student support services that enhance the educational experience. In FY2022, Student Affairs onboarded a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software. This software has improved communication with prospective students throughout the application and registration process. It has also facilitated case-management advising, which helps advisors keep students on track for program completion.

When operational budgets are not sufficient to support exceptional educational experiences, they are supplemented with grant funds. The Perkins grant budget includes funds for curriculum development, faculty professional development, and equipment purchases. The College recently received a Strengthening Community Colleges - Round 4 grant that will fund a career specialist position and allow for enhancements in work-based learning.

Pillar II: Exceptional Training Opportunities
This pillar includes training opportunities for regional workforce development and training opportunities for RVC employees. In summer 2024, the Workforce Development Department launched a collision repair course. Of the eight students in the first cohort, seven completed the course and secured job offers from their internship hosts. In the first six months of 2024, Customized Training was provided to 176 participants employed at industry partners such as Woodward, Kadon Precision Machining, and General Mills.

To create exceptional training opportunities for its own employees, the College has invested money in human resources and software. Examples include the addition of two positions called Professional Development Specialists. One of the two Professional Development Specialists focuses their support on Faculty development, and the other focuses on staff development. Professional development software, Cornerstone on Demand, provides an online training platform.

Pillar IV: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
In FY2022, the College added a DEI Office staffed by a vice president, executive assistant, and two full-time specialists. Later an ADA Compliance Coordinator was added to the DEI staff. DEI budget covers one symposium each semester (one for institutions and another students) and, in FY2024, the Viewfinder Student Culture Survey.

The DEI Office is not the only place where resources are allocated to support Pillar IV. The Promoting and Inclusive Community (PAIC) committee has a budget to support its mission to "lead the college community by enhancing and sustaining an institutional culture of equity and social justice that fosters diversity and inclusion." The Perkins grant supports the Special Populations Work Groups, which work to provide support and remove barriers for student who have disabilities, are economically disadvantaged, are pursuing careers nontraditional for their gender, are single parents or single pregnant students, are out-of-workforce, experiencing homelessness, are English learners, have parents who are on active military duty or have aged out of foster care. In FY2023, the College contracted with Modern Campus to launch a website redesign with a focus on improving accessibility. The following year, the Marketing and Communications team launched a new Intranet for employees that also focuses on accessibility.

5.C.2. The institution links its processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning and budgeting.
The processes for assessment of student learning and evaluation of operations are linked together by an institutional commitment to continuous improvement, and results of assessment and evaluation are used for planning and budgeting. With the implementation of Watermark Planning and Self Study, the College has infrastructure to conduct assessment, evaluation, and planning within the same tool. Some departments (e.g., English) already use this software for both.

Student success data included in the State of the College (page 27) suggest that, although RVC students are retained at a higher rate than students at peer institutions and other public, two-year institutions in Illinois and across the country, they take longer to graduate than all three comparison groups. Case-management advising was implemented in academic year 2023-2024 to improve persistence toward completion.

Equity gaps (page 36) in student success are evident when retention and completion data are disaggregated by race and ethnicity. These gaps are especially large for Black and African American students when compared to other racial/ethnic groups. The College's Black Male Completion Initiative, including chartering a chapter of Student African American Brotherhood in 2023, is aimed at ensuring young men of color have the education-to-career support they need to achieve lives of purpose and success.

Annual financial planning utilizes zero-based budgeting, which allows for the results of program review and assessment for student learning to inform budget requests. Annual budget requests require selection of a strategic plan pillar for each line item and detailed justification. Justification could include findings from assessment or program review. Program reviews, inclusive of recommendations related to assessment, also are presented to college leadership to reinforce the need for requested resources.

Grant budgets also are aligned with evaluation of programs and institutional planning. For example, the annual Perkins plan and corresponding budget are informed by a Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment (CLNA). In addition, programs can only receive Perkins funding if they have an approved Program of Study on file with ICCB. Examples of Perkins funded resources include personal protective equipment for Fire Science, audio and video equipment for

Mass Communications, and equipment for the Media Lab.

Evaluation of operations and strategic planning also impact the college's budget for compensation. In FY22, several positions were added based on these evaluations and need for human capital to carry out the college's strategic plan and priorities. Some of the positions added in FY22 include Director Development & Alumni Relations, Grant Coordinator, Multimedia Content Creator, Talent Acquisition Specialist, Professional Development Specialist, ADA Compliance Coordinator, DEI Specialists (2), Dean Adult & Developmental Education, and Executive Director Industrial Development. The Student Services and IT departments were also reorganized to better support the College's mission and priorities.

5.C.3. The planning process encompasses the institution as a whole and considers the perspectives of internal and external constituent groups.

RVC's planning process encompasses the institution as a whole. The college implements a structured planning framework derived from the strategic plan. Based on the strategic plan goals, division-specific plans have been created and implemented for academic affairs, enrollment management, industry partnerships and community engagement, professional development, facilities and equity. These plans were created with input from various stakeholders.

RVC's planning process considers the perspectives of internal constituents. Contributors to the 2021-2024 Academic Plan included the Associate Vice President of STEM, Executive Director of Online Development and Innovation, Executive Director of Outcomes Assessment and HLC Liaison, Vice President of Equity and Inclusion, Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness & Communications, Vice President of Liberal Arts and Adult Education, Vice President of Student Affairs, and a member of the Board of Trustees. These individuals brought a broad perspective from various college units. Development of the next academic plan is underway and utilizes an even broader planning technique. Workshops were held in Spring 2023 to gather feedback on the current plan, and a session was held during the September 2024 Professional Development Day to gain input into the Academic Strategic Plan 2.0. Similarly, the Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) Steering Committee (page 5) included broad representation. This team met bi-weekly for several months to develop the SEM Plan. The 2023 Facilities Master Plan Update gathered input from faculty, staff, and students through a series of focus groups (page 94).

Despite efforts to reach all internal groups, participation can be limited by work schedules, competing priorities, or lack of interest. As a result, the College tends to regularly include the same groups in planning (e.g., Foundation) and some stakeholders are not aware of changes and implications until they occur. Project leaders are continually trying to address this challenge.

RVC's planning process considers the perspectives of external constituents. Each career technical education program has an advisory board that provides input on industry and employer needs. Input from advisory boards also is used to write a Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment (CLNA) every four years. In 2023, RVC hosted a K20 Education Summit to collaborate with regional school districts. The College is planning its second summit for November 2024. In addition, RVC employees serve on Boards and regional workgroups to facilitate collaboration

across the region. These include Alignment Rockford, Region 1 Planning Council, Rockford Promise, and the Goodwill Partner Connection.

5.C.4. The institution plans on the basis of a sound understanding of its current capacity, including fluctuations in the institution's sources of revenue and enrollment.

RVC makes plans based on a sound understanding of its current capacity. The Strategic Plan Scorecard includes several metrics related to financial health. These include credit hour enrollment, non-credit enrollment net revenue, and unit cost. The College constantly monitors credit hour enrollment and provides monthly enrollment updates to the Board of Trustees. The administration and Board also regularly monitor other sources of revenue and expenses through Fiscal Vital Signs, Cash and Investment Reports, and the annual State of the College which includes unit cost data (page 62) and a 10-Year Financial Forecast. At the end of the year, excess revenues are used to maintain reserves, invest in capital projects, or fund other specific initiatives.

The College considers fluctuations in revenue sources. As a community college, RVC's three main sources of revenue are local property taxes, state apportionments, and student tuition and fees. The 10-Year Financial Forecast created by the Chief Financial Officer can be adjusted to examine the impact that revenue fluctuations could have on the College budget. This allows leadership to anticipate fiscal implications of changes in revenues or expenses and make adjustments.

Administration is aware of the impact property tax revenue has on the College budget. The College currently levies the maximum rate approved by referendum for the operating funds. Changes in property tax revenue are directly related to changes in the Equalized Assessed Value (EAV) of properties within the tax district. EAV has increased steadily since 2016, with the greatest increase occurring in 2023 as home prices increased after the COVID-19 pandemic. The concern would be the impact of a "housing bubble burst." If home prices artificially increased due to the economy and then there was a downward adjustment in home values, EAVs and the corresponding revenue from property taxes would decrease. Attention is paid to housing value trends in the district and economic adjustments.

State apportionments are monitored for regular payment, and attention is paid to news from the State capital regarding the State budget and allocations. In FY2016, Illinois did not pass a State budget, which lead the College to design budgets with contingencies that reduce reliance on State revenue. State funding increased from 2018 to 2023, however the community colleges in Illinois are underfunded by approximately 80% as costs have increased at a faster rate due to inflationary factors. Illinois also has recently announced that, after a couple years of surplus, it is now projecting a deficit.

The College carefully considers fluctuations in enrollment. Revenue from tuition and fees (i.e., enrollment revenue) is the primary source of revenue over which the institution has some control. The College was projecting an upward trend in credit hour enrollment from 2019 and 2020 until the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on enrollment in fiscal years 2021, 2022, and 2023. Despite enrollment declines, revenue generated from tuition and fees have remained fairly

stable due to increases in tuition and the implementation of differential tuition for career technical education (CTE) courses.

The College cannot solely rely on tuition increases to maintain a balanced budget. Per ILCS 805/6 of the *Public Community College Act* and ICCB Rule 1501.505, in-district tuition and fees may not exceed one-third of the per capita cost as defined in the chargeback reimbursement calculation. In addition to enrollment revenue, the College began monitoring [instructional unit cost](page 62) (page 62) in FY2015. The goal is to maintain the margin between unit cost revenue at +/- $10 for credit programs. The College intentionally reduced its schedule offerings to increase section fill rates with the goal of reducing the difference between unit revenue and unit cost. As a result, between FY2015 and FY2018, the College reduced the differential between unit cost and unit revenue from $(43.09) to $(3.62). In FY2020, the Board approved a $25 per credit hour tuition differential for CTE courses that improved the unit cost to positive $9.14 per credit hour in FY2021 when fill rates hit their peak. In 2022 and FY2023, fill rates declined. In FY2023 the average differential between unit revenue and unit cost was still positive at $1.42.

College leadership is also aware of the impending enrollment cliff facing higher education. Knowing that the high-school age population is expected to decline, has led RVC to focus on recruitment of adult learners. These individuals have been divided into three categories: non-traditional-age students, students moving from non-credit programs to credit programs, and Adult Education students (e.g., GED and ESL) who are ready for college-level work.

5.C.5. Institutional planning anticipates evolving external factors, such as technology advancements, demographic shifts, globalization, the economy and state support.
Some of the impacts of state support and demographic (age) shifts on budget and enrollment planning are described in 5.C.4.

State Support
Institutional planning further anticipates state support by monitoring the priorities of grant funds administered by state agencies. For the past several years, grant opportunities funneled through the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) have focused on workforce training and equity. RVC has successfully applied for competitive workforce grants such as the Workforce Equity Initiative, Rev Up Electric Vehicles, Trades School Grant Program, and Noncredit Workforce Training Program. The Illinois Department of Economic Opportunity is administering funds associated with the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act. RVC has partnered with the Local Workforce Innovation Board and other entities to apply for grants under this program. In addition, the RVC President has strengthened relationships with elected officials, which has resulted in additional state support. For example, DCEO has provided a grant opportunity to fund demolition activities at the anticipated Downtown West location.

Demographic Shifts
The annual State of the College (SOTC) includes a section devoted to [district demographics](page 8) (page 8). Total population of the tri-county region decreased by 1.6% from 2014 to 2023 and is projected to remain flat through 2028. For the first time in several years, the 2024 SOTC data projected slight growth in the age ranges that contain high school students and traditional

college-age students. This information is accepted with caution as an enrolment cliff is projected to begin in 2025. Educational attainment in the tri-county region indicates a need to provide education and training opportunities for the nontraditional (age 25 and older) student population. This region is less educated than the state of Illinois and the nation as a whole. One-third (33%) of adults aged 25 and older have earned a college degree, compared to 45% in Illinois and 44% in the United States.

Economy
The effect of the economy on property tax revenue was discussed in 5.C.4. The economy also plays a role in enrollment trends. For community colleges, enrollments typically increase with unemployment rates (page 14) as people go back to school for upskilling or reskilling. Job projections by industry (page 15) help the College determine whether it is offering programs in alignment with workforce needs.

Technology Advances
Advances in technology, along with the COVID-19 pandemic, have increased the number and quality of online course options. Simultaneously, technological advances have created a multitude of technology solutions designed to improve workplace productivity. RVC establishment of an IT Advisory Committee and data governance structure to minimize redundancies and maximize efficiencies through the use of technology solutions. The advisory committee also helps the IT department set priorities by using a project scoring rubric.

Globalization
In district tuition for online While an increase in online course offerings makes it possible for students to complete coursework anywhere in the world, most RVC students still live within the district. The interconnectedness of world cultures is addressed by the Institutional Student Learning Outcomes (ISLO).The cultural competence ISLO states that "students will develop an awareness of their own cultural values and how they differ from the cultural beliefs of others in a variety of contexts both local and global."

5.C.6. The institution implements its plans to systematically improve its operations and student outcomes.
RVC is committed to implementing its plans to systematically improve operations and student outcomes. Cabinet holds itself accountable for implementing the College Strategic Plan by maintaining a scorecard aligned with strategic plan goals and providing regular updates to the Board, employees, and other stakeholders.

Strategic plan updates are shared with the Board of Trustees in the form of Quarterly Updates and other presentations during the Committee of the Whole.

Committee of the Whole	Strategic Plan Updates
January 2024	Illinois Board of Higher Education Equity Plan

February 2024	Case Management Advising Marketing Plan - RVC Downtown-West
March 2024	Non-credit Workforce Metrics
April 2024	-----
May 2024	Adult Education Program Overview Quarterly Strategic Plan Update
June 2024	Adult Recruitment Metrics
July 2024	Downtown West Campus Update

Updates are provided to employees at the annual town hall meeting and professional development days. Updates are provided to external stakeholders during events such as the K-20 Summit. Recent success stories shared with employees at the September 2024 Professional Development Day include the number of grants secured to remove financial barriers for students, development of an assessment tool kit to improve student learning outcomes, the inaugural collision repair class resulting in all employment for all completers, and actions implemented to improve communication in response to the Employee Culture Survey. These examples demonstrate how RVC implements plans to improve operations and student outcomes. Graduation rates provide evidence that these strategies have impacted student outcomes. Students who began in Fall 2020 have higher normal time and 150% of normal time graduation rates than those students who began in Fall 2019.

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5.S - Criterion 5 - Summary

The institution's resources, structures, processes and planning are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

Summary

Through the evidence provided, RVC has demonstrated that its resources, structures, and processes are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities. The college engages in strategic planning that guides, as well as supports, budgetary and financial decisions that address the mission. The statements below summarize the College's strengths, challenges, and actions as a result of its comprehensive review of Criterion 5.

Strengths

1. The annual State of the College report, financial projections, key performance indicator reports, and strategic plan scorecard metrics provide data that enable leaders to make informed decisions.

2. There are several joint committees between faculty and administration that work together to set academic requirements (e.g., Curriculum Committee, Academic Council, and Contract Review Committee).

3. The Facilities Master Plan includes spaces that will support current and future academic programs.

4. Budget managers can monitor their budgets in real time with Self Service.

Challenges

1. The College lacked a centralized location for standard operating procedures and processes.

2. The college lacked a strong data governance structure.

3. Post-covid retirements left vacancies, some of which have been difficult to fill.

4. Covid distracted resources away from strategic priorities.

5. Siloed planning sometimes results in duplication of efforts that impact budget, time, and efficiency.

Action as a result of this comprehensive review

- The College created a centralized location and standardized process for documenting standard operating procedures.
- The College engaged with Ellucian for a data governance consultation resulting in several recommendations for improvement. The College has begun to implement these recommendations.
- Implementation of Informer 5 has resulted in the creation of datasets.
- RVC recently implemented several salary increases based on a comprehensive market compensation study conducted by a third-party consultant.

Sources

There are no sources.