

Assurance Argument

Maricopa Community Colleges-Rio Salado Community College

Review date: 02-09-2026

1 - Mission

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

1.A. Mission Alignment

The institution's educational programs, enrollment profile and scope of operations align with its publicly articulated mission.

Argument

Rio Salado College (RSC) is one of 10 institutions in the Maricopa County Community College District (MCCCD), [one of the largest](#) community college districts in the nation. A seven-member elected Governing Board oversees all 10 colleges; however, each MCCCD institution is individually accredited and has a unique mission.

RSC's [mission documents](#) reflect the college's ongoing focus on learner empowerment, anticipating students' needs, the future of the workforce, and serving the community.

RSC's vision, mission, and values are:

VISION

Empower learners everywhere through innovative education.

MISSION

We redefine the educational experience by anticipating the needs of our students and future workforce. We support learners where they are and provide high-quality, flexible, and accessible education to empower individual goal attainment, foster partnerships, and strengthen communities.

VALUES

Rio Salado College honors everyone's unique qualities with respect and dignity. We value you.

Mission Development

RSC's mission documents were originally developed during the comprehensive planning and visioning process for the 2020-24 RSC Strategic Plan, which included [input](#) from students, employees, and community members. After RSC's 2022 comprehensive visit, MCCCD adopted a new strategic framework, which evolved into the [MCCCD 2023-2026 Strategic Plan](#). MCCCD also adopted a [new mission in 2023](#). Following the adoption of MCCCD's new mission, RSC reviewed the college's mission documents as part of its alignment and strategic planning process for 2024-2026. This review included the Executive Team (President, VPs, Associate VPs, and Faculty Senate President), the [President's Cabinet](#), the Development Team (Faculty Chairs and staff with a rank of Associate Dean or higher), and the [Strategic Alignment Committee](#). The 2024-2026 strategic planning process is discussed extensively in Criterion 4.C.

More recently, an additional part of RSC's mission review included a [survey](#) administered to faculty, staff and administrators participating at the Fall 2024 college-wide planning day. The survey results confirmed that the existing Mission and Values aligned with RSC's purpose, service to students, strategic plans, and current initiatives as indicated below:

- How well does the current mission statement explain Rio Salado College's purpose?
 - 83% responded extremely/very well
- How well does the current mission statement reflect the way in which we serve our students?
 - 81% responded extremely/very well
- How well does the current mission statement provide effective guidance on prioritizing work and aligning resources?
 - 74% responded extremely/very well

Following the Executive Orders issued in January, 2025, the [President's Cabinet](#) reviewed the mission documents. After discussion and a unanimous vote, [bulleted items](#) from the 2020-2024 values statement were removed for compliance purposes, and the overarching value statement "Rio Salado College honors everyone's unique qualities with respect and dignity" was retained. In addition, conforming edits were made to the Strategic Plan, which were approved by the Executive Team.

The four goals in the 2024-2026 RSC Strategic Plan [align directly with the College mission](#).

Educational Programs

RSC is a public community college, and consistent with its mission, provides affordable access to [academic programs](#) across a wide spectrum, spanning degree or certificate programs targeted for those desiring career advancement or advanced degree attainment; general education courses; college readiness courses; special-interest courses in both credit and [non-credit formats](#); workforce development certificate programs; adult basic education; English language acquisition; and post-baccalaureate teaching credentials.

These offerings align with RSC's mission to meet the needs of its students and future workforce by providing high-quality, flexible, and accessible education, and will be described in detail in Criterion 3.

Enrollment Profile

RSC's enrollment profile is consistent with its stated mission of providing education to "empower individual goal attainment, foster partnerships, and strengthen communities." The [current student population](#) includes online learners, adult education, dual enrollment, corporate and government partnership programs, military and veterans, incarcerated re-entry, and students from across the country. These cohorts include many nontraditional students that require accessible education outside of a typical college campus or program. The enrollment profile is detailed below (some may not total 100% because of unreported responses):

Undergraduate Population (AY24-25): 44,149 students

Online: 23,844

Dual enrollment: 9,824

Adult education: 6,195
Educational services partnerships: 3,306
Veterans: 1,428
Incarcerated reentry: 1,306
Active duty military: 545

14.4% full-time
85.6% part-time

40.8% male
58.2% female

43.3% first-generation college student

Ethnic Composition:
1.4% American Indian/Alaska Native
6.7% Asian-Pacific Islander
8.5% African American
31.5% Hispanic
42.6% Caucasian
9.1% Other or Undisclosed

Scope of Operations

RSC's primary focus since its founding has been its model for high-quality, low-cost, accessible educational opportunities. Historically, this has attracted credential-seeking students as well as non-credential seeking "supplemental" students, consisting of students taking courses for personal interest, job skills, or transfer to another college or university. The "supplemental" student population comprises roughly [75% of the student](#) population in a given academic year.

RSC's flexible schedule (40+ Monday start dates a year) and [low attendance costs](#) allow students both in Arizona and out-of-state to complete courses when they are unavailable at their home institutions and/or when scheduling conflicts arise. As indicated in the mission documents, RSC continues to serve students "where they are" and remains consistent with its roots as a nontraditional college while evolving to meet the needs of students in a 21st century context.

Publicly Articulated Mission

RSC presents the college vision, mission, and engagement practices on its [public website](#). In addition, the mission is shared in the [college catalog](#), and posted in public spaces throughout college buildings across all locations, such as in [elevators](#), at [building entrances](#), in the [library](#), and the [computer lab](#). Biweekly [All Employee Meetings](#) include activities that reinforce the college's mission and help employees connect their departmental work to the mission documents. In addition, RSC's mission is championed during [employee onboarding](#), a three day orientation known as "Rio Wave," which is discussed more fully in Criterion 4.B.

Sample Actions Aligned to RSC's Mission

- **Open Educational Resources (OER)**

Consistent with its mission of "support[ing] learners where they are and provid[ing] high-quality, flexible, and accessible education," RSC has focused increasingly on educational content strategies that prioritize digital course materials across all disciplines. In FY2024-25, RSC

offered 460 for-credit online courses (nearly 65% of all courses) using materials provided at no cost to students. The College's continued transition to OER and low/no cost materials is estimated to have saved students over [\\$4.2 million in FY2024-25](#).

- **Accessibility Council**

RSC's [Accessibility Council](#), discussed further in Criterion 1.C., is dedicated to fostering an inclusive and equitable environment. Consistent with RSC's mission of "strengthen[ing] communities," the Accessibility Council ensures that all students, faculty, staff, and community/business partners with disabilities have equal access to the educational programs, learning experiences, activities, and services offered by RSC.

Sources

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1.B. Mission and Public Good

The institution's operation of the academic enterprise demonstrates its commitment to serving the public good.

Argument

Mission Alignment and Public Good

Consistent with its [mission](#) of strengthening communities, Rio Salado College's operation of the academic enterprise demonstrates its commitment to the public good through a wide array of programs, services, partnerships, workforce and initiatives.

- ***Serving the Public Good through Programs***

Adult Education Programming

In keeping with its nontraditional structure, RSC has operated through a number of course [locations](#) throughout the greater Phoenix area since its inception in 1978, working with local communities to provide programming in facilities that have been established in high-need areas. The locations primarily offer adult education programs and classes, as well as a range of student support services.

RSC is the principal provider of GED® test preparation programs for the MCCCCD, and the largest provider of [adult education courses](#) in Arizona, offering its [award-winning program](#) at six RSC community-based locations across Maricopa County. [The RSC Adult Education program](#) prepares first-generation and underprepared students for [college and career success](#). In 2023, Strada Education Foundation awarded RSC's Adult Education Program a multi-year grant to support the expansion of academic readiness and employment reskilling ([CAREER](#)) programming. In addition, Adult Education offers [Integrated Education and Training IET](#) programming under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act with needs identified in the Maricopa County and City of Phoenix Local Workforce Plans.

RSC's Community Development team recently presented their award-winning IET work at the [League of Innovation in the Community College](#) Conference in March 2024. The presentation highlighted the groundbreaking collaborative career training model Rio developed with sister community colleges, including [Glendale Community College](#), [South Mountain Community College](#), and [Phoenix College](#) to upskill adult education students. The innovative RSC [IET program model](#) supports underprepared learners, helping students earn a high school equivalency diploma through the GED® test or other pathways or improve their English language skills while simultaneously gaining 21st-century employability skills and training for in-demand careers.

Most recently, RSC's [Building Workforce Pathways for Adult Learners Through Strategic Partnerships](#), was judged a [Top 10 Bellwether Finalist](#) in the category of Workforce Development by the [Bellwether College Consortium](#).

Course locations also offer [presentations and events](#) about educational opportunities and enriching cultural experiences. In addition, the [RSC Northern](#) location offers a [One-Stop Student Services Center](#) where essential in-person student services are centralized and extended from the Tempe location.

Adults Achieving a College Education (Adult ACE)

[Adult ACE](#) is a two-year scholarship program for first-generation minority students who wish to complete a degree, certificate, or workforce training program overseen by the Community Development Division. Students are often co-enrolled in noncredit Adult Education classes working to earn their High School Equivalency diplomas, while also participating in credit classes. In addition, students also participate in [activities](#) that expose them to civic, cultural, and academic experiences outside of the classroom and prepare them for workplace and college success.

Incarcerated Re-Entry Programs

RSC's [Incarcerated Re-Entry programs](#) constitute a partnership with the Arizona Department of Corrections, Rehabilitation and Re-entry (ADCRR) designed to provide skills training in high-demand occupations that promote employability upon release. To complement the coursework, RSC trains students who may then be placed in jobs through the ADCRR, allowing them the opportunity to gain work experience during incarceration. In addition to these on-site educational opportunities, the program provides the inmate population with access to correspondence classes, thereby presenting an opportunity for earning college credit which may lead to Certificates of Completion and the opportunity to earn a degree. IRE students earned [557 awards in FY2023-24](#).

RSC began piloting educational programming through laptops at the women's Perryville prison under the Revised Experimental Second Chance Pell Program, and is transitioning to the Pell Education Program following [approval](#) from the Department of Education.

High School ACE

RSC participates in district-wide initiatives designed to prepare diverse student populations for life and workplace success. The [High School ACE \(Achieving a College Education\)](#) program helps underrepresented high school students accelerate learning and career readiness through access to college-level coursework during their junior and senior years.

Hispanic-Serving Institution

In May 2021, the U.S. Department of Education recognized RSC as a [Hispanic Serving Institution](#) (HSI) in the MCCCDC. This status as a Minority Serving Institution (MSI) made RSC eligible for Title V grant funding. In 2022, RSC secured a [\\$2.9 million grant](#) for the [Avanar Project](#) to support student goal attainment by providing Hispanic and underserved students with academic life coaching and academic support. The Avanar project began full implementation in the Spring of 2024, and [data is monitored](#) for impacts on persistence, retention and graduation rates for credential seeking, Hispanic and underserved students that are first time students at RSC. On September 10, 2025, the Department of Education announced it was [ending funding](#) for discretionary Title V grants and RSC is winding down implementation accordingly. Through AY2024-25, over 1,700 students received Avanar programming services.

Dual Enrollment

RSC's [dual enrollment offerings](#) improve postsecondary access, reduce higher education costs, facilitate academic readiness, and accelerate pathways to completion. Dual enrollment is discussed extensively in Criterion 3.A.

- ***Serving the Public Good through Services***

Rio Salado College Dental Clinic

The [RSC Dental Clinic](#) provides preventive dental hygiene care to community members while enabling dental hygiene students to gain practical educational experience, overseen by licensed clinical instructors.

Division of Public Service

RSC's [award-winning Division of Public Service](#) brings value to the community through two public radio stations, the Sun Sounds of Arizona reading service, the SPOT 127 youth media center, and the [Hear Arizona podcast initiative](#). All are publicly-supported and provide culturally-enriching programming for the citizens of Maricopa County and beyond.

[KJZZ 91.5FM](#) is a listener-supported public radio station featuring a mix of local, national, and international news. In 2024, Nielsen Audio ratings data indicated that KJZZ broadcast to more than 76,000 listeners every day and streamed its signal to mobile devices and computers an average 450,000 hours per month.

- The [Fronteras Desk](#) is an [award-winning](#) reporting unit on KJZZ, with under-reported news deserts at the core of its mission. Fronteras Desk reporters spearhead the coverage of diverse communities for KJZZ. These reports have had regional, national, and international distribution to an estimated 15 million listeners through NPR and Arizona's public radio stations.
- [SPOT 127](#), KJZZ's youth media center, empowers high school students to develop their skills through digital media and technology at no cost to the student. The program has served over 1,500 students since its inception in 2012. In 2023-24 approximately 400 high school teens participated in the SPOT 127 program.
- [Sun Sounds of Arizona](#) provides audio access to print information for people who cannot read or hold print material due to a disability. Sun Sounds broadcasts the reading of over 200 local and national publications 24/7, 365 days a year. The reading is done by hundreds of trained volunteers.

[KBACH 89.5FM](#) is the only radio station in Phoenix that plays classical music 24/7. The station supports local arts organizations and each week showcases premier local performances from throughout the state. In 2024, Nielsen Audio ratings data indicate that KBACH broadcast to almost 60,000 listeners every day, and streamed audio via mobile device or computers an average of 355,000 hours per month.

[Jazz PHX](#) is a new dedicated jazz music service that is available via audio streaming on mobile devices and computers as well as broadcasting on 91.5 HD2. The 24/7 jazz service is presented by a mix of local Phoenix-based hosts as well as national hosts via the Pub Jazz music provider. Local hosts interview musicians and provide new and classic jazz to a statewide audience. In the last six months of 2024, the service streamed more than 230,000 hours of jazz music to listeners.

The KJZZ and KBACH membership operations generate close to \$4 million annually through sustaining gifts, direct mail, and on-air campaigns. An additional \$3 million is generated through corporate underwriting support.

Veterans and Military

RSC's Military and Veterans Services office proudly serves active-duty service members, veterans, and their dependents. RSC has a long-standing tradition of serving military communities in Maricopa County and became an officially designated [Arizona Veteran Supportive Campus](#) (AVSC) in December 2014. RSC meets the Principles of Excellence program, and also supports the [Yellow Ribbon Program](#) for eligible veterans and their dependents who meet specific criteria.

RSC has served the [Luke Air Force Base military community](#) since 1979. RSC offers a list of courses approved on the [General Education Mobile, Air Force & Guardians](#) for Airmen and Guardians to complete all general education requirements for the Community College of the Air Force (CCAF) associate degree. RSC Luke provides admissions, testing, and academic advising services and operates a National Test Center (NTC) with exams free to all eligible service members, families, and employees.

RSC liaises with the Department of Defense for military tuition assistance and MyCAA and the Department of Veterans Affairs for processing the GI Bill and DOD Education Benefits. RSC also maintains compliance with both government and state entities. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Regional Office and the State Approving Agency audit the Military and Veterans Services office.

Café at Rio

The [Rio Salado Cafe](#) has been a ground-breaking concept since inception, whereby RSC combined the basic need for food service provision to students and employees with the academic program of [Sustainable Food Systems](#). The Cafe offers classes and events that are free, or at nominal charge, to community members. These programs serve to both inform and assist lower-income families with healthy alternatives for meals and snacks.

Further, through catering relationships and partnerships with [local producers](#), the Café is stimulating the local economy while reducing environmental impact. Cafe at Rio [community partnerships](#) include:

- Rise n Shine Bread: Rio Salado Cafe chefs developed a honey-oat wholegrain bread recipe for volunteer home bakers which are then donated to Tempe food banks
- Centers for Habilitation: provide cooking workshops at Tempe group homes to support and empower those who live with developmental or physical disabilities
- Banner/Aetna Kitchen: ongoing series of 10 kitchen and gardening workshops that teach a cohort of 16 students on preparing healthy food along and introducing gardening
- Livestream cooking demos: Black History, Asian Pacific Islander and Hispanic Heritage months and International Student Week

- [Rio Fresh Kits](#): a kit of ingredients, recipes and video links to Rio chef demonstrations
- [City of Tempe Meals on Wheels](#): beginning January 2026, will prepare 40 to 50 hot meals, beverages, and supplemental cold items and snacks each weekday for community members in need

- ***Serving the Public Good through Workforce***

Corporate and Government Partnerships

RSC engages in [Educational Service Partnerships](#) (ESP) with business and industry partners and government entities, enabling students who are employed within specific industries and professions to earn college credit at their places of employment. A [Partnership Personalized Service Survey](#) that is utilized to measure the program's effectiveness is sent to ESP instructors, directors, and key contacts on a semi-annual basis and has elicited overwhelmingly positive feedback over the past 3 years (N=266) regarding importance of these higher education opportunities for employees and satisfaction with the RSC partnership. Examples of long standing ESP partners include: Correctional Officers Training, Cox Communications, Maricopa County Sheriff's Office, and Salt River Project.

Career and Technical Education

In response to community needs, RSC offers credentials in high demand areas, such as [educator preparation](#) and [dental hygiene](#). CTE offerings include 1 Bachelor of Applied Science Degree, 27 Associate of Applied Science Degrees and 110 Certificates of Completion for a total of 138 [workforce awards in FY2023-24](#), including three [new programs](#) to meet evolving demands.

- ***Serving the Public Good through Initiatives***

Semiconductor Manufacturing

RSC's semiconductor manufacturing programs provide training opportunities to veterans, adults, and traditional students through in-person training combined with online learning components through a number of initiatives:

- MOU with the [University of Arizona Center for Semiconductor Manufacturing](#) to collaborate and emphasize the development of educational pathways for high school and college students
- Grant from National Science Foundation's [Advanced Technological Education](#) to build creative partnerships with organizations and industry leaders to promote college STEM programs and to create its nanotech for veterans program
- Partnership with [Northern Arizona University and Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company](#) to offer an innovative semiconductor technician apprenticeship program that will prepare students for careers in semiconductor manufacturing jobs

Behavioral Health Workforce Expansion Efforts

RSC received funding to focus on the expansion of behavioral health programs to address Arizona's workforce needs and to offset the costs incurred to support instruction and curriculum development. The college supported 149 students with over \$300,000 in scholarships across 11 [degree and certificate programs](#).

Tempe Workforce Skills Accelerator

The [Tempe Workforce Skills Accelerator partnership](#) was created by RSC and Tempe Chamber, offering three online microcredentials to upskill Tempe businesses' workforce. To alleviate financial burdens, 20 scholarships are available through the Tempe Chamber and Tempe Chamber Foundation to member companies who need assistance to offer this opportunity to their workers.

Tempe Promise Program

The [Tempe Promise Program](#) provided financial support to City of Tempe residents with demonstrated financial need to attend RSC. Eligible students received funds to cover “last dollar” tuition and fee expenses. Since its initial launch in January 2025, 32 students applied for the Spring and Summer 2025 semesters, with 16 eligible for funding. The State of Arizona has since adopted a statewide [Community College Promise Program](#), which supersedes the Tempe Promise Program.

Good Jobs, Great Cities

Beginning in 2023, RSC partnered with the City of Tempe in the national initiative Good Jobs, Great Cities Academy, led by the National League of Cities and the Department of Labor. The City of Tempe was selected to take part in the program to build upon efforts to grow and empower the city's workforce. Activities included a convening [Preparing the Future: Building Tempe's Advanced Manufacturing Workforce Pipeline](#) hosted by RSC to [support bridges](#) between education and industry that close the skills gap and prepare individuals for jobs of today and tomorrow.

- ***Serving the Public Good through Community Support***

RISE Learning for Life

The RSC Surprise location is home to [RISE Learning for Life](#), which offers non-credit community learning events to retirement-age adults seeking continuing education and peer interaction. RISE volunteer content experts present numerous topics, ranging through history, science, arts, humanities, and current events. In FY23-24 RISE facilitated 23 learning events available to 200 members, with an average attendance of 25 participants per event.

Hosting Community Events

"RSC responds to its constituencies by sponsoring and co-sponsoring special events hosted by organizations that share a common goal with the College, or depend on it for service.

This extensive involvement in [community events](#) includes a diverse spectrum of activities geared towards specific organizations and community groups.

Community Sponsorships

Over the past four years, RSC has spent nearly \$40,000 on [community sponsorships](#) that benefit diverse community agencies and programs.

Community Boards and Committees

RSC President Kate Smith utilizes a [President's Advisory Council](#) whose members are representative of RSC's partnerships with employers, community-based organizations, state and municipal agencies, and other educational institutions. This diverse constituency provides the president and executive leadership with perspectives relating to college strategic priorities,

helps identify new opportunities and markets, and provides advice and assistance related to external challenges and political issues. [Meetings](#) include a wide range of topics related to increasing RSC's ability to meet the educational needs of the communities it serves. Additionally, the President represents RSC through service on a number of [local and national boards](#).

Community and Professional Memberships

RSC maintains active institutional membership in a large number of [professional and community organizations](#).

Community and Student-focused Support

- **Valley of the Sun United Way Campaign**

As part of a district-wide initiative, RSC participates in the annual [Valley of the Sun United Way campaign](#) for Maricopa County. RSC employees contributed over \$50,000 in the last three years of the campaign.

- **Full Cart Program**

The [Full Cart Program](#) which was launched in 2018 as an RSC partnership with Feeding Children Everywhere, demonstrates the College's commitment to helping its students and their families cope with food insecurity. In FY2023-24, RSC provided over 6,900 food servings to students needing assistance.

- **Student Assistance Fund**

The [Jo C. Bennett Student Assistance Fund](#) targets RSC's general student population who encounter financial hardship that impedes their ability to succeed. This fund provides support for needs ranging from rent, childcare, transportation, and utility payments to textbooks and tuition. In the past three fiscal years, the fund has paid out just under \$30,000 to students in need. For FY2024-25, 79 students received assistance and 78% of these students successfully completed the semester in which they received aid.

- **Dash with Rio**

[Dash with Rio](#), a faculty-inspired annual 5K running/walking event for employees and their families, promotes community engagement and visibility while simultaneously supporting fundraising efforts and community outreach. Most recently, Dash raised over \$3,800, with proceeds supporting the Jo C. Bennett Student Assistance Fund.

- **Employee Donation Campaigns**

The MCCC-led [Be a Student's Hero](#) campaign directs funds to students in need via the Jo C. Bennett Student Assistance Fund. RSC employees contributed over \$16,000 during the last three years of the campaign.

- ***Serving the Public Good through Economic Development***

A Lightcast 2025 analysis of the [economic value of Rio Salado College](#) used a two-pronged approach utilizing both economic impact analysis and investment analysis. In FY2023-24, the study demonstrated RSC's significant positive impact (\$1.2 billion in income to the Maricopa

County economy, equivalent to supporting 13,326 jobs), as well as a positive return on investment to its students, taxpayers, and communities served.

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- RSC_Community Sponsorships_1.B
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- RSC_Division of Public Service_1.B
- RSC_Dual Enrollment Offerings_1.B
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- RSC_Educator Preparation_1.B

1.C. Mission and Diversity of Society

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.

Argument

Following the 2022 comprehensive visit, the Team Report noted a number of opportunities regarding Criterion 1.C. The Team Report recommended: broadening the scope of co-curricular assessment beyond Honors, Phi Theta Kappa (PTK), the National Society for Leadership and Success (NSLS), and Adult ACE; adding additional student activities; conducting additional climate surveys; measuring learning from DEIB events; and institutionalizing existing efforts to ensure an ongoing inclusive and equity-model environment for both students and employees. In response to the recommendation to expand the breadth of co-curricular assessment reporting, the [dataset now includes](#) students enrolled in Addictions and Substance Use Disorders, Social Work, and Educator Preparation internship courses.

Though the college continues to seek opportunities to expand co-curricular programming, prior efforts have not garnered much student interest due, in large part, to RSC's enrollment profile. Over 75% of its online learners are supplemental students who participate in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities at their "home" colleges and universities. A significant population are dual enrollment students, who likewise engage in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities at their high schools. As an example, Student Life recently surveyed over 2,000 students about participating in a museum trip, and only 3 students responded.

Since the 2022 Team Report, Student Life has sponsored a number of civic engagement activities that are detailed below. A recent initiative that has experienced success is the launch of the East Valley Rotary Club, also detailed below, which provides community service opportunities for RSC students and staff.

In response to the recommendation to conduct additional climate surveys, RSC regularly participates in the Decisionwise Employee Engagement Survey, which consistently reflects a healthy climate. During the [Spring 2023 survey administration](#), 485 employees (46% response rate) completed the survey which yielded a 75% favorable score, the highest among all 10 colleges in MCCC. Overall, 81% of respondents were classified as either highly engaged or key contributors, exceeding RSC's 2019 scores as well as global and higher education sector benchmarks.

Although the DEIB Council was disbanded following the 2024 Executive Orders, much of the work of the DEIB Council transitioned to the Community Engagement Council (CEC), discussed below. The RSC CEC provides consistent and institutionalized programming to ensure an ongoing inclusive and equity-model environment for both students and employees. Based on the Team Report recommendations, learning objectives are now identified and articulated at every event, which are then measured in participant surveys.

Civic Engagement through Social Responsibility Learning Outcome

In AY2023-24, RSC added [Social Responsibility](#) as a college-wide student learning outcome, which measures demonstrated awareness of varied cultural perspectives, knowledge of the principles of civic discourse, and understanding of the impact of individual and collective action on contemporary social issues. Data from the 2024-25 Assessment of Student Learning Report indicate that 83% of the 16,501 assessments tagged with the Social Responsibility outcome were [rated at a college level](#), which exceeds the college-wide goal of 80%.

Civic Engagement in Curriculum

Consistent with RSC's mission to "strengthen communities," civic engagement is a focal point in many courses and seamlessly integrates into the curriculum across various disciplines. [Course-based activities promote civic engagement](#) in a diverse, multicultural society and globally connected world.

Civic Engagement through Course-Based Student Service

In addition, a variety of coursework includes [student service that promotes civic engagement](#). Examples range from dental hygiene students providing oral health care to ICU patients, to Honors students volunteering time in the community, to social work students engaging in a 40 hour volunteer project.

Civic Engagement through Student Service Organizations

RSC hosts a number of student organizations that engage in community service, including:

- **National Society of Leadership and Success (NSLS):** helps students build leadership skills while also working on their educational, career, and personal goals.
 - Students volunteered at [Feed My Starving Children](#), [St. Mary's Food Bank](#) and Midwest Food Bank
 - NSLS members engaged in an annual donation drive for [National Hunger & Homelessness Awareness Week](#)
- **Phi Theta Kappa (PTK):** international honor society for two-year colleges, PTK encourages scholarship and promotes leadership, service, and fellowship. The [award-winning RSC Alpha Theta Omicron chapter](#) enrolled a total of 851 new members in the three years spanning FY2021-24.
 - Students volunteered at Phoenix Rescue Mission and Feed My Starving Children
 - Launched a new podcast channel [PTK Pulse on YouTube](#) to explore how stories influence and shape the world
 - [Reduced membership fees for incarcerated students](#), leading to a 45.6% membership increase
- **Rotaract:** launched in February 2025 as an [East Valley Rotaract Club](#), people ages 18 and older are brought together to exchange ideas with leaders in the community, develop leadership and professional skills, and have fun through service. As of August 1, 2025, the club is an official Charter of Rotary International with 18 inducted members who, together with dozens of other students and community members, organized 11 events and joined numerous events to help PTK, Rotary, and other Rotaract clubs [serve and support our communities](#).

Civic Engagement through Experiential Learning

- **Dental Programs Service Hours**

Dental Hygiene Program students are required to complete 40 hours of community service as part of program requirements. Students also complete external rotations known as clinical enrichment experiences, in venues such as the St. Vincent de Paul Dental Clinic, Dignity Health ICU at Chandler Regional Hospital, Dignity Health Children's Dental Clinic, Arizona School of Dentistry and Oral Health: Special Needs Clinic, and at the [Mexico Consulate](#).

- **Paralegal Program Service Hours**

Rio Salado's Paralegal Program offers [internship opportunities](#) involving both education and practical work experience, requiring accrual of a minimum 80 hours during each semester. The internship [lead instructor coordinates](#) the process with students and assists in placement of interns.

- **Bachelor and Post-Baccalaureate Educator Preparation Field Experience**

Most courses in the EDU program require [field experience](#) in a pre-K through 12 classroom. Depending on the course, elements may include classroom observation, participation, teaching, and self-reflection.

Civic Engagement and Registration/Voter Support

RSC's Student Life hosted a number of events to support voters in the 2024 elections:

- implemented multiple voter registration and ID clinics with VoteRiders and Campus Vote Project
- partnered with Campus Vote Project for [Breaking Down Barriers: Challenges to Voting Access, Your Voice, Your Vote: Navigating the 2024 General Elections Ballot](#) discussion
- sponsored AZ Clean Elections [The Power of Your Vote: Understanding the 2024 Primary Election Ballot](#) discussion
- collaborated with AZ Town Hall for [Voting and Elections in Arizona](#) discussion
- facilitated Constitution Day Voter Registration Drive at Cafe at Rio with Student [Democracy Fellows](#) and Campus Vote Project, an approved non-partisan MCCCDC partner
- RSC also hosted an early [ballot drop-off option](#) prior to the Presidential election, collecting over 1000 ballots

In recognition of Student Life's voter support efforts on the 2024 election, it was recognized as a [2024 ALL IN Most Engaged Campuses](#), and a student member was named to the 2025 ALL IN Student Voting Honor Roll.

Community Engagement at RSC

The [Community Engagement Council](#) seeks to strengthen relationships, encourage participation, and inspire positive change through thoughtful programming and collaboration via a wide range of [community engagement activities](#) for students, faculty and staff.

Learning objectives are identified for each activity and [survey feedback](#) is collected at the end of the event that include:

- Overall Satisfaction: How satisfied were you attending this event?
- To what extent did the event enhance your understanding of the topic?

- Engagement and Participation: How engaged did you feel during the event?
- Please share key takeaways or lessons from the event:

In support of community engagement events, the RSC Library creates [Research Guides](#) that provide additional educational resources and further heighten awareness around these topics for students and employees. These guides are featured in the weekly employee newsletter and on RSC social media platforms.

Non-Discrimination Policies

MCCCD's [Administrative Regulation, Section 5, Non-Discrimination](#) outlines the policies that serve to prohibit discrimination against applicants, employees, or students in any of its processes. The college practices, designs processes, and takes action focused on the equitable treatment of all populations. The [Office of Conduct and Community Standards](#) is available to assist students in understanding their rights and responsibilities and administers the [Student Code of Conduct](#) policies and procedures.

Four Practices of Engagement

To uphold its commitment to all students and all staff, RSC focuses on [four key practices of engagement](#): mindfulness, empathy, happiness, and resilience. These four tenets are fundamental to the work of the college, creating safe and honest dialogue and action. The four practices serve as guiding principles at every [all-employee](#) meeting.

College Strategic Enrollment Management (CSEM)

Consistent with its mission, RSC seeks to “support learners where they are and provide high-quality, flexible, and accessible education” by increasing opportunities for underserved students. RSC's [CSEM](#) deploys a number of strategic activities [to achieve this goal](#), such as:

- Increase the conversion rate of applicants to enrollment from 45.4% to 49.0% by 6/30/25 through targeted marketing initiatives and campaigns. This goal was met.
- Expand the number of educational experiences and opportunities from 18 to 30 to better engage students in student life, co-curricular, and extracurricular activities that support their academic, personal, and professional goals. This goal was exceeded, with a total of 46 events offered.

Student Organizations

- **National Adult Education Honor Society**

RSC also encourages students to prepare for informed citizenship and workplace success through national leadership participation. The [National Adult Education Honor Society](#) (NAEHS) recognizes RSC's students studying to earn a high school equivalency diploma or learn English. RSC inducts approximately 25 [adult education students](#) into the NAEHS each year.

- **National Society of Leadership and Success**

In 2025, RSC and other MCCCD colleges' participation as individual chapters in National Society of Leadership and Success were centralized as a [MCCCD chapter](#). NSLS [builds students leadership skills](#) while also developing their educational, career, and personal goals. NSLS encourages [organizing action](#) to better the world. In FY2024-25, 176 RSC students participated in NSLS.

Other opportunities offered to RSC students for civic engagement include:

- [National entrepreneurship celebration events](#) to recognize entrepreneurs for economic innovation throughout history as part of National Entrepreneurship Week, a congressionally-chartered initiative, and annual competitions for [student entrepreneurs](#).
- [Virtual Summer Camp](#) and [Spring StartUp Sprint](#) events to prepare students for workplace success in the growing risk management and insurance industry.
- [MVET](#), an MCCCDC constituency group that provides support, encouragement, and educational opportunities for veteran employees, students, and their families.
- Honors supports students' civic engagement and community enrichment by offering [co-curricular](#) opportunities. Honors students engage as informed citizens, conduct [projects](#), and present at conferences to share their knowledge.

Inclusive Processes and Activities

- **Student-Centered Entry Processes**

RSC has developed customized web tools to guide entering students. [Start at Rio](#) features information tailored to the educational goals of diverse students. They receive guidance to choose from program-specific pathways and services, including a mix of in-person and online options for specific populations such as degree-seeking, guest students, transfer students, military, dual enrollment, adult education, teacher education, and out-of-state.

- **RioConnect**

[RioConnect](#) is an online community space for RSC students to connect with classmates, ask questions about online learning or classes, create study groups, share study tips, and offer peer support. [Data](#) shows a 40% increase in belonging reported among students who engage on the platform and 14% growth in peer connectedness, benefiting both early adopters and late joiners.

- **Disability Services**

RSC's [Office of Disability Resources and Services](#) (DRS) offers resources and services that promote accessible learning for students with documented disabilities, in keeping with [MCCCDC Administrative Regulation 2.8](#).

- **Accessibility Council**

RSC's [Accessibility Council](#), composed of faculty members and staff from IT, Instructional Design, Course Production, and Disability Services, addresses online accessibility issues in RSC courses and provides employees across the college with [resources, tools, and training](#) to design products with inclusivity and equitable access for all stakeholders.

- **International Education Center**

The [International Education Center](#) supports international students with personalized services to select and register for classes. In the three years spanning FY2021-24, International Education served 528 walk-in students and responded to 4,516 email inquiries and 3,901 telephone inquiries. In addition, the IEC hosts a number of events during [International Education Week](#) promoting civic engagement.

MCCCDC Programs:

- MCCCDC established a [Center for Excellence in Inclusive Democracy](#) that is committed to fostering meaningful relationships between MCCCDC and the communities it serves by advancing democracy and civic engagement, shared governance, and academic freedom.
- MCCCDC provides [career development](#) and [mentoring](#) programs to connect employees from a variety of backgrounds to share ideas and perspectives across the district.
- [Performance Success](#) training focuses on the growth and development of employees and shifts the focus from process to people, by creating a strong coaching culture that builds collaborative relationships of trust between managers and employees where individual and team growth are a priority.

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Criterion 1 Summary

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

Argument

- RSC's mission documents were reviewed in 2024 as part of a collaborative alignment strategic planning process that included leadership, faculty, staff, and community input.
- RSC's publicly articulated mission aligns to its educational programs, enrollment profile and scope of operations through an ongoing focus on learner empowerment, anticipating students' needs, the future of the workforce, and serving the community.
- RSC's commitment to serving the public good is evidenced by adult education programming, incarcerated re-entry programs, a dental clinic, radio stations, veterans and military services, Café at Rio outreach, corporate and government partnerships, career and technical education, and a variety of community support efforts.
- RSC provides opportunities for civic engagement through its curriculum, course-based student service, student service organizations, experiential learning opportunities, grant programming, registration/voter support, and community and engagement learning events.

Sources

There are no sources.

2 - Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

In fulfilling its mission, the institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

2.A. Integrity

Actions taken by the institution's governing board, administration, faculty and staff demonstrate adherence to established policies and procedures.

Argument

RSC's [mission documents](#) reflect its commitment to the values of integrity and stewardship by "strengthen[ing] communities" and valuing "everyone's unique qualities with respect and dignity."

2.A. Integrity

MCCCD's governing board, and RSC's administration, faculty and staff are expected to comply with MCCCD's [administrative regulations](#) that establish policies and procedures for ethical and responsible conduct as described below.

Integrity and MCCCD Governing Board, Administration, Faculty and Staff

The Governing Board and employees of the MCCCD abide by a set of [Governing Values](#), which are published on the District website and are transparent to all stakeholders.

The [Governing Board Policies](#) and [Administrative Regulations](#) provide the framework for employees' duties and responsibilities. Each employee is expected to be aware of and abide by these organizational policies. In order to foster accountability and transparency, employees are required to submit [annual disclosure forms](#) regarding conflict of interest, hiring of relatives, enrollment irregularities, internal control, and travel policies.

The [MCCCD Governing Board](#) has established a [Code of Conduct](#) that determines expectations for ethical, professional, and lawful conduct by board members and outlines a process for complaints and perceived violations of Board policy. Governing Board members are required to participate in [Public Stewardship and Ethics Training](#) during their probationary period or within one year of hire, and triennially thereafter. Similarly, the MCCCD mandates triennial [integrity and ethics training](#) for all employees.

All policies stem from [interest-based negotiation](#) processes conducted by representatives of District and College administration, along with members of the relevant employee groups.

All [mandatory training modules](#) are provided online, enabling efficient tracking of employee completion. Additional role-specific mandatory training requirements are in place, such as the [MCCCD Employee FERPA Compliance Tutorial](#) required for all employees who access student records.

- **Adherence to Federal, State, City, and District Laws and Regulations**

RSC, together with the other MCCCDC colleges, upholds and protects its integrity by following all applicable federal, state, local, and district regulations. The [MCCCDC Office of the General Counsel](#) advises MCCCDC institutions regarding strict legal compliance with these laws and regulations.

- **Employee Acknowledgments and Training**

Every employee at RSC is mandated to annually reaffirm their understanding and commitment to MCCCDC's policies and regulations through a series of [acknowledgments and disclosures](#) through the Employee Learn Center (ELC). The nature of these trainings may vary depending on the employee's role and include:

- [Hiring Practices and Processes](#)
- [Data Security and Privacy](#)
- [Legal Issues: Public Sector Employment](#)
- [MCCCDC Employee FERPA Level 1 Compliance](#)
- [MCCCDC Public Stewardship](#)
- [Preventing Sex Discrimination and Harassment](#)

Additionally, the MCCCDC sends out annual notifications to students, faculty, and staff on behalf of the College. These annual notifications are also housed on the MCCCDC district website and are available year-round. The annual notifications include:

- [Clery Act Annual Notification](#)
- [Drug and Alcohol Prevention Annual Notification](#)
- [FERPA Annual Notification](#)
- [Higher Education Act Annual Notification](#)
- [Title IX Annual Notification](#)
- [Voter Registration Annual Notification](#)

- **Faculty and Staff Handbooks and Grievances**

Residential faculty rights are stipulated in the [Residential Faculty Agreement](#) which was adopted by the Governing Board on April 22, 2025 and effective as of July 1, 2025. [Article 20](#) covers Resolution of Conflict and Grievance policies. Adjunct faculty rights are stipulated in the [Adjunct Faculty Handbook](#), effective as of July 1, 2024.

The MCCCDC maintains a [Staff Policy Manual](#) for appointed, classified staff and non-classified MCCCDC employees. The [classified staff grievance procedure](#) is included in this manual.

Institutional Decision-Making Entities

- **Governing Board**

The MCCCDC Governing Board meet on the fourth Tuesday of each month (except July) to direct the activities of the District under powers given them pursuant to Arizona Revised Statutes [\(ARS\) §15-1444](#). Public notices of board meetings are posted on the Governing Board website and [calendar](#).

- **Executive Team**

The Executive Team is a weekly meeting of the President, Vice Presidents and Associate Vice Presidents, representing [key areas](#) of the college, including Academic Affairs, Strategy, Student Affairs, Administrative Services, Public Service, Employee Services, Community Development, and Technology and Infrastructure to address pressing items. Additionally, the Faculty Senate President is a member of the team, representing the interests of Rio's faculty. During the [VP Strategic meetings](#), the Executive Team makes and reviews decisions that impact a broad range of stakeholders. Its responsibilities include allocating funding, approving position requests, and serving as the final authority for all other councils and committees.

- **Faculty Chairs and Faculty Senate**

All RSC residential faculty serve as Faculty Chairs as well as Faculty Senators. As set forth in the faculty [Constitution](#), the RSC Faculty Senate meets at least twice a month and as needed upon request by the Faculty Senate President. [Agendas](#) include policy and operational items, and faculty vote on issues that affect the body at large. In their chair roles, faculty are responsible for decision-making in their respective departments. Further details regarding RSC's faculty model can be found in Criteria 3.C. and 4.A.

- **President's Cabinet**

The [President's Cabinet consists](#) of: the Executive Team; Deans and Associate Deans; and faculty, staff, and student representation. The Cabinet [meets on a monthly basis](#) to receive updates, make recommendations, and vote on strategic objectives.

- **Deans Council**

The [Deans Council](#) includes employees at the level of associate dean and above who meet monthly to share information and discuss implementation of college initiatives and priorities.

- **Development Team**

The Development Team (Dev Team) is a [cross-functional body](#) co-chaired by a division vice president and a faculty chair. Membership includes all residential faculty and administrators at associate dean level and higher. As college leaders, members often seek input of the larger Dev Team to inform department/division decision-making. College-wide recommendations are advanced to RSC's Executive Team for review. [Meetings](#) are held biweekly during the academic year and monthly during the summer.

- **Budget and Infrastructure Council**

[RSC's Budget and Infrastructure Council](#) was established to enhance financial transparency, promote responsible budget management, and oversee infrastructure-related matters at the college. Its mission is to ensure effective decision-making and accountability in these areas, facilitating sound financial management and sustainable infrastructure development in alignment with the college's strategic goals.

Hiring Practices and Qualifications

MCCCD and RSC ethical hiring practices are detailed in Criterion 4.B, which ensures integrity in hiring practices.

Fiscal Integrity

The MCCCD is audited annually by the Arizona State Auditor General's Office. Copies of the audits are included in the District's [Comprehensive Annual Financial Reports](#) (CAFRs). The

District has always received an unqualified audit report regarding its financial statements, most recently for the [Fiscal Year Ended June 2024](#).

MCCCD operates under a [Memorandum of Understanding](#) with HLC that satisfies the need for individual, external financial audits of the 10 colleges. The Arizona State Auditor's reviews demonstrate efficient management of individual expenditure budgets consistent with maintaining the fiscal viability of the District, and demonstrates the integrity of the District and colleges.

The MCCCD [Internal Audit and Management Advisory Services Department](#) (IAMAS) supports the vision, mission, and values of the MCCCD and its colleges and centers by providing independent, objective assurance and consulting services designed to add value and improve the organization's operations, and to help ensure the efficient and effective use of resources, program operations, and stewardship over assets.

College Compliance and Audit Procedures

- **Office of Institutional Integrity & Compliance**

RSC's [Office of Institutional Integrity & Compliance](#) (OIIC) falls under the purview of the Dean of Institutional Effectiveness & Innovation (who also serves as the HLC Accreditation Liaison Officer) and functions as a centralized hub for compliance efforts, including State Authorization and adherence to the various mandates related to the Higher Education Act, among others. Working closely with key stakeholders across the College, Institutional Integrity ensures that compliance begins with program creation and stems out into the operational areas of the institution (as evidenced by this [program development flowchart](#)). Further, the Curriculum Department meets with all internal stakeholders identified in the first step of the process to discuss programs that have been Governing Board approved, and next steps regarding compliance.

- **Office of Conduct and Community Standards**

Following the provisions in Administrative Regulation [2.5 Student Rights and Responsibilities](#), the RSC [Office of Conduct and Community Standards](#) (OCCS) is designed "to help ensure a productive and safe environment for students, employees, and visitors" (para. 1, section 2.5.2) and to be "committed to promoting a learning and work environment that is non-discriminatory" as stated in [Administrative Regulation Section 5 Non-Discrimination](#) (para.1).

Within the Office of Conduct and Community Standards, the functional areas are Student Conduct Administration; Title IX; Behavioral Intervention Team (BIT); and the Office of Academic Integrity. The administrative procedures for academic misconduct, student conduct administration, and Title IX are outlined respectively in the [MCCCD Administrative Regulations: 2.3.11 Academic Misconduct Policy](#); [S-6 Instructional Grievance Process](#); [2.5 Student Rights and Responsibilities](#), which includes the [Student Conduct Code](#) (i.e., prohibited conduct) and the [Student Conduct Procedures](#); and [5.1.16 Title IX Sexual Harassment Policy](#). All members of the Title IX team receive [Title IX Training and Resources](#).

- **Compliance Calendar and Committee**

The Office of Institutional Integrity & Compliance (OIIC) has created and manages an [award-winning compliance calendar](#), providing the means by which the college monitors and maintains compliance with the regulatory triad of federal regulations, state regulations, and

accreditation/third party requirements. Items are monitored for both internal and external processes, and include a description of the regulation/requirement, links (where appropriate), action items, and due dates. OIIC facilitates a [College Compliance Committee](#) which involves a wide representation of stakeholders, such as: advising, DRS, educator preparation, faculty, financial aid, international, public safety and student life. The [College Compliance Committee meets](#) two to three times per year.

- **Student Policies**

RSC abides by the student policies established by the MCCCCD, which are articulated in the College Catalog and on the [Student Policies](#) page of the RSC website.

- **Student Complaints and Resolutions**

RSC provides detailed information for students regarding the [MCCCCD instructional grievance](#) and [non-instructional complaint resolution](#) processes from its [Student Solution Center](#) website. Instructional student issues that are escalated to the Vice President of Academic Affairs for resolution are resolved through the defined process, while OIIC addresses non-instructional complaints.

- **Record Keeping of Student Complaints**

RSC maintains internal electronic systems to track and aggregate information for both academic and non-academic student complaints. Faculty determinations of academic misconduct violations and imposed academic consequences are maintained by the Office of Academic Integrity in RSC's [Customer Relationship Management](#) (CRM) database.

Non-academic student complaints are maintained by the Office of Institutional Integrity & Compliance in the RSC Student Complaint Management System database (SCMS). Records include details of the complaint, the manner in which it was resolved, and any relevant findings. From 2022-2024, 96% of student complaints (n=152) were resolved to the student's satisfaction.

Records of alleged Student Conduct Code violations, Title IX misconduct (e.g., complaints, notice letters, available evidence, etc.) and reports to the Behavioral Intervention Team (BIT) pertaining to individuals of concern are maintained in the RSC Symplicity Advocate case management and reporting system database. Employees are able to [submit reports to the BIT](#) via an internal RSC link, and the team meets weekly to review these reports which encompass such concerns as potential disruptive conduct, self-harm, and violence to others.

Additional Examples of Adherence to Policies and Procedures

- **Grants Monitoring**

The [District Grants Development and Management Department](#) provides compliance and support to college grant project directors with applicable rules, regulations, terms, and conditions for grants management. The RSC grants manager coordinates with business services for fiscal accountability on grant-funded projects.

- **Auxiliary Functions**

RSC's [Event Services](#) include the Conference Center at Rio, which is a multi-purpose facility that hosts internal and external events, receptions, and conferences. The Vice President of Administrative Services oversees the staffing of the Conference Center. Open access is

provided for Conference Center rentals, consistent with [AR 6.24 Public Access and Expression on District Property](#) (Free Expression Policy).

Risk Mitigation

- **Maricopa Community Colleges Police Department (MCCPD)**

Beginning with the Fall 2025 term, the MCCPD implemented a [new public safety deployment model](#) that expanded sworn officer coverage to a 24/7 schedule. RSC's public safety efforts are overseen by a police sergeant, ensuring a safe college environment in accordance with [AR 6.15 Public Safety](#).

- **Information Security**

Consistent with federal, state, local and international laws relevant to information privacy and security, the [MCCCD Privacy Incident Response Team](#), is charged with responding to actual or suspected situations involving unauthorized access to and/or misappropriation of confidential information.

- **Emergency Management**

Emergency management is addressed through [AR 4.1 Maricopa Emergency Management System](#) which addresses comprehensive and systemic processes and protocols for the prevention of, preparedness for, response to, and recovery from, any emergency or crisis. [The Emergency Management Plan](#) provides a framework for planning and developing a comprehensive plan that achieves full mobilization of the college location and clarifies strategies to prepare for, respond to, and recover from an emergency or disaster incident that could impact the district, the campuses, or the region.

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- MCCCCD_Governing Board Calendar_2.A
- MCCCCD_Governing Board Members_2.A
- MCCCCD_Governing Board Policies_2.A
- MCCCCD_Hiring Practices and Processes_2.A
- MCCCCD_Integrity and Ethics Training_2.A
- MCCCCD_Interest Based Negotiation_2.A
- MCCCCD_Legal Issues Public Sector Employment_2.A
- MCCCCD_Mandatory Training and Disclosures_2.A
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- RSC_Student Policies_2.A
- RSC_Student Solution Center_2.A
- RSC_Symplicity Case Reporting_2.A
- RSC_Vice Presidents Strategic Meeting Agenda and Minutes 05052025_2.A
- RSC_Mission and Vision_2.A

2.B. Transparency

The institution presents itself accurately and completely to students and the public with respect to its educational programs and any claims it makes related to the educational experience.

Argument

The 2022 Team Report noted that no reference was found on the RSC's 'About Us' or 'Leadership and Administration' webpages regarding its control structure (relationship to MCCCDC) or Governing Board. Shortly after the Team Report was released, RSC [added clarifying language](#) to its 'About Us' and 'Leadership and Administration' pages regarding its control structure, relation to MCCCDC, and the Governing Board.

RSC exemplifies transparency and thoroughness in conveying information to its students and the general public. This encompasses academic programs, faculty and staff details, student costs, governance structures, and accreditation affiliations detailed below.

Educational Programs - Academic Offerings and Costs

- **College Catalog**

[The RSC College Catalog](#) contains information on academic programs, partnership programs, course descriptions, general education and transfer options, policies, procedures, student services, and community services. Additionally, the catalog functions as a static reference that establishes the academic program requirements under which a student graduates. Primary access is provided online, with options available for populations in need of alternative delivery formats. Archived college catalogs dating back to 2001 are available on the [RSC catalog website](#).

- **Programs Website**

Details of [RSC Programs, Degrees and Certificates](#) and [RSC Degrees and Certificates by Fields of Interest](#) are available on the college website. Information is provided for all programs, certificates (academic and occupational), and degrees offered, as well as district-wide associate degrees and additional learning opportunities and pathways. RSC's website includes an online course search feature that students can [search by designation](#) for general education curriculum.

- **Class Schedule**

The [course search tool](#) allows students to search for current course offerings in all modalities via several customizable search options, such as course prefix and weekly or semester start date. Students may also search for courses with [\\$0 cost/low cost textbooks](#).

- **Tuition, Fees and Net Price Calculator**

RSC provides detailed tuition and fees on a [dedicated webpage](#), mirrored on the [MCCCDC Tuition Information page](#). A [Net Price Calculator](#) on the RSC website helps estimate costs by credit hour versus flat rates, in-county, out-of-county, and out-of-state, including a tuition cap rate.

The Financial Aid department offers a cost of attendance link and provides a College Financing Plan to students who complete the FAFSA or apply for Veteran Education benefits. RSC is transparent in providing students with cost information pertaining to [credit hour tuition rates and fees](#).

- **State Authorization Disclosures**

RSC operates in states across the nation, both through individual state authorization/exemption and via participation in the national [State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement](#) (SARA). The College is proactive in its communication with students in relation to state authorization, and required licensure/certification disclosures are automated through the CRM.

- **Accreditation**

RSC was established in 1978 and granted candidacy for regional accreditation status by the North Central Association. Since 1981, the College has been continuously accredited and was last reaffirmed after a comprehensive visit in February 2022. In keeping with HLC requirements, RSC displays a [statement of accreditation](#) and the official logo link to the HLC website on its public website. [Programmatic Accreditation](#) information and details are displayed for the following:

- Addictions and Substance Use Disorders
- Dental Programs
- Educator Preparation Programs
- Languages

- **Admission Requirements**

Admission requirements are listed in Administrative Regulations [AR 2.2](#).

- **Syllabus Language**

In an effort to meet the needs of RSC students and provide consistency and clarity in the learning experience, all online course syllabi are standardized to contain district-approved course competencies/outcomes and a well-defined assessment methodology. [Standardized language](#) is included in syllabi for basic elements such as academic misconduct, civility policy, active participation requirements, disability statement, Title IX information, regular and substantive interactions, and library services. Common elements such as course requirements, time requirements, testing procedures, final grade options, and copyright acknowledgements are incorporated across all disciplines and customized for the specific course.

Website and Institutional Advancement Processes

The Institutional Advancement (IA) Department oversees all aspects of promoting and representing RSC to current and prospective students, alumni, and community stakeholders. IA encompasses the functions of marketing, public relations and communications, social media, website and web development, recruitment outreach efforts tied to leads, fundraising, and alumni relations.

Within these areas, IA manages advertising, creative services, media relations, and content development to ensure a consistent and effective brand presence across all channels.

IA collaborates closely with the Office of Institutional Integrity & Compliance to ensure all website content, marketing materials, and related policies align with accreditation standards and

federal compliance guidelines. Additionally, IA partners with internal college stakeholders to verify the accuracy, accessibility, and relevance of published content.

A [Website Governance Guide](#) was developed by representatives from IA, Institutional Integrity and Compliance, Quality Assurance, and Faculty and approved by the Executive Team in Fall 2021. This document clarifies the structures, roles, responsibilities, policies, and processes that support the maintenance of the RSC website, a critical resource for a nontraditional, online institution.

As a requirement of website governance, all webpage owners complete an [annual audit](#) of the accuracy and integrity of their content, conducted through the Office of Institutional Integrity as part of the ongoing RSC compliance calendar. These audits result in [content updates](#), navigability enhancements, and [currency](#). In addition, the Accessibility Council (discussed in Criterion 1.C.) ensures that RSC's website meets accessibility standards.

Reporting and Disclosures

- **Institutional Effectiveness**

[The Department of Institutional Effectiveness](#) provides official annual reporting information on its website pertaining to enrollment demographics and Pell recipients, retention rates, and graduation and transfer rates. In addition, the annual [College Fact Sheet](#) provides highlights about the College and statistical data regarding students and employees.

- **HEA Disclosures**

In conformance with the Higher Education Act of 1965 (HEA), RSC makes required disclosures to enrolled and prospective students, parents, employees, and the public via its [Consumer Information](#) website, as well as the college catalog.

- **Faculty and Staff Information**

Details about RSC's [Leadership and Administration](#) and [Residential Faculty](#) are provided on the public website, in the college catalog, and in other materials distributed to students and the community (e.g., college commencement program). Information includes academic qualifications and positions held.

Educational Experience

RSC supports the educational experience of students through organizations and clubs, cultural events, community service opportunities and radio programming:

- **Academic student organizations and clubs**

[Student Life](#) and Leadership encourages student engagement in learning through leadership, service, and cultural activities:

- [Phi Theta Kappa](#)
- [National Society of Leadership and Success](#)
- [Honors](#)

- **Cultural Events**

The Community and Engagement Council hosts ongoing [historical and cultural events](#) that represent and address a variety of experiences and viewpoints. In addition, the International Education Center hosts cultural celebrations during [International Education Week](#).

- **Community service opportunities**

In January 2025, RSC launched an [East Valley Rotaract Club](#), which supports service activities in the community for anyone 18 or older. In addition, Phi Theta Kappa, National Society of Leadership and Success, and Honors provide service opportunities for students. As noted in Criterion 1.C., a variety of courses include [student service activities that promote civic engagement](#).

- **Radio programming**

As discussed in Criterion 1.B., RSC's [Division of Public Service](#) offers educational experiences through its two public radio stations, KJZZ and KBACH, and the [Hear Arizona podcast initiative](#).

Sources

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- RSC_Consumer Information_2.B
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- RSC_Degrees and Certificates by Fields of Interest_2.B
- RSC_Degrees and Certificates_2.B
- RSC_Division of Public Service_2.B
- RSC_East Valley Rotaract Club_2.B
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- RSC_Institutional Effectiveness_2.B
- RSC_International Education Week_2.B
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- RSC_NSLS_2.B
- RSC_Programmatic Accreditation_2.B
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- RSC_Residential Faculty_2.B
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- RSC_State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA)_2.B
- RSC_Statement of Accreditation_2.B
- RSC_Student Life_2.B
- RSC_Student Service Activities that Promote Civic Engagement in Coursework_2.B
- RSC_Student Solution Center_2.B
- RSC_Tuition and Fees_2.B
- RSC_Tuition Cost Calculator_2.B

2.C. Board Governance

In discharging its fiduciary duties, the institution's governing board is free from undue external influence and empowered to act in the best interests of the institution, including the students it serves.

Argument

The [MCCCD Governing Board](#) functions autonomously in its decision-making to ensure the integrity of each of the 10 community colleges and uphold the vision, mission, values, and strategic priorities of the District. The Governing Board includes seven elected officials and one student board member. Five of the seven elected positions are determined by geographic districts within the county, and the remaining two are at-large elected positions. Board members are elected for staggered four-year terms, which allows for continuity and stability of governance operations. The Board oversees the MCCCD Chancellor and shares information on important matters with the public.

The [Maricopa Governance](#) leadership model includes policies and [Administrative Regulations](#) that establish a framework for accountability for the Board's constituents. Specific [governance processes](#) include the training and preparation to conduct Board meetings in accordance with operational policies. [Governance Investment](#) stipulates that training and retraining will be "used appropriately to orient new members and to maintain and increase existing Board Member skills and knowledge" so that there is informed decision-making with regard "to the institution's financial and academic policies and practices." When the 1996 Governance leadership model was adopted, the Board transferred day-to-day [Fiscal Management](#) responsibilities to the Chancellor "subject to a formal approval process" for adoptions, amendments, and deletions.

Subsequently, the Board and the Chancellor, in collaboration with the 10 MCCCD colleges, have established plans that include additional training for new and existing board members concerning shared governance, the establishment of a cross-departmental/cross-college task force to refine the definition of shared governance, and protocols for board interactions with MCCCD employees. At the December 14, 2022 Governing Board Work Session, members received a detailed [onboarding training](#) form from the Office of General Counsel. The [Maricopa Governance Change Crosswalk](#) is updated annually, and publicly shared information also includes the [Process for Approving Administrative Regulations](#).

The priorities of the MCCCD Governing Board, as stated in its [Governing Values](#) mission documents, are: Student Centric; Integrity; Collaboration; Inclusiveness; Innovation; Respect.

These areas of focus are in keeping with the public stewardship responsibilities of one of the largest community college districts in the nation. Board members undertake to represent the residents of Maricopa County in "determining and demanding appropriate organizational performance," as stated in the [Board Job Description](#).

The Governing Board has identified [four strategies](#) that are in keeping with the mission of a public community college district serving its identified constituencies, which include the

residents of Maricopa County, students at the MCCCDC colleges, private and public sector employers in Maricopa County, and other educational institutions in the County:

- College-going behavior for K-12 students
- Leader in workforce development
- Future ready institutional leader in technology
- Community impact

The Governing Board conducts [regular monthly meetings](#) which are open to the public and allow for participation and submission of agenda items by both internal and external constituencies. Board meetings allow for reporting by internal constituency groups including college administration, faculty senate, employee senate, adjunct faculty senate, student life, etc. Detailed [agendas](#) are published to ensure transparency. [Minutes of Governing Board meetings](#) posted after 2017 are available from the board website.

As elected officials, members of the MCCCDC Governing Board may speak individually; however, the board is expected to act collectively in the best interests of the institution. Per its [Manner of Governing](#), the board undertakes to govern in a lawful, nonpartisan manner.

The [Board Members Code of Conduct](#) clearly outlines expectations for professional and ethical conduct. Furthermore, board members are required to adhere to all regulations defining restrictions regarding [gifts, gratuities, and unrelated compensation](#).

Administration

[The Chancellor](#), who serves as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the District, is the single employee who reports directly to the Governing Board. The Governing Board's [Delegation to the Chancellor](#) provides direction that allows for the Chancellor's own reasonable interpretation of policy. As referenced above, the Administrative Regulations are rules adopted by the Chancellor for day-to-day management of District operations. Per the [Accountability of the Chancellor](#), the Chancellor is responsible for all authority and accountability of employees, and delegates implementation of the administrative regulations to appropriate personnel, such as vice-chancellors, college presidents, etc.

[Maricopa's Shared Governance Blueprint](#), approved by the Governing Board in 2022, defines Shared Governance as: "A process for engaging internal constituencies in the development of plans, policies, and procedures to improve decisions and create better outcomes." The [Shared Governance Council \(SGC\) structure](#) is "designed to bring together a wide range of voices and expertise to address challenges, pursue new opportunities, and ensure decisions made throughout the system thoughtfully align with [MCCCDC's] long-term goals."

The SGC is composed of:

- [Teaching, Learning, and Classroom Council](#): Focused on academic excellence and instructional quality.
- [Student Access, Success, and Experiences Council](#): Dedicated to enhancing the student journey from access to success.
- [Operational & Human Resources, Facilities, and Technology Council](#): Oversees essential services that support the System's operations.
- [Institutional Effectiveness, Planning, and Compliance Council](#): Ensures alignment with strategic planning, performance, and regulatory standards.

- [Shared Governance Executive Council](#): Acts as an intermediary, providing guidance and recommendations to the Chancellor and facilitating cross-council collaboration.

The Councils are standing bodies charged to formulate recommendations to the SGEC or to make final decisions in those cases where that authority has been delegated by the Chancellor to that council through its charter.

The RSC President sits on the [Shared Governance Executive Council](#). The President and college administrators oversee the day-to-day management of college-related activities concerning students, faculty, and staff. The RSC shared governance model is described in Criterion 4.A.

MCCCD Faculty

In alignment with the [Residential Faculty Agreement](#), the [RSC Residential Faculty Senate](#) functions as the primary faculty governance team, promoting success in teaching and learning, contributing to the creation and implementation of educational policies at the College, and serving on integral administrative committees. [Instructional Councils](#) (ICs), discipline-specific groups composed of one voting faculty representative per college, are important bodies to ensure that residential faculty members have a leadership role in MCCCD academic matters. The Instructional Councils provide oversight for the MCCCD's common course bank and shared instructional programs. They also oversee curriculum development and modifications, and play a role in activities such as university transfer and articulation agreements. More information on the faculty role in the curricular process is provided in Criterion 3.B.

Sources

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- MCCCD_Board Job Description_2.C
- MCCCD_Chancellor_2.C
- MCCCD_Delegation to the Chancellor_2.C
- MCCCD_Fiscal Management_2.C
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- MCCCD_Governance Processes_2.C
- MCCCD_Governing Board Agenda_2.C
- MCCCD_Governing Board Meeting Schedule_2.C
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- MCCCD_Instructional Council Handbook_2.C
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- MCCCCD_Shared Governance Executive Council_2.C
- MCCCCD_Shared Governance Executive Council_Charter_2.C
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- MCCCCD_Student Access Success and Experience Council_2.C
- MCCCCD_Teaching Learning and Classroom Council_2.C
- MCCCCD_Vision Mission and Institutional Values_2.C
- RSC_Faculty Senate Constitution_2.C
- MCCCCD_Board Members Code of Conduct_2.C

2.D. Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression

The institution supports academic freedom and freedom of expression in the pursuit of knowledge as integral to high-quality teaching, learning and research.

Argument

Academic Freedom

The rights of MCCCCD residential and adjunct faculty are delineated in [Section 3.1 – Academic Freedom](#) of the Residential Faculty Agreement. MCCCCD has a [District Academic Freedom committee](#) comprised of three subcommittees: [Education and Training, Academic Freedom Assistance](#), and [Policy Review and Recommendation](#). In accordance with these principles, the [Academic Freedom Philosophy Statement](#) of the RSC residential faculty places a high value on supporting academic freedom in the context of the college mission. The statement is posted on both the residential and adjunct faculty intranet sites.

Freedom of Expression

Consistent with [state law](#), RSC submits an annual [Free Expression Report](#) to the MCCCCD for distribution, which demonstrates compliance with District [policies and procedures for student assembly](#) and the principle of free [exchange of ideas](#). The report also details examples of activities supported and sponsored by RSC that allow for a discussion of varying views and opinions.

The RSC Library provides a research guide for [Banned Books Week](#) that celebrates the free and open access to all information and emphasizes the harm of censorship. Also, the RSC Library's [Collection Development Policy and Procedures](#) document includes an Intellectual Freedom Statement that guides acquisition of materials addressing a broad spectrum of views.

Sources

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- MCCCCD_Academic Freedom Subcommittee on Policy Review and Recommendation_2.D
- MCCCCD_Academic Freedom_Residential Faculty Agreement 2025-26_2.D
- MCCCCD_Committee on Academic Freedom_2.D
- MCCCCD_Free Expression Report_2.D
- RSC_Academic Freedom Philosophy Statement_2.D

- RSC_Banned Books Week_2.D
- RSC_Collection Development Policy and Procedures_2.D

2.E. Knowledge Acquisition, Discovery and Application

The institution adheres to policies and procedures that ensure responsible acquisition, discovery and application of knowledge.

Argument

Academic Research and Presentations

RSC Faculty and students share their research in a variety of forums as evidenced by this [Research Examples](#) list.

Sabbaticals

MCCCD faculty can apply for a sabbatical every seven years. The criteria and process are addressed in [Section 12.8 Sabbatical Leave](#) of the [Residential Faculty Agreement](#). As a recent example, a RSC faculty chair used a sabbatical to complete a [dissertation](#) that underscored the critical need for academic institutions to prioritize inclusivity through deliberate strategies that address workplace disparities.

Evidence of Educational Research Contributions

- **Predictive Analytics: RioPACE (Progress and Course Engagement)**

[RioPACE](#) is an in-house predictive analytics model built on historical data to help identify whether students are on track for successful online course completion. Course success is based on predictors such as login information, engagement with the course content (e.g., opening lesson content, completing assignments, viewing instructor feedback), points earned, etc. Success [indicators on the course roster](#) allow faculty to readily identify students who are at risk, and to launch proactive interventions to help them succeed. Similarly, the [student view of the indicators](#) serves as a “nudge” for students to change or maintain their academic behaviors to increase their likelihood of success. PACE analytics are currently available in [565 online courses](#), with a predictive success rate of approximately 93%.

- **Predictive Analytics : RioPACT (Persistence and Completion Tracking)**

[RioPACT](#) is a predictive model that determines the likelihood of student persistence, analyzes student engagement, and considers previous academic success and demographics. RioPACT then identifies “high risk” and “low risk” students for not progressing through a program. Pilots of the RioPACT program in the Disability Resources and Services unit [show direct improvement](#) in learner equity, additional support and outreach, and greater persistence rate than all other student groups who were not involved in the pilot program.

RioPACT was awarded the [2023 WCET WOW award](#). In addition, the Rio developers of RioPACT received fellowships to the [Strategic Data Project](#) at the Center for Education Policy Research at Harvard University. The fellowships provided additional support for the successful [implementation of RioPACT](#).

Evidence of Research: Student Contributions

Community-based learning is articulated as a [core purpose](#) in RSC's mission documents. Accordingly, students have the opportunity to participate in community engagement activities as part of their educational experience at the college. Several of these opportunities were described in Criterion 1.C., including:

- **Phi Theta Kappa (PTK)**

As mentioned in Criterion 1.C., PTK fosters scholarship while promoting leadership, service, and fellowship. Each year, PTK chapters engage in an Honors-in-Action Project, which revolves around a research-based theme and incorporates a community engagement component. A recent example includes [Take a Break](#), which embedded structured stress relief activities in online accounting and history courses.

Evidence of Research: Grants

RSC has secured a number of [grants](#) that support the community as well as developing best practices in educational disciplines. The NSF grant, Nano Knows No Limits, led to [presentations](#) regarding best practices for semiconductor manufacturing technician education.

Library Guidance

The RSC Library provides extensive guidance to students on the ethical use of information via online resources such as citation guides, video tutorials, and discipline-specific research guides which are linked extensively in courses at students' point-of-need and are also available via the library website. Usage data illustrates robust student engagement with these resources. In FY2023-2024, the [APA Citation Style guide, 7th Edition](#) had 49,929 [views](#), along with 15,082 [views](#) for the [MLA Citation Style guide, 9th Edition](#). A [Plagiarism Basics tutorial](#), which launched in February 2021, had more than 8,465 [views](#) by the end of FY2023-24.

RSC instructors can also request in-person and/or virtual library instruction sessions taught by Library Faculty, which cover discipline-specific research methodology and ethical information practices. In addition, Library Faculty created [RIO100-INTEG](#), an Academic Integrity course offered at no cost to students, which provides training on all aspects of ethical information within the academic setting and is included among the academic misconduct interventions.

Information Literacy

As a college serving a large cohort of online students, RSC has been vigilant in establishing and promoting policies and mechanisms to ensure the ethical use of information by students. [Information Literacy](#) is a college-wide student learning outcome that is measured at the college-, program-, and course levels, and several interventions are in place in online courses across all disciplines, including a [Library Services](#) section in all online syllabi which includes a link to MCCC's 24/7 Ask a Librarian service. Additionally, third-party materials are cited appropriately through a [Copyright Acknowledgement](#) section.

The Library Instructional Coordinator works with online course developers to identify appropriate third-party content for courses, including library subscription materials (articles and media) as well as open educational resources (OER) that have Creative Commons licensing, so that ethically-used materials are provided and modeled for students.

Centralized Copyright Processes

RSC has a centralized Copyright Department housed within the library, whose functions are to: provide assistance and guidance during the instructional design and course production

processes for use of third-party content provided in online courses; secure copyright and/or licensing permission where indicated; and track permissioned items by course in an internal copyright database. The library also provides tailored copyright education resources, such as [Image Copyright and Ethical Use](#) and [Audio & Video Copyright and Ethical Use](#) in the Computer Technology (BPC/CIS) Research Guide, and the [Copyright Basics for Fiction Writers](#) guide for the Creative Writing Department.

Academic Integrity

An RSC [Academic Ethics and Integrity](#) public web page includes a statement of values and associated practices, along with tips to help students maintain integrity in their online coursework. Students who violate these policies are subject to MCCCAD Administrative Regulation (AR) 2.3.11 [Academic Misconduct Policy](#). In accordance with AR 2.3.11, an [Academic Misconduct](#) section is included in all syllabi.

RSC's Office of Academic Integrity (OAI) systematically reviews the assessment database to identify potential issues related to students submitting assignments from identical IP addresses, matching file properties, and other factors that could indicate a violation of academic integrity standards. A proprietary [Peer-to-Peer Plagiarism Detection System](#) scans student assignment submissions across online course sections and terms, and RSC also subscribes to the Turnitin e-plagiarism detector, which scans student work against a database of previously-published electronic documents. The Faculty Chair, after investigation of flagged infractions, proceeds through a series of progressive interventions that support an educational, rather than punitive, approach to remediating confirmed incidents.

The OAI is responsible for maintaining academic misconduct records electronically in [CRM](#), and alerts the discipline Faculty Chair when a student has a history of violations across courses and/or disciplines. The chair may refer the matter to an Academic Dean to facilitate adjudication for disciplinary sanctions, including probation, suspension, or expulsion, via the [Administrative Regulations 2.5.2](#) procedures. Students may appeal academic consequences by following the Instructional Grievance Process referenced in Criterion 2.A.

In addition to academic misconduct, [Civility](#) expectations are included in every course syllabus and are enforced by faculty members via the Academic Misconduct Policy noted above.

Artificial Intelligence

- **AI Roadmap**

As part of its commitment to strategic innovation and continuous improvement, RSC has initiated the development of an institutional [AI Roadmap](#). This effort began with foundational research into existing AI roadmaps and strategies from leading universities and organizations, including resources from EDUCAUSE, WCET and other higher education consortia. A cross-functional committee was tasked with shaping the roadmap, marking the formal launch of this initiative. Moving forward, the team will finalize the [focus areas](#) and establish a formal charter to guide the group's work. Plans are also underway to develop a detailed [task list and project timeline](#), with the goal of presenting the completed AI Roadmap to the college by Spring 2026.

RSC faculty have also developed policies and training initiatives to ensure students use AI responsibly and ethically in academic settings. Faculty Chairs crafted [college-wide syllabus language](#) setting student academic integrity expectations for use of AI tools. Some departments

provide further guidance on its use. For example, the [STEM Department Policy Manual](#) provides clear guidelines on AI use, emphasizing faculty responsibility in setting expectations and students' accountability for verifying AI-generated content. STEM faculty are also [required to communicate](#) usage policies in course announcements, reinforcing expectations around citation, verification, and integrity.

In addition, RSC faculty have also contributed to Rio's [AI Roadmap](#), shaping the college's long-term strategies for AI integration in education. Beyond policy development, assessment strategies have evolved to ensure AI does not compromise academic honesty, with assignments designed to promote critical thinking rather than reliance on AI-generated responses. Some examples include business courses that have updated [Lesson 0](#) to educate students on generative AI's limitations and [Spanish 201](#), which incorporates AI as an option to help students edit their essays.

To further support AI literacy and responsible engagement, faculty members have participated in institutional initiatives like a [two-part workshop](#) that included a presentation by Dr. Jeanne Law of Kennesaw State University, a [homework assignment](#) examining AI's role in education and its impact on one's teaching and assessment practices, and a follow-up workshop session.

- **AI Workshops**

In Fall 2025, RSC's Innovation Think Tank launched a [workshop series](#) to explore practical and hands-on ways to use artificial intelligence in daily work tasks. Topics include AI foundations and smart prompting, generating images with AI, creating inclusive content with AI, and using AI for data analysis and insights.

- **AI Resources**

MCCCD has dedicated [AI resources](#) that provide guidance for faculty on generative AI tools and academic misconduct, syllabus statements regarding generative AI, a student guide to generative AI, and other pertinent tools to help navigate AI technology.

- **AI Needs**

RSC continues to actively seek feedback from faculty and staff on developing AI literacy. In response to emerging trends, RSC's Faculty Chair of Computer Information Systems has proposed [a suite of AI courses](#), which are under consideration for development in 2026. In addition, AI resource needs have been added to the Faculty Chair reports and department reviews for the Executive Team to discuss as part of the budgeting and planning process detailed in Criteria 4.B. and 4.C.

Course Syllabus Information

As described above, all RSC syllabi contain information and expectations regarding avoidance of academic misconduct.

Writing Tutors

Faculty may encourage students who have been accused of plagiarism through AI to attend sessions with RSC's Writing Tutors and re-submit assignments.

International Day of Action

RSC participates in [The International Day of Action](#), which is an opportunity to bring students, faculty, and staff together to champion academic integrity, professional ethics, and "the

principles of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility and courage” as defined by the International Center for Academic Integrity (ICAI). These activities include RioConnect posts (described in Criterion 1.C.) to educate students about RSC’s commitment to and students’ obligation to practice academic integrity, and to encourage students to participate in the Day of Action campaign-themed contests.

New Student Orientation

The New Student Orientation (NSO101) is a non-credit online class that is available at no cost for first-time Rio Salado College students. This class explores helpful topics, including college policies and resources, and [academic integrity](#). Approximately [1,600 students completed the NSO](#) on average each year between AY2021-22 and AY2023-24. [Reporting shows](#) that NSO has a positive impact on student outcomes where first-to-second term persistence rates for students who enrolled in NSO during AY2023-24 were observed to be 16.7 percentage points higher than those who did not.

Institutional Review Board

Faculty, staff, students, and external investigators conducting research at RSC must conform with the [MCCCD Institutional Review Board \(IRB\) Policy](#), which ensures compliance with federal guidelines for human subjects research. Each of the 10 MCCCD institutions has a College Research Review Committee (CRRC) to evaluate proposals that do not require full IRB review. The chair of each CRRC serves on the MCCCD Institutional Review Board, which typically meets 2-3 times in the fall and spring semesters. Per the [MCCCD IRB Handbook](#), all research conducted at RSC must receive institutional site approval from the Vice President of Academic Affairs (VPAA) prior to submission to the CRRC and/or IRB. Policies and procedures are available on the [Institutional Review Board Website](#).

Initial formal training is required of all IRB Members at the time of their appointment, and thereafter as required by the IRB. IRB Members must update their training once every three years. The IRB office maintains a log of continuing education completion dates. Continuing education of IRB Members is also supported through information resources on the IRB webpage.

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Criterion 2 - Summary

In fulfilling its mission, the institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

Argument

- District-, college-, and individual-level integrity and ethical, responsible conduct are established through adherence to a code of conduct, expectations for professional and personal ethics, and mandatory training that ensures compliance with state and federal policies, regulations, and laws.
- RSC accurately and completely conveys information to its students and the general public including academic programs, faculty and staff details, student costs, governance structures, and accreditation affiliations in its catalog, website, marketing and communications.
- MCCCCD Governing Board acts in the best interest of RSC and its students.
- Teaching, learning and research are supported through academic freedom and freedom of expression.
- RSC supports the responsible acquisition, discovery, and application of knowledge through institutional policies—such as academic integrity, artificial intelligence, and IRB—as well as through an information literacy student learning outcome.

Sources

There are no sources.

3 - Teaching and Learning for Student Success

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness in fulfilling its mission. The rigor and quality of each educational program is consistent regardless of modality, location or other differentiating factors.

3.A. Educational Programs

The institution maintains learning goals and outcomes that reflect a level of rigor commensurate with college-level work, including by program level and the content of each of its educational programs.

Argument

Appropriate Educational Programs and Courses

Rio Salado College (RSC) offers a wide range of [degree programs](#), including bachelor's, associate's, and certificates. The rigor associated with the college's courses and programs is appropriately aligned with [course competencies](#) and [program learning outcomes](#) agreed upon within each discipline's [Instructional Council](#) (IC) and, if applicable, [advisory councils](#). These programs and courses are consistent with RSC's mission of providing "high-quality, flexible, and accessible education."

Instructional Councils

As mentioned in Criterion 2.C., [Instructional Councils](#) are district-wide, discipline-specific committees comprising faculty representatives from each of the 10 MCCCCD colleges that oversee the District's common course bank and shared programs, and are responsible for evaluating the quality and content-appropriateness of academic curricula. RSC has a residential faculty representative on most of these councils, who may also serve as chairs of their respective councils.

Advisory Councils

RSC's occupational degree and certificate programs are guided by [advisory councils](#) of industry professionals, ensuring relevance to regional employers and adherence to industry standards. These councils actively support various programs:

Administration of Justice
Behavioral Health Services
Business and Industry
Computer Information Technology
Dental
Education
Paralegal Studies
Semiconductor
Sustainable Foods

As an example, the [Business Advisory Council](#) met to consider: emerging skills and curriculum alignment; ethical considerations and barriers to AI adoption; impact of remote/hybrid work on business operations; and soft skills for hybrid work environments. The [recommendations were incorporated](#) into General Business courses, including:

- GBS120 and MGT175: added content on the impact of company culture
- GBS151 and MGT175: added content on emotional intelligence
- GBS120 and GBS233: added content on interviewing via a remote environment
- GBS120 and GBS233: added content on conducting remote business meetings

The [General Business program review](#) is further detailed in Criterion 3.E.

Guided Pathways Framework

Guided Pathways represents a comprehensive model implemented across the entire college to assist all students in exploring, selecting, planning, and completing programs aligned with their career and educational goals, efficiently and cost-effectively.

Programs and certificates are organized into nine [Fields of Interest](#) (FOI) that share similar areas of study, intended to facilitate the identification of learning/career areas of interest for students through use of behavioral economics. The FOI advising model is discussed further in Criterion 3.G.

All [transfer courses are reviewed](#) by Arizona's three state universities to determine course equivalency, providing another measure of rigor for courses developed by RSC and MCCC faculty. Guided Pathways metrics and data are discussed in Criterion 3.G. below.

"One Course, Many Sections" and 40+ Weekly Start Dates

RSC's "one course, many sections" curricular model for online, hybrid, print-based, and correspondence classes provides a centrally-developed, single version of a given course, with all of the content and assessments included. Individual instructors may [enhance the lessons](#) with additional information and resources, but the core content remains intact. Courses are developed and written by the department Faculty Chair or a designated content expert, often an experienced adjunct faculty member who is a practitioner in the field, working with the [Instructional Design and Technology Department](#) (IDT).

In implementing the "one course, many sections" model, the IDT assists Faculty Chairs in the course design and project management of online, hybrid, and mixed-media RSC courses. Course content and assessment materials are developed in collaboration with the chairs or their designated developers (typically experienced adjunct faculty), following an established course design model and aligned with the curriculum and official course competencies in the [MCCCD course bank](#).

The Instructional Technology teams, comprising a director, manager, and 17 employees, produces and maintains the 1,148 live courses offered in RioLearn - online, hybrid, print-based, and ESP (spring 2025). An in-house [Course Lifecycle tracking system](#) provides real-time information for all processes: development, production, maintenance, and deactivation. The course production team also reviews courses for accessibility and remediates as appropriate. A

total of 163 new courses or course revisions were completed in FY2023-24, and approximately 478 hours in staff time were expended on edits to live courses.

[RioLearn](#), RSC's customized, scalable Learning Management System, was created in-house in 2004 to accommodate 40+ annual “start” dates and the need to scale up the online “one course, many sections” model as opposed to individual faculty course creation. As online sections fill, new sections are automatically created based on the master course, with associated instructors staffed and enrolled students assigned and linked to the appropriate section.

Students may enroll to begin most of RSC's online courses on 40+ Mondays per year. The College has a well-developed infrastructure for maintaining this model, including a [block calendar](#) system for degree- or certificate program seekers.

RSC's centralized academic model presents many advantages to the College, instructors, and students:

- Course materials are consistent in look, feel, and navigation.
- Courses follow established quality standards for instructional alignment and assessment.
- Course materials are reviewed in accordance with [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines](#).
- Copyright clearance for third-party course materials is managed by the RSC Library.
- Instructors have more time to focus on engaging with individual students and providing substantive feedback on assignments.

While curricular consistency is assured by having identical outcomes and assessments in online and hybrid courses, in other modalities this consistency is provided by requiring that identical course competencies are assessed for each specific course, regardless of the modality. For example, whether students are taking [ENG101 online](#) or via [dual enrollment](#), they will be assessed according to the same learning outcomes.

Learning outcomes in ESP courses ([Educational Service Partnerships](#)--see Criterion 1.B.) are also assessed at the appropriate level, regardless of the location or mode of delivery, as evidenced by the identical competencies in the [ESP](#) and [hybrid](#) versions of LET155.

Furthermore, adjunct faculty expectations relative to class preparation, facilitation, communication, and assessment for all modalities are clearly articulated and enforced in Rio's [Faculty Service Standards](#).

An additional benefit of the one course, many sections model is that it facilitates the collection of student performance data since assessments are uniform among sections of a course. As a result, interventions can be readily implemented in course content, assessments, or teaching strategies that affect a large number of students simultaneously.

An example of performance data informing instructional interventions can be found in the [History Department PDCA cycles](#), which were designed to improve student attainment of Critical Thinking skills. (RSC's PDCA practices are further detailed in Criterion 3.E.) In addition, student performance data informed enhancements in the COM correspondence courses offered to incarcerated students. Across three courses, [college level proficiency improved](#) in college

student learning outcomes following in-person intervention and practice, as well as specific written content to build speaking skills.

The Dynamic Assessment Data Display (DADD), enabling assessment of college-wide student learning outcomes across over a million assessments in thousands of online courses, is described in Criterion 3.E.

Regular and Substantive Interactions

RSC faculty provide learners with frequent opportunities for regular and substantive interactions (RSI), which are critical components of a quality online program. Consistent with [federal regulations](#) on RSI, faculty teaching online credit courses monitor weekly due dates and initiate contact with students, post course announcements and/or "From Your Instructor" notes that are academic and relevant, respond to academic inquiries within 72 hours, and provide detailed, personalized, and timely feedback.

In addition, faculty regularly engage in synchronous and/or asynchronous interaction with students via tools such as discussion boards, voice threads, video conferences, audio recordings, phone calls, email and/or text messages, social media, and online collaboration software. Faculty members are responsible for initiating interaction, providing academic information, and facilitating learning.

RSC students are responsible for remaining in regular contact with their instructors on a weekly basis and engaging with the course content as active participants in the educational experience. These practices and expectations were standardized in [RSC syllabi](#) in [2019](#), following faculty consensus.

Accordingly, prior to the federal regulation July 1, 2021 effective date, the [RioLearn LMS](#) was [modified](#) to release assessments no sooner than 7 days prior to the due date to ensure [weekly](#) academic engagement between the student and instructor.

Dual Enrollment

RSC has over 35 years of experience offering dual enrollment courses throughout Maricopa County. The [MCCCD Dual Enrollment Catalog](#) governs which courses may be offered. The RSC Faculty Chairs oversee all academic aspects of the program, including instructor qualification, instructor evaluation, prerequisite enforcement, syllabi approval, assessment review, and textbook selection. Students taking courses for dual credit must meet the same learning outcomes as students taking "traditional" college courses, and dual syllabi submitted by instructors via the Syllabus Builder (described in Criterion 3.C.) must demonstrate that the topics taught and assessed align with the RSC course competencies, as seen in this sample [SOC 101 syllabus](#). Dual enrollment students are also subject to the [same admission requirements](#) as credit seeking students.

Some dual courses share identical materials with online counterparts, as evidenced by the [dual enrollment BIO100 syllabus](#) in comparison with the [online syllabus for BIO100](#). RSC dual enrollment credits transfer to all Arizona public colleges and universities, and additional [articulation agreements](#) are in place with a variety of private and out-of-state institutions.

During [FY2023-24](#), RSC's dual enrollment program offered 161 different courses at 47 high schools throughout Maricopa County. A total of 9,872 students took 31,774 classes during that time, earning 91,488 RSC college credits.

RSC maintains a [Dual Enrollment Office](#) with a comprehensive infrastructure in place to support the school locations. Dual staff meet directly with students to facilitate admissions, course selection, enrollment, and program pathway coaching. Dual team members also meet with administrators at high schools and school districts to receive feedback and explore new ideas for future dual offerings. Further, the RSC Office of Disability Resources and Services (DRS) supports dual enrollment students as needed.

Dual Enrollment Faculty Qualifications

As indicated in Criterion 3.C, instructors who teach dual enrollment classes must meet the same HLC required minimum qualifications as other RSC faculty. Instructors with less than the requisite academic credits may be placed on a [Faculty Credential Development Plan](#) (FCDP), which requires demonstrable, current, and consistent progress toward the academic credential and is reviewed on an annual basis. A [standard operating procedure](#) has been developed for processing and annual monitoring.

Dual Enrollment Student Access to Learning Resources

In addition to online library access commensurate with all other RSC students, library instruction is provided to dual enrollment students through recorded webinars, LibGuides, and video tutorials, as described in Criterion 3.D. In addition, the Ask a Librarian 24/7 live chat service is available to students at all times.

Additionally, as part of the RSC library instruction program, dual enrollment students are formally assessed on their [Information Literacy skills](#).

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3.B. Exercise of Intellectual Inquiry

The institution's educational programs engage students in collecting, analyzing and communicating information; in practicing modes of intellectual inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments.

Argument

Development of Offerings

As previously described, Rio Salado College (RSC) is one of 10 colleges in the Maricopa County Community College District (MCCCD). Each college is individually accredited; however, the 10 colleges share a common course bank and follow a district-wide curriculum approval process, as defined in the [MCCCD Curriculum Handbook](#). The [Center for Curriculum and Transfer Articulation](#) (CCTA) supports the MCCCD faculty and administration in the development of quality curriculum for district students, as well as the articulation of the curriculum to post-secondary institutions. RSC has a designated Faculty Chair who leads processes for the development, coordination, and review of the College's curriculum, and serves on the [District Curriculum Committee](#) (DCC), in the role of Curriculum Design Facilitator (CDF), contributing the RSC faculty perspective to MCCCD curricular priorities.

RSC Curriculum Process

To increase proactive communication, planning, and efficiency to align the college's and MCCCD's approval processes (ICs, college administration, Governing Board and HLC) the [RSC Curriculum Steering Committee](#) (CSC) was formed in the Summer of 2025. The CSC consists of the VPAA, Academic Deans, Curriculum Design Facilitator, Associate Dean of Instructional Design and Technology, ALO, and Curriculum Department Supervisor. The CSC reviews preliminary curriculum proposal requests on a monthly basis and supports RSC faculty in navigating the MCCCD curriculum feasibility and approval processes. A standard operating procedure has been developed for [launching new programs](#). Approved proposals move forward to the RSC Curriculum Committee.

The [RSC Curriculum Committee](#) receives monthly updates from the Curriculum Department, which prepares a list of all new and modified internal [curriculum proposals](#) for consideration. Membership comprises six Faculty Chairs (one of whom serves as the Curriculum Design Facilitator, or CDF), as well as College Vice Presidents and Deans. Courses from the MCCCD course bank that are developed at RSC are reviewed by the discipline Faculty Chair or designee to assure that all official course competencies have been included. Lesson outcomes are developed and [aligned with official course competencies](#), and assessed at the appropriate level.

The CDF also reviews all new and modified curriculum proposals from other MCCCD colleges, consulting with the RSC discipline-specific faculty chair when questions arise.

Programs that prepare students for state licensure illustrate the relevance and appropriateness of RSC's curriculum. Admissions requirements for each of these programs is specified in the official program description at the district level [Programmatic accreditation](#) and licensure disclosures demonstrating the applicability of the programs are disclosed on the RSC website:

[Addictions](#) and [Substance Use Prevention Programs](#), [Dental Hygiene](#), and [Educator Preparation Programs](#).

Additionally, the Curriculum Department works closely with the Office of Institutional Integrity and Compliance and other stakeholders on compliance and regulations in [new and revised program development](#), as described in Criterion 2.A.

Program learning outcomes are based upon SOC and CIP descriptors. For example, program descriptions for the [Early Childhood Education AAS](#) in comparison to the [Early Childhood Education CCL](#) demonstrate how learning outcomes of certificates are simultaneously connected to and distinguished from corresponding associates degrees, and tailored to the credential awarded.

General Education

The MCCCDC has established curriculum and transfer articulation as the key factors in development of general education programs in the District. As described above, the District's [CCTA](#) manages curriculum articulation areas. The MCCCDC general education program is contained in the [Arizona General Education Curriculum \(AGEC\)](#), a set of 35-37 credits that satisfy general education requirements at Arizona State University (ASU), Northern Arizona University (NAU), and the University of Arizona (UA) through statewide articulation agreements.

These articulation agreements allow students to identify a program of study early and take courses at RSC for the first two years and then transfer to a state university to complete a four-year degree. The current AGEC designations include:

First Year Composition	Humanities, Arts and Design
Literacy and Critical Inquiry	Social-Behavioral Sciences
Mathematical Applications	Natural Sciences
Computers/Statistics/Quantitative Applications	Cultural Diversity in the United States
Global Awareness or Historical Awareness	

Following the [Arizona Board of Regents policy requirement](#) in February 2021 to redesign general education requirements at the state universities, the [AZTransfer Steering Committee](#) began the process of updating the [AGEC](#) to reflect current general education strategies, Guided Pathways, and 21st-century skills. MCCCDC [crosswalked](#) the redesigned AGEC, which maps the assignment of existing general education courses into one of [seven new domains](#):

Written Communication	Social and Behavioral Sciences
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Oral Communication	Institutions in the Americas
Quantitative Reasoning	Natural Sciences
Arts and Humanities	

It is anticipated that the updated AGECE will launch with the Fall 2026 term across MCCCDC.

RSC's general education chairs, which include the chairs for Biology; Communication; Counseling and Personal Development; English and Creative Writing; ESL and Reading; History and Geography; Humanities, Philosophy, Religious Studies, and Honors; Languages; Library Services; Math; Physical Sciences; Psychology; and Social Sciences, collaborate on a formal [General Education Program Review](#) conducted approximately every five years. This review includes detailed analysis of general education student learning outcomes. The program review process is discussed in Criterion 3.F.

The framework of [General Education at MCCCDC](#) includes specific elements across the curriculum designed to foster [personal development and essential knowledge and skills](#).

The MCCCDC and RSC general education requirements contribute to student success in the following areas: transfer to a baccalaureate program; associate degree recognition and/or specialization certification as affirmation of proficiency in a particular content and/or skill area; application of these skills for employment and job advancement; and development of critical and evaluative reading, composition, research, and critical thinking skills (e.g., analysis, evaluation, inference).

To facilitate the achievement of these foundational knowledge and essential skills and the ability to contribute to society, RSC has designated five [student learning outcomes](#) as the focus of college-wide student learning assessment work. These student learning outcomes are assessed at the college-, program-, and course levels and are described in detail in Criterion 3.E.

In addition to meeting the college-wide learning outcomes on critical thinking and information literacy, every degree program at RSC requires students to demonstrate the ability to apply intellectual inquiry skills to varied and challenging materials, as demonstrated by [these examples](#).

Also, students must achieve a [district-approved score](#) on the reading portion of a nationally-normed standardized assessment, or they must earn a passing grade in CRE101 (College Critical Reading).

College Contributions to Scholarship

An example of RSC contribution to scholarship includes research efforts, such as the RioPACE and RioPACT predictive analytics for student persistence. The RioPACT team was awarded the [2023 WOW Award](#) from WCET and recognized by the [Strategic Data Project](#) Convening at Harvard University's Center for Educational Policy Research. The team also

engaged in [academic publishing](#) and [presenting](#). In addition, the RSC Deans and administrative staff are active in [publishing and presenting](#) at conferences.

Faculty Contributions to Scholarship

As a two-year college, RSC does not directly engage in scholarship as one of its primary functions; however, RSC residential faculty are instructional leaders who remain current in their fields by participating actively in professional organizations, pursuing regular professional growth opportunities, [academic publishing, and presenting](#) at conferences.

Student Contributions to Scholarship

- **Honors Program**

The [Honors Program](#) provides intellectually-stimulating learning opportunities for academically outstanding students. The program includes scholarships, distinguished multidisciplinary classes, project-based learning, and community cultural events. Recipients of the Presidents' Honors Scholarship and Honors Achievement Award are required to complete [co-curricular activities](#) designed to enrich and enhance the educational experience. Students report on these activities in the non-credit HONORS100, which includes a writing component. Students must earn a minimum writing score of 70% in order to be considered "college-level," as determined by a standardized grading rubric. Of the 234 co-curricular assessments submitted by Honors students during AY2023-24, 95.7% were written at or above college level, far exceeding the RSC target to have 80% of students producing college-level writing. The [Honors Scholarship Award graph](#) shows the award totals for Fall 2021 through Spring 2024.

- **All Arizona-Academic Scholars**

The MCCCDC colleges annually recognize students for outstanding academic achievement, community service, and leadership that benefit society beyond the classroom. Most recently, [RSC honored two student scholars](#) at the All-Arizona Academic Team celebration in February, 2025.

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- RSC_Honors CoCurricular Activities_3.B
- RSC_Honors Scholarship Awards_3.B
- RSC_Honors_3.B
- RSC_Lesson Alignment with Competencies_GBS233 and MNT112_3.B
- RSC_Licensing Disclosure for Educator Preparation Programs_3.B
- RSC_Licensing Disclosure for the Addictions and Substance Use Disorders Programs_3.B
- RSC_Licensing Disclosure for the Dental Hygiene Program_3.B
- RSC_Licensing Disclosure for the Substance Use Prevention and Interventions Program_3.B
- RSC_New or Revised Program SOP_3.B
- RSC_Presentations and Publications by Rio Deans and Staff_3.B
- RSC_Programmatic Accreditation_3.B
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- RSC_SOP for Launching a New Program_3.B
- RSC_Student Learning Outcomes_3.B
- RSC_WCET 2023 WOW Award_3.B

3.C. Sufficiency of Faculty and Staff

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

Argument

Sufficiency of Faculty

- **RSC Residential Faculty Chair Model**

Since RSC's founding in 1978, the College has maintained a nontraditional faculty structure. There is generally one full-time residential faculty member per academic department who also serves as the [Faculty Chair](#) (with multiple disciplines combined under one chair in some cases). The chair model is based on maintaining a compact, flexible, and innovative leadership group of discipline experts (numbering 24 in FY2023-24) who manage their programs, curriculum, student learning assessment, projects, initiatives, and services while supervising a large contingent of adjunct faculty (1,207 in FY2023-24). Since many of the Faculty Chairs' responsibilities differ from roles at traditional campuses, RSC has a significant support model (see below) to assist with operational responsibilities, allowing the Chairs to focus their efforts on department-, college-, district-, and often state- and national-level leadership in their areas of expertise, as well as devoting their time to interdisciplinary work and participating in a wide range of RSC strategic activities.

It should be noted that the Higher Learning Commission has accepted the RSC residential faculty model. In a letter dated June 28, 2021, [the Commission stated](#): "Based on the information you provided to HLC in your 2021 Institutional Update, your institution triggered indicator 4-Minimal Full-Time Faculty, which requires the institution submit information for staff review... Since your institution has provided acceptable information in a previous report about indicator 4-Minimal Full-Time Faculty, no institutional report is required at this time."

Faculty Chairs represent the College through service on district-wide [Instructional Councils](#) and [Articulation Task Forces](#), serving as academic leaders to ensure the currency, quality, and rigor of the common district curriculum, and are responsible for developing their courses at RSC or designating subject matter experts as course developers. Faculty leadership positions are held by elected individuals who serve as liaisons between the residential faculty and other college entities, as well as serving on the [MCCCD Faculty Executive Council](#).

- **Faculty Instructional Team**

In order to maintain the small cohort of residential faculty while meeting enrollment needs and continued delivery of high-quality instruction, a sustainable and scalable Faculty Instructional Team support model is in place. Unbundling faculty chair responsibilities allows departments to staff tiered positions—including full-time [Instructional Services Director](#) or [Instructional Services Coordinator](#), part-time Discipline Specialist or Lead Adjunct Faculty—as appropriate. Faculty instructional support personnel are often experienced, fully-credentialed adjunct faculty members prior to being selected through a competitive hiring process, and assist the chair with such matters as refinement of department policies and procedures, overseeing the tracking of

instructional issues, evaluation of adjunct faculty, and coordination of assessment efforts, among others.

Residential Faculty Qualifications

Residential Faculty qualifications are described in the [Residential Faculty Agreement](#) as:

- **Academic disciplines:** For academic disciplines, faculty qualifications include a master's degree in the discipline being taught, or a master's degree in any area with 18 graduate credits in the discipline.
- **Occupational disciplines:** Generally, for occupational disciplines, a combination of education and/or experience is required to qualify. Faculty may qualify with any of the following:
 - Five years of occupational experience in the field to be taught OR
 - Three years of occupational experience in the field to be taught and a Bachelor's degree or higher OR
 - A Master's degree or higher in the teaching field OR
 - A Master's degree or higher in any field with 18 graduate credits in the teaching field OR
 - A Master's degree or higher in any field with a combination of 24 upper division and/or graduate credits in the teaching field

Consideration of equivalent experience can be recommended by the Instructional Councils, subject to approval by the MCCCDC.

Adjunct Faculty, Educational Service Partnerships (ESP) Instructors, and Dual Enrollment Instructors

All RSC adjunct faculty, ESP instructors, and dual enrollment instructors are required by the MCCCDC to meet the same qualifications as residential faculty upon hire, in alignment with the HLC minimum qualifications and HLC Assumed Practice B.2. Detailed specifications, as approved by the relevant Discipline Faculty Instructional Council for each teaching field, are listed on the [MCCCDC Faculty Credentials website](#).

RSC ensures that new adjunct faculty and instructors meet requirements through its centralized [Faculty Services department](#), which is responsible for receiving applications, pre-screening, and verifying teaching credentials (education and required years of experience) before submitting the application to the appropriate departmental faculty chair who then reviews qualifications, conducts interviews, and makes the hiring determination.

Instructors with less than the requisite academic credits may be placed on a [Faculty Credential Development Plan](#) (FCDP). Consistent with HLC Assumed Practice B.2 and the HLC Guidelines for Determining Qualified Faculty, the FCDP requires demonstrable, current, and consistent progress toward the academic credential and is reviewed on an [annual basis](#).

Staff Qualifications

RSC's student support services personnel are hired according to the criteria established by the MCCCDC. The [MCCCDC jobs website](#) lists the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for specific positions, along with examples of the education and experience that would meet the skill set. Details of MCCCDC hiring processes are provided in Criterion 4.B. Required qualifications for

higher-level positions generally include a college degree along with commensurate experience in the field.

Professional Development and Training - Residential Faculty Development

- **Faculty Professional Growth (FPG)**

MCCCD residential faculty are provided with professional growth funds and advancement opportunities as stated in [Article 13 of the Faculty Agreement](#). The District expended a total of \$60,144.55 in [FPG funds](#) for conference registration and travel by RSC's residential faculty members in fiscal years 2021-2023. In addition to MCCCD funds, RSC supports faculty attendance at conferences and workshops as needed if they have exhausted their district allowance and are representing the college or attending a conference of particular importance in their areas of specialization.

- **Maricopa Center for Learning and Instruction**

The [Maricopa Center for Learning and Instruction \(MCLI\)](#) is a district-wide office that provides leadership in the areas of teaching and learning, serves as a source for innovation resources, and provides ongoing professional development opportunities for residential and adjunct faculty.

The MCLI is also the Arizona lead agency for Quality Matters™, a peer review process whereby faculty assess and certify the quality of online courses. Eight current RSC Faculty Chairs have participated in [Quality Matters training](#).

Professional Development and Training - Adjunct Faculty Development

As mentioned above, RSC's faculty model encompasses a large cohort of adjunct faculty members, and particular attention is paid to ensuring that adjunct faculty receive rigorous and ongoing professional growth and development opportunities. Adjunct faculty are required to attend at least two professional development opportunities per fiscal year. This requirement is reinforced in the AFD101 workshop (see below) and [tracked in the FIS database](#) detailed below.

- **All-Faculty Meetings**

Adjunct Faculty gain important teaching and learning knowledge by attending the All-Faculty Meetings (AFM) held each fall and spring semester. The [fall meeting](#) includes a general session, assessment updates, and TED Talk-style "RioChats" by adjunct faculty members, as well as department meetings. In addition, [outstanding adjunct faculty awards](#) are presented for recognition in the categories of assessment of student learning, and contributions to teaching and learning. The spring event focuses primarily on department meetings for discussion of discipline-specific matters and connection with colleagues. All online and location-based adjunct faculty are invited to attend these biannual meetings which are well attended, averaging 569 in fall and 406 in spring for the past three fiscal years. [Exit survey data](#) attest to the value of these meetings to RSC adjunct faculty.

- **Adjunct Faculty Development (AFD) Workshops**

RSC's [AFD online workshops](#) are designed to provide comprehensive continuing education for adjunct faculty. Topic tracks include Online Teaching, Student Learning Outcomes, Online Course Development, Student Experience, Learning Theory, and Adult Learners. New adjuncts are required to attend [AFD 101](#), and additional workshops may be required by the Faculty Chair as an intervention to improve instructor effectiveness, or as a component of sequential instructor

evaluations. Additionally, the workshops that are tied to the college-wide student learning outcomes may be required by some departments. All AFD workshops are presented in the RioLearn LMS, thereby providing adjunct faculty with an opportunity to experience the system from the student viewpoint before they begin teaching.

Over the past three fiscal years, almost 150 new adjunct faculty members successfully completed AFD101 and close to 750 additional workshops were completed from the selections available. The Spring 2025 [Adjunct Faculty Survey](#) (N=305) provided overwhelmingly positive data regarding perspectives on RSC's mission and culture, knowledge and understanding of policies and procedures, and effectiveness of communication strategies. Faculty Chairs continue to highlight these professional growth opportunities, and in some instances require completion of specific workshops to remediate areas for improvement identified during evaluations.

- **MCCCD Adjunct Faculty Professional Growth (AFPG) Program**

The [AFPG program](#) provides limited funding assistance on a reimbursement basis to adjunct faculty employees. For FY22-24, RSC adjunct faculty have been awarded \$13,022.59 in MCCCD professional growth funds. In addition, adjunct faculty attending pre-approved faculty professional growth events are eligible for [tier-based compensation](#).

Performance Success Training

Beginning in Fall 2023, all employees of MCCCD are engaged in [Performance Success](#) training. These trainings are intended to create a strong coaching culture that builds collaborative relationships of trust between managers and employees where individual and team growth are a priority.

Sabbatical Policy and Administrative Leave Policies

For residential faculty, MCCCD facilitates a faculty development leave/sabbatical program, allowing faculty members to dedicate time to new course development, research endeavors, or doctoral dissertation completion. As described in Criterion 2.E., a faculty chair recently used a sabbatical to complete a dissertation.

Administrative Leave

RSC leadership at a grade of 125 or above are eligible for a two (2) consecutive month paid [Administrative Leave](#) after four (4) consecutive years of service to the District. The purpose of the leave is primarily that of relieving the administrator of the pressure of full-time duties.

Paid Educational Leave

[Paid Educational Leave \(PEL\) Program](#) is designed to provide employees the leave time to further their careers and employment opportunities through the completion of an advanced degree (Associate's, Bachelor's, Master's or Doctorate), certifications coursework, to complete dissertation, thesis, or participation in internships/practicums required for a degree outside MCCCD.

Annual Evaluations

Staff Evaluations

Staff are evaluated based on the following [standards](#): job knowledge; quality of work; productivity, problem solving and initiative; communication and teamwork; customer focus and

service; strategic focus and resource management; behaviors for success; and leadership. In addition, staff describe future focus on goals, objectives, and employee development opportunities. Staff evaluations are reviewed by the divisional Vice President and President.

Residential Faculty Evaluation

- **Peer Assistance and Review (PAR)**

Residential faculty hired into the MCCCDC system are considered probationary for their first five years of employment, and are required to participate in the PAR (Peer Assistance and Review) process during those years, in accordance with [Article 17](#) of the Faculty Agreement. As outlined in the [RSC PAR documentation in the Faculty Manual](#), the primary purpose of PAR is to encourage, support and mentor probationary faculty members while building an archive for achievement and performance. The information gathered during the PAR process is used as one tool in the decision-making process for renewal of a probationary faculty member.

During PAR, probationary faculty document their instructional expertise, service to the College and community, and professional development through an [Individual Development Plan \(IDP\)](#) each year. Peer Mentors are required to undergo specific training and to meet frequently with their mentees in a designated process that includes mentoring activities and oversight. A Peer Assistance and Review Committee (PARC), consisting of the Vice President of Academic Affairs and qualified appointive faculty, evaluates IDPs each year and makes recommendations to the RSC President regarding renewal of the probationary appointment, and appointive status at the end of the fifth year. PAR evaluations are maintained at the College, with recommendations forming part of the faculty member's official personnel file at the District office.

- **Faculty Evaluation Plan (FEP)**

In addition to PAR and the IDP process, RSC's residential faculty are evaluated according to the Faculty Evaluation Plan (FEP), a self-examination process outlined in [Article 18 of the Faculty Agreement](#). Residential faculty are required to complete an IDP annually for the first five years of employment as they progress through the PAR and IDP process, and an FEP every third year thereafter. FEP committee members are chosen from among faculty peers, college administration, or other discipline experts, while student input is sought in the teaching, learning, or service area. FEPs for all RSC residential faculty are up to date, and maintained in the faculty files at the District Office.

Adjunct Faculty, Dual Enrollment Instructor, and ESP Instructor Evaluation

All adjunct faculty, including dual enrollment and ESP instructors, are evaluated in accordance with [Article 19 of the Faculty Agreement](#). At RSC, [formal evaluation](#) is conducted once each semester during the first three semesters of teaching in alignment with MCCCDC policy, and continually thereafter in compliance with MCCCDC policy and criteria established by the department Faculty Chair. Evaluations are conducted by the Chair, an Instructional Support designee, or Instructional Helpdesk personnel.

[End-of-course surveys](#) are administered to students to determine instructor efficacy. These data are analyzed and incorporated as a component of the Program Review process described in Criterion 3.F.

Evaluations for all adjunct faculty are retained in personnel files maintained by the Faculty Services Department.

OnBoarding

- ***Springboard to Success Onboarding***

In addition to meeting minimum qualifications, all new faculty (Residential, OYO, OSO, and Adjunct) must complete the "[Springboard to Success: All Faculty Onboarding](#)" during the first semester of their employment as MCCCCD faculty members.

- **Residential Faculty Onboarding**

The New Faculty Experience is an additional onboarding program under the direction of the PAR Facilitator that supports first-year Probationary Faculty members in developing sound teaching and learning practices, completing the [Individual Development Plan](#), learning the culture of the College, and understanding the duties, rights, responsibilities, and expectations of being a Residential Faculty member. Participation in the New Faculty Experience begins in the first Fall semester after being hired. The onboarding includes a kickoff meeting, followed by monthly PAR meetings.

New Faculty are paired with a mentor during their first five years. The mentor meets regularly with their mentee during the first year, with meeting frequency decreasing over time to monthly or as needed. The college's faculty developers hold weekly [training sessions](#) for all faculty that align with the goal of the Individual Development Plan listed above. These meetings allow new faculty to learn from all appointive faculty, not just their mentors. New faculty are also encouraged to reference the [Residential Faculty Agreement](#), which houses college policies and operating procedures on processes. Rio residential faculty also complete AFD102 - Outstanding Online Instruction Mentoring during their first semester.

- **Adjunct Onboarding**

Upon hire, new adjuncts participate in Rio Salado's [onboarding process](#). This onboarding includes training on Rio Salado's history and culture, along with services offered and pedagogy.

For online and hybrid instructors, additional onboarding includes a two-semester training and mentoring experience to prepare new faculty for using the RioLearn Learning Management System, college and department policies and procedures, and services the college offers. This begins with AFD101- Outstanding Online Instruction. Once a new hire completes AFD101, they meet with their department chair or designee to verify specific department policies and review the course they will teach.

During their second semester, adjuncts complete AFD242 - Supporting the Whole Student, which delves into regular and substantive feedback, communication, and services offered by the college.

Adjunct Faculty Support Systems

In addition to facilitating the hiring process as described above, the Faculty Services department maintains a proprietary [Faculty Information System](#) (FIS) database containing detailed files for all adjunct faculty, dual enrollment instructors, and ESP instructors. FIS includes resumes, transcripts, credentials, professional and/or industry licenses and certifications, formal evaluations, and monitoring of ongoing required professional development. Faculty Services personnel and Faculty Chairs update and manage information in FIS, which is easily

searchable. The Institutional Research department is able to create customized [reports](#) from the system as needed.

The [Instructional Helpdesk](#) (IHD) assists the Faculty Chairs as needed in the mentoring, training, and evaluation of adjunct faculty. Additionally, RSC has a dedicated infrastructure in place to serve the needs of instructors and students in its various locations, including a [dual enrollment office](#), an [Educator Preparation Program department](#), an [incarcerated re-entry office](#), and an [ESP department](#), all of which are fully-staffed. The [Course Scheduling and Adjunct Pay Department](#) provides a number of behind-the-scenes functions that assist adjunct faculty and facilitate the smooth operation of RSC's 40+ annual course starts, such as monitoring live enrollment data and opening new sections as required, scheduling class sections for all instructional disciplines, and calculating worksheets for the adjunct faculty payroll process.

Dual Enrollment Instructor Orientation and Training

RSC Faculty Chairs/designees provide training and orientation for new dual enrollment instructors in college expectations, course-related matters, and using the RSC [Syllabus Builder](#), an in-house, proprietary tool that guides dual enrollment instructors through the [creation of syllabi](#) that conform with RSC expectations. The software automatically populates required information such as [MCCCD course competencies](#) and reading lists, and Faculty Chairs use a [dashboard](#) to track the submitted syllabus from its initial creation, through modifications, to final approval. Instructors must provide evidence that the topics taught and assessed in their dual enrollment courses align with the course competencies approved in the MCCCD Course Bank.

An annual [Dual Enrollment Orientation](#) for new dual enrollment faculty is held each summer. In addition, most Faculty Chairs meet with their new instructors several times in the first year and at least once annually thereafter, also maintaining regular contact via email, telephone, and newsletters. [Department-specific guidelines for dual enrollment instructors](#) are made available via an internal portal.

ESP Instructor Training

ESP instructors complete [AFD250b- Teaching and Learning Experience for Rio Partners](#), which provides similar information to Springboard to Success. ESP instructors also engage in department training that meets the specific needs of the specialized partnership.

Student Affairs Employee Training

The [Student Affairs Division](#) conducts regular in-service training for all departments under its purview. The Division has a [Quality Assurance \(QA\) & Training Team](#) that has created and implemented a system to provide pre-scheduled internal standardized training at prescribed intervals. [Modules](#) include Admissions, SIS101, Enrollment, Guided Pathways, among others. Additionally, the QA team provides customized and specialized group training upon request. Participant feedback is used to evolve the standardized content, identify trainer/training areas for improvement, and address any follow-up questions.

- **Advisement Training**

Student Affairs developed an [initial advisor training outline](#) that is continually updated as new advisors are onboarded. Advisement also leverages the [Guided Pathways for Rio Advisement 2024](#) document for guided pathways specific information. The department holds weekly meetings, and there are annual [Academic Advisement](#) and [Student Success conferences](#). SA

staff attend professional meetings such as [NACADA](#), [AWHE](#), and [AZTransfer](#). Lead Advisors work closely with faculty to develop expertise and resources specific to the programs in their designated advisement Field of Interest.

- **Student Affairs Knowledge Base**

The Quality Assurance Team created and maintains the Student Affairs [Knowledge Base](#) that is used college-wide. Ongoing updates and annual audits of the content ensure continued currency and accuracy. Content includes [Quick Reference Guides](#), linked to relevant reference articles and materials, as well as process update articles that keep staff abreast of changes as needed. The Knowledge Base search engine also pulls results from the RSC public website, allowing staff to provide quick and accurate information to students.

- **Financial Aid (FA) Training**

New Financial Aid staff undergo a rigorous three-month [training plan](#) at the onset of employment. Components include the customer service skills, knowledge, and professionalism required to appropriately counsel students as needed on Title IV aid, and policies and procedures in other areas that have a direct impact on financial aid. FA Staff also participate in ongoing cross-departmental and district training as needed. Additionally, the FA staff attend in-person and virtual webinars for state, regional, and national [FA conferences](#).

- **Military/Veterans Staff Training**

Key staff at [Arizona Veteran Supportive Campus \(AVSC\) institutions](#) are required to take [Military Cultural Awareness training](#) as part of the bi-annual recertification process, in accordance with [Arizona Revised Statute 41-609](#).

- **MCCCD Student Success Conference**

The MCCCD holds an annual Student Success Conference primarily geared towards an audience of student services personnel and faculty, with informational and educational sessions featuring best practices and strategies for facilitating student success. The [Fall 2025 conference](#) focused on “Envisioning Tomorrow: Navigating the Future of Education.”

- **Third Party Training – Sextant Marketing, LLC**

Since May 2023, RSC has contracted with Sextant Marketing, LLC to provide inbound call center services to support Admission, Records and Registration, and Academic Advisement and other departments as needed. A 2024 review of data demonstrated that in accordance with college expectations, Sextant maintained their staffing rate of 10 Full-time employees, error rates of 3.3% and aided in enrolling 8,884 students for RSC. Their Quality Assurance average score has been maintained at 96.8%, with an abandonment rate of 6.7% and the average time to answer being .8 seconds. The training process for Sextant representatives is completed through [2 iterative tiers](#). During FY2023-2024, the QA team provided over 168 hours of training which included specialized requests. Sextant Marketing was acquired by Carnegie Learning in November 2024.

Tutors

[Tutors](#) are subject-matter experts, of whom over 90% have a master’s degree in their subject areas, ensuring excellent content knowledge and consistency with the curriculum. RSC tutors are trained in adult learning and tutoring techniques that promote independent learning.

Adult Education Staff Training

The Adult Education program allocates a minimum of 10% of its annual grant funding to job-embedded professional learning for instructors and staff. Arizona Department of Education, the grant sponsor, approves the program's [professional learning plan](#) and offers state-wide professional learning initiatives to guide grant-funded program implementation standards. Additionally, RSC Adult Education staff attend a wide variety of [conferences and training events](#).

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- RSC_Syllabus Builder Dashboard_3.C
- RSC_Syllabus Builder Template_3.C
- RSC_Training at Faculty Chair Meeting_3.C
- RSC_Tutors_3.C

3.D. Support for Student Learning and Resources for Teaching

The institution provides student support services that address the needs of its student populations, as well as the teaching resources and infrastructure necessary for student success.

Argument

Student Support Services

RSC endeavors to provide students with the services they need in multiple modalities, including in-person, online, live chat, telephone, and email, in keeping with its mission statement to "support learners where they are."

Admissions, Registration & Records (AR&R)

As a community college, RSC has an open admissions policy. The [Admissions, Registration & Records Department](#) handles student registration, along with such functions as requests for transcripts, evaluating transfer credit for program seekers, determining residency for tuition, and [student identity verification](#), whereby all students are required to submit a government-issued photo ID at the time of admission. A gap analysis of the 2025 Priorities Survey for Online Learners (PSOL; n=498) indicates improvement in student perception that "registration for online courses is convenient," with the gap between importance and satisfaction decreasing from 0.46 in 2022 to 0.30 in 2025.

Financial Aid

The RSC [Financial Aid Office](#) provides assistance to students with navigating the financial aid process and ensuring timely student access to U.S. Department of Education Title IV Student Aid programs. The office is led by a Student Affairs Director supported by Financial Aid staff for application processing, including awarding, authorization, and return of federal funds. In FY2023-24, a total of 11,117 financial aid applications were received, and \$9 million was disbursed in federal aid and [scholarships](#).

Academic Advising Department

[RSC's Academic Advisors](#) work with students towards completing degree or certificate programs that meet their career and university transfer goals, and build proactive relationships to support program-seeking students with a semester-by-semester plan. [RioCompass](#), a secure RSC portal developed in-house, provides students, staff, and faculty with 24x7 comprehensive resources designed for facilitating student success and goal completion. Students and advisors are also able to review the [Degree Progress Report](#) in SIS to map out needed courses for program completion. Appointments are available in-person, via video, or by telephone. The ratio of advisors to actively enrolled credential-seekers is approximately 300 to 1. In FY2023-24, advising hosted 5,879 student meetings.

Counseling and Career Services

The [Counseling Services Department](#) is staffed by two residential faculty co-chairs, four adjunct faculty, a career services manager, and a student services specialist. Counselors serve students with both urgent and non-urgent issues and offer a [comprehensive range of resources](#)

designed to help students navigate their educational journey and prepare for future careers, including issues relating to personal goals.

Career Services are free to all new, continuing, and prospective students. Credit-bearing [College and Career Success Classes](#) provide strategies for college success through instruction on topics such as time management, stress management, improving interpersonal skills, career exploration, and identifying values, interests, and personal strengths for career decision making.

Disability Resources and Services

RSC's [Office of Disability Resources and Services](#) (DRS) assists students with documented disabilities by providing appropriate accommodations in strict conformance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Section 504, and [MCCCD Administrative Regulation 2.8](#): Students with Disabilities. The department is run by a Disability Services Director and a Program Analyst, serving approximately 600 disability-registered students.

Instructional Helpdesk

The [Instructional Helpdesk](#) assists online students with course-related questions, facilitates student interactions in the New Student Orientation (NSO), and assists the Faculty Chairs as needed in the mentoring, training, and evaluation of adjunct faculty. The Instructional Helpdesk is headed by an Instructional Services Manager, with four full-time employees and one part-time employee, all of whom are experienced, fully-credentialed adjunct faculty members and provide a broad, cross-disciplinary knowledge base to assist students and adjunct faculty. Over 2,648 helpdesk tickets were submitted by students and adjunct faculty in FY2023-24.

Testing Services

RSC's [Testing Services](#) department provides in-person testing to students, partners, and community members at nine RSC locations across Maricopa County, offering college midterm and final exams, course placement options, prior learning exams for credit, industry and IT certification exams, high school equivalency GED® exam, adult basic education assessments, and extensive proctoring services for other colleges and organizations.

RSC also offers virtual proctoring (RVP) that ensures that course exams are conducted under conditions equivalent to on-site testing while providing students with the flexibility to test from home. RVP employs verified identity checks, a dual-monitor system providing both a front-facing and workspace view, and screen sharing and real-time monitoring by trained RSC Testing staff.

On average, Testing Services administers 59,000 exams annually, provides proctoring for over 16,800 exams for distance learning students and community members per year, and grades approximately 4,500 paper-based assessments. The College is a certified member of the [National College Testing Association](#) (NCTA) and adheres to their standards and guidelines.

Tutoring Services

RSC offers free [tutoring](#) services in 15 subject areas, preparation for GED and placement exams, and writing across the curriculum. Services are provided in person or via synchronous virtual meeting software. A full-time Learning Support Analyst supervises the Department of approximately 10-15 tutors. Additional tutoring is available online through an outsourced contract with [Brainfuse](#), which offers 24x7 services in some subject areas. Student engagement with in person, virtual and Brainfuse tutoring have [significantly increased](#).

The 2025 PSOL indicates improvement in student perception that “tutoring services are readily available for online courses,” as the gap between importance and satisfaction for this area narrowed from 0.29 in 2022 to 0.18 in 2025.

New Student Orientation (NSO101)

[NSO101](#) is a free non-credit online class that serves the same purpose as in-person orientation offered at traditional colleges. NSO101 is automatically added to students’ schedules when they register for their first class if they are degree- or certificate-program seekers, or plan to transfer to a bachelor’s degree program. Approximately [1,600 students completed the NSO](#) on average each year between FY2022 and FY2024.

First Year Experience (FYE)

Degree-seeking students who are new to Rio Salado College and the Maricopa Community Colleges as of Fall 2022 are required to take one of two first-year experience (FYE) [courses](#) as part of their degree program. These courses include goal setting, success strategies and financial literacy, career exploration, and developing a career and education plan. Approximately 1,800 students completed FYE courses on average each year between FY2023 and FY2024 which represented approximately 81% of students who were eligible to enroll. [Data suggest](#) that FYE course enrollment positively contributes to early academic momentum with 58% of students who enrolled in FYE persisting into their second year of coursework compared to 40% of students who were eligible for FYE, but did not enroll.

Learning Support

The RSC [Welcome Students](#) page provides a number of resources to support incoming students, including a [RioLearn tutorial](#).

Technology Helpdesk

The Technical Support Team, under the Director of User Support, runs the [Technology Helpdesk](#), part of a comprehensive college helpdesk system used to house data related to student and employee issues that can then be referenced by authorized personnel in various departments. The Technology Helpdesk includes the [Technology Requirements](#) page for verifying required hardware and software needs in preparation for online learning. Over the past three fiscal years, the technical support team fielded over 15,000 calls.

The 2025 PSOL indicates improvement in student perception that “appropriate technical assistance is readily available,” as the gap between importance and satisfaction for this area narrowed in 2025 to 0.22, from a gap of 0.37 in 2022.

Library Services

[Library Services](#) are primarily focused on reaching online students and serving the college locations. Four librarians include the Faculty Co-Chairs for Library Services, a Library Instructional Coordinator, and a Manager of Access Services, supported by two staff members. Several adjunct library faculty also provide online reference and instructional support for RSC students. A small physical library at the RSC Tempe location serves students and employees who also have borrowing privileges for the collections of all MCCCDC libraries totaling 438,270 items, as well as interlibrary loan services.

The online library provides access to approximately 115 databases of journals, magazines, newspaper articles, media, and ebook collections containing approximately 383,138 volumes.

The library is consistently in the [top ten most-visited sites](#) on the RSC website. As of spring 2025, there were also 3,545 library-licensed database articles and streaming films directly integrated into multiple sections of 298 distinct courses in RioLearn.

Reference services are provided in-person and via telephone, but most RSC students are served via the [Ask a Librarian 24/7 Chat service](#), which is supported by the MCCCDC for all the colleges. In FY2023-24, RSC students accounted for almost 27.5% of the MCCCDC's total chats; the highest usage of the system across the District. Post-chat exit survey data in this period indicated [92.9% of students rated the service as excellent or good](#).

RSC Library Faculty create and provide information literacy video tutorials designed to assist students with basic information, research skills, and ethical use of information. These tutorials are embedded within RioLearn courses, shared with dual enrollment instructors, and made available from the library's [tutorial page](#) and the [RSC YouTube channel](#). Customized [research guides](#), which garnered 149,972 views in FY2023-24, assist students and faculty with comprehensive strategies and content for conducting research over a wide number of subject areas, and many are embedded in relevant courses.

The 2025 PSOL indicates improvement in student perception that "adequate online library resources are provided," as the gap between importance and satisfaction for this area narrowed in 2025 to 0.15, from a gap of 0.23 in 2022.

Improvement in Online Lesson Delivery

Data from PSOL, administered seven times between 2008-2025, indicates improvement in student perception that "the quality of online instruction is excellent," as the gap between importance and satisfaction for this area narrowed in 2025 to 0.58, from a gap of 0.74 in 2022.

As part of its continuous improvement efforts, RSC implemented a [Student Digital Experience \(SDX\) initiative](#) to enhance the digital platforms used by students, focusing on accessibility, user experience, and effective communication. Over the last few years, these [enhancements](#) have included the student portal search functionality, a student "Action Items" list, and an improved calendar integration and user interface. RioLearn, contributing over [50 enhancements](#) suggestions since June 2024.

Laboratory Access

- **Science Lab**

The RSC Science Lab is a unique concept designed to meet the needs of students enrolled in online science laboratory courses. Employees assemble kits that are sold through the College Bookstore for 15 distinct courses in the fields of [Biology](#), [Physical Science](#), and [Engineering](#). During the past three fiscal years, 3,078 kits were assembled and sold each year.

- **Computer Labs**

RSC provides in-person [Computer Labs](#) at two college locations in Maricopa County. The Computer Lab staff includes a Computer Lab Supervisor and part-time lab technicians. In addition to instructional assistance, students can also use the labs to register for courses,

submit financial aid paperwork, request transcripts, and take proficiency or placement practice tests.

Clinical Practice Sites - Dental Programs

The Dental Faculty Chair serves as Program Director for RSC's [Dental Program](#) and oversees all instructional and facility needs in conformance with current concepts of dental hygiene practice. The program is [accredited](#) by the American Dental Association Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA). RSC's [Dental Hygiene clinic](#) is ADA compliant and includes 21 complete treatment units equipped with state-of-the-art dental chairs, operator and assistant stools, digital radiographic equipment, sterilization equipment, intraoral cameras, and intraoral scanners.

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3.E. Assessment of Student Learning

The institution improves the quality of educational programs based on its assessment of student learning.

Argument

Assessment Philosophy and Mission Alignment

RSC's [assessment philosophy](#) of "assessment-directed improvement by gathering evidence of student learning to evaluate the teaching and learning process" reflects its commitment to improving the quality of educational programs as well as aligning to its mission of "providing high-quality, flexible, and accessible education." The assessment philosophy also reflects expectations of faculty involvement in the assessment process as "faculty and students who understand the value of assessment and participate in assessment activities benefit most from this work. Therefore, the College expects every individual to participate fully in this effort." The RSC's Assessment Philosophy is posted on the assessment website and in the College Catalog.

The Learning Assessment Team

The [Learning Assessment Team](#) (LAT) includes representation from Faculty Chairs (who serve as assessment coordinators for the college-wide student learning outcomes), senior academic administrators, and Institutional Research personnel, who coordinate all aspects of student learning assessment. An annual [Assessment of Student Learning Report](#) details results of student learning outcomes assessment at the institution level; identifies best practices; and indicates areas for improvement and future growth. The report is shared with RSC employees, including adjunct faculty members at All-Faculty Meetings, and posted to the public website. LAT member roles are documented in its [charter](#). Program review is discussed in Criterion 3.F.

College-wide Learning Outcomes Assessment

Consistent with its mission of providing "high-quality, flexible, and accessible education," RSC has established the following college-wide outcomes for assessment of student learning across the curriculum, and created guides with rubrics to provide for standardized assessment of these outcomes across disciplines:

- [Critical Thinking](#)
- [Information Literacy](#)
- [Oral Communication](#)
- [Social Responsibility](#)
- [Writing](#)

The college-wide learning outcomes guides and rubrics are available on RSC's public [assessment website](#). This enables instructors to incorporate common, vetted resources in assignment feedback. In addition, students have a centralized hub they can access at any time to support their progress on these outcomes throughout their educational journey. As detailed in the program reviews in Criterion 3.F., RSC's goal is that at least 80% of students perform at college-level on each of these outcomes.

Program-level Learning Outcomes Assessment

Program learning outcomes, such as those for the [CCL in General Business](#), are posted on the RSC [website](#), and student achievement data is accessible via the published program reviews. As indicated in 3.F., as part of the program review process, Faculty Chairs are responsible for addressing results that do not meet the target. For example, the [General Business Program Review](#) includes curricular modifications that were implemented to address low student performance on the student learning outcome for writing. Specifically, GBS151, which is the highest enrolled general business course, was [modified](#) to include scaffolded writing assessments as well as authentic assessments of writing experiences.

[Additional examples](#) of how learning outcomes assessment data from program reviews informed curricular modifications include: ACC211 - modified assignment on tax treatment for partnership transactions; AJS101 and AJS260 - modified assignment instructions to provide examples and specific guidance regarding the expectations for college-level writing; MNT201 - modified final exam for stronger alignment to course and program outcomes; and HUM201 - modified writing assignments for supportive scaffolding.

Co-curricular Student Learning Outcomes Assessment

Historically, RSC identified four representative co-curricular student cohorts (Honors, Phi Theta Kappa, the National Society for Leadership and Success, and Adult ACE) to determine academic performance in college-wide student learning outcomes. Following recommendations from the 2022 HLC Review Team, RSC expanded the cohort to include students enrolled in Addictions and Substance Use Disorders, Social Work, and Educator Preparation internship courses. During AY2023-24, course-level data from close to 1.3 million student assessments were analyzed to determine performance by these students. The findings demonstrated that [a greater percentage of co-curricular students performed at college level](#) for all five cross-college student learning outcomes as compared with the general student body, ranging from 83% to 87% of co-curricular students. Co-curricular data are also examined at the course-, program-, and institutional level as part of the program review process.

Total Quality Management, Continuous Quality Improvement and PDCA

Grounded in its 30-year commitment to Total Quality Management and Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI), RSC continues to improve student learning through a framework of [Plan-Do-Check-Act \(PDCA\)](#), a CQI tool to collect data, assess outcomes, and implement improvements based on the data. In addition to institution-level data collected for the college-wide student learning outcomes, course-level measurement is conducted via PDCA cycles. Faculty Chairs report their PDCA cycles on an annual basis as a component of [chair reports](#) that are submitted to the Vice President of Academic Affairs, and PDCA cycle examples are also included in the annual assessment report. [Examples of PDCA cycles](#) that align with college-wide student learning outcomes include those designed to improve student attainment of Oral Communication skills across the online curriculum and Information Literacy skills in the dual enrollment courses.

Collaborative Assessment Processes

As indicated above, RSC has a culture of assessment that involves stakeholders across the College. Maintaining a small cohort of residential faculty who serve as chairs, represent multiple disciplines, and [meet](#) semi-monthly, facilitates effective interdisciplinary decision-making. Within the framework of this model, Faculty Chairs and Deans have implemented collaborative and

integrated processes for assessment of student learning at the college-, program-, and course-levels.

Adjunct Faculty and Assessment

RSC's adjunct faculty play a critical role in college assessment practices. Assessment strategies and data updates are shared at the fall and spring All-[Faculty Meetings](#). In addition, adjunct faculty participate in [discipline-specific discussions](#) of curriculum and assessment during their respective department meetings. [Rio Learning Outcomes Grants](#) (RioLogs) provide a mechanism for Faculty Chairs to engage adjunct faculty in developing learning-outcomes-based initiatives, directly linked to assessment data, to drive curricular improvements. As detailed in Criterion 3.C., the College created AFD courses on the college-wide student learning outcomes to support adjunct faculty assessment work in those areas.

Dual Enrollment Instructors and Assessment

RSC engages in a multi-faceted approach to ensure the rigor and quality of the DE courses through various assessment practices. RSC faculty review and approve course syllabi, including competencies and assessment methods for every dual enrollment section.

In addition, to validate the quality of DE student performance at the college level, RSC instructors from a variety of academic disciplines who teach both online and dual enrollment applied a common rubric to assessments in each modality. As detailed in the [AY2022-2023 Learning Assessment Report](#), average scores and the percent of students performing at a college level for each rubric dimension show that dual enrollment students exceeded the target in all areas and performed at or above their peers in online courses.

As DE course opportunities focus primarily on general education, Faculty Chairs also review and approve [dual enrollment assessments](#) to ensure alignment with RSC's course competencies. DE Instructors also utilize RSC's college wide learning outcomes rubrics, described above, to [assess RSC course competencies](#).

During Spring 2024, [the process](#) for collection and approval of dual enrollment assessments was centralized and streamlined. Faculty Chairs reviewed assessments across 45 distinct academic disciplines, labeled with their corresponding RSC course competencies, prior to archiving. Assessments are added annually to the new [consolidated interdisciplinary site](#) following Faculty Chair review. With the centralization of DE assessments, RSC will repeat the validation process of DE student performance at the college level, described above, beginning in the Spring 2026 term, and biennially thereafter.

Additional validation of RSC's DE student performance at the college level includes Educational Testing Service (ETS) assessments. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, RSC assessed institution-level student learning outcomes with a sample of DE students in 2018 through the ETS Proficiency Profile, a nationally standardized assessment that measures academic competence in critical thinking, reading, writing, and mathematics. RSC also administered the ETS Proficiency Profile to co-curricular student groups discussed above in 2019 before suspending ETS testing due to the pandemic.

The ETS platform provides RSC with an externally-validated assessment of outcomes for comparison analyses of DE student outcomes to peer institutions. The ETS assessment data indicates that RSC's DE students [performed above](#) the national mean score of freshman community college students, and at or near the national average on various domains.

During Fall 2025, RSC resumed administration of ETS which included a [sampling of DE students](#) at six high schools with high DE enrollments, in addition to co-curricular student groups; results are anticipated in Spring 2026. Based on the results, RSC will engage in appropriate PDCA cycles. Following this relaunch of ETS, RSC will regularly include a rotating sample of dual enrollment (DE) students from various high schools in ETS administration.

Institutional Research

RSC's Institutional Research (IR) Department is an integral part of its culture of assessment. The associate dean serves on the Learning Assessment Team, and IR collects and reports on student learning outcomes at the institution-, program-, and course-levels, administers nationally-normed assessments, and provides comprehensive data for program review. The creation and evolution of the [Dynamic Assessment Data Display](#) (DADD) described below is a direct result of the IR team's mission to democratize data for informed decision-making.

Dynamic Assessment Data Display (DADD)

The Dynamic Assessment Data Display (DADD) is an in-house web-based tool to capture student learning analytics. Initially created as an Excel spreadsheet where chairs would input assessment data, the DADD has evolved into an [award-winning](#) source of real-time, on-demand, data. The DADD flags assessments in which fewer than 80% of students performed at a college level. This enables faculty to focus their efforts, make informed decisions with regard to needed instructional interventions, and track their effectiveness. See the History Department PDCA cycles referenced in Criterion 3.A. for an example.

“Bottleneck” Assessment Dashboard

In collaboration with faculty, RSC's Institutional Research team developed a new [dashboard](#) that tracks student course outcomes - including pass, fail, and withdrawal rates - at the assessment level. As an example of leveraging information from the dashboard, [lessons were redeveloped for AHU245](#) for greater currency, relevance, and engagement. Course retention increased from 70% in AY2023 to 84.6% in AY2024.

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3.F. Program Review

The institution improves its curriculum based on periodic program review.

Argument

Program Review Policies and Processes

RSC defines a program as “a set of college-level courses resulting in a certificate or degree,” which includes General Education. Faculty Chairs are responsible for conducting program reviews with the support of Institutional Research. Program Review at RSC is a mature process that was initiated via membership in the HLC Academy for the Assessment of Student Learning in 2007. During five years of Academy membership, the College developed, piloted, and refined a [formal program review model](#) that has proven to be sustainable and has been adjusted and modified several times to align closely with institutional goals. These processes allow the College to make an in-depth examination of its programs, incorporating both curricular and co-curricular components, to ensure that the program is effective, relevant, and supports the college mission.

A structured [Program Review Template](#) contains foundational components, such as goals and learning outcomes for the program, assessment of college-wide student learning outcomes, end of course surveys, strategies used to increase student learning, and program resources. In addition, suggestions and actions from Advisory Boards are also detailed. For example, as a result of the Advisory Board’s suggestions, the [General Business Program Review](#) details course changes regarding the impact of company culture, additional content on emotional intelligence, how to interview via a remote environment, and additional content on conducting remote business meetings. Depending on the program, additional elements may also be included, such as external accreditations.

The Learning Assessment Team (LAT) examines the reviews and provides feedback to the Faculty Chair as part of an iterative process. Final reviews include one of the following recommendations from the LAT:

- Continue the program and implement the stated action plan, with the next review due in 3-5 years.
- Continue the program, implement the stated action plan, and address specific areas identified during the review, with a spotlight follow-up report due in 1-2 years.
- Refer to college administration to determine program viability.
- Discontinue program.

The reviews are then submitted to the Vice President of Academic Affairs for approval or additional action. The LAT maintains a [Program Review Schedule](#) for the 3-5 year cycle of reviews.

Four program reviews were completed in FY2023-24. Of these, two were recommended for discontinuation--the CCL in [Community Dental Health](#) and the AAS in [Family Life Education](#), the latter being replaced by the AA in Family Life Education as a result of the Guided Pathways initiative. Data from the [General Business Program Review](#) showed a marked influx of students participating in Employer Tuition Assistance partnerships, resulting in a significant increase in

first-generation and first-time-in-college students enrolled in the program. Section XI.c. of the review details the action plans currently underway to support the success of these students. Faculty Chairs are responsible for closing the loop on recommendations and decisions that surface during the review process.

Once the evaluation cycle has been completed, the review is posted to the [Program Review page](#) of the RSC public assessment website. Five additional programs completed the review process during FY2024-25, with additional programs added each year according to the master [Program Review Schedule](#).

Internal and External Curricular Review Process and Governing Board Involvement

RSC's faculty content experts develop curriculum, often in collaboration across colleges. As introduced in Criterion 2.C., [Instructional Councils](#) (ICs) are discipline-specific groups composed of one voting faculty representative per college to provide oversight for MCCC's common course bank and shared instructional programs. MCCC [evaluation, review, and quality assurance practices](#) are also in place to maintain relevant curriculum for RSC students that ensure that faculty reviewers evaluate all course and pathway curriculum on a 5-year cycle. Curriculum development aligns with the Academic Policies overseen by the Governing Board and are used in managing courses and programs offered at the ten MCCC colleges. The process for reviewing, approving, and implementing new programs is detailed in Criterion 3.B., including the standard operating procedure developed for [launching new programs](#).

The curriculum process is defined by the MCCC Curriculum and Transfer Articulation (CCTA) Office, and it is each college's responsibility to adhere to the curriculum guidelines and procedures as presented in the [MCCC Curriculum Handbook](#). The handbook is designed as a source of information for MCCC employees and curricular stakeholders, outlining the roles, responsibilities, guidelines, and business processes for the development, analysis, processing, implementation, and review of high quality curriculum.

Curriculum proposals are processed through all necessary procedures and approvals by the Instructional Councils, and the District and [RSC Curriculum Committee](#) prior to being placed on the [MCCC Governing Board Agenda](#).

Transfer Credit and Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)

RSC adheres to the MCCC [Transfer Credit and Prior Learning Assessment Policy](#). In accordance with this policy, RSC conducts [prior learning assessment](#) in a variety of ways, including national standardized tests, such as Advanced Placement (AP), College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) and DSST (formerly DANTES); faculty-approved equivalency lists; departmental credit by evaluation; credit by examination; portfolio assessment; and professional licenses and certifications. Over the past 5 years, nearly 11% of degree completers at RSC earned [PLA credit](#).

RSC's Admissions, Registration & Records department evaluates transfer credit for equivalency in accordance with the above-mentioned policy. Courses that do not appear on existing faculty-approved equivalency lists are forwarded to the appropriate Faculty Chair for evaluation. Transfer credit for program-seekers is reviewed upon receipt of transcripts, and the data are then uploaded to the Student Information System (SIS) database, where staff create checklists that indicate how the student's prior coursework has been applied to the program of study.

Specialized Accreditation

RSC maintains specialized accreditation for the following programs:

- Addictions and Substance Use Disorders—[National Addiction Studies Accreditation Commission](#) (NASAC) and [The Association for Addiction Professionals](#) (NAADAC)
- Dental Hygiene—[Commission on Dental Accreditation](#) (CODA)
- Educator Preparation Programs—[Arizona Department of Education](#) (ADE)
- Spanish Medical Interpretation—[Certification Commission for Healthcare Interpreters](#) (CCHI)

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3.G. Student Success Outcomes

The institution's student success outcomes demonstrate continuous improvement, taking into account the student populations it serves and benchmarks that reference peer institutions.

Argument

As noted throughout the assurance argument, RSC's primary focus has been its model for high-quality, low-cost, accessible educational opportunities. Historically, this has attracted "supplemental students" who are students taking courses for personal interest, job skills, or transfer to another college or university and not seeking to receive a credential from Rio. RSC's flexible schedule (approximately 40 plus start dates a year) and low attendance costs allow students to complete courses when they are unavailable at their home institutions and/or when scheduling conflicts arise.

Although RSC serves approximately 40,000 students a year, the outcome measure of IPEDS graduation rate within 150% of normal time is an extremely limited measure of RSC's outcomes. The IPEDS graduation rate measures less than 200 of RSC's 40,000 students (0.5%) and is limited to the fall census date enrollment. This does not accurately reflect the first time, full time population at RSC because RSC follows a "flexible start" model, where students can start courses approximately 40 plus Mondays a year. Therefore, when IPEDS data are captured as of the fall semester census, many RSC students have not yet enrolled. Enrollment in the fall continues with start dates through the first week of December and students who enroll in the fall semester may be taking courses extending into March.

In addition, another IPEDS outcome measure of first-year retention rate is similarly limiting, as it does not capture all of the credential seeking students that RSC serves through its flexible start dates. This outcome measures approximately 300 of RSC's 40,000 students.

RSC identified peer institutions through IPEDS reporting that are 2 year public institutions serving a significant population of undergraduate students exclusively enrolled in distance education. RSC has compiled first-year retention, as well as disaggregated completion and transfer rates in its comparison, as well as aggregating completion and transfer utilizing the same methodology as HLC's student success indicators:

IPEDS data- HLC's student success indicators methodology	Retention Rate	Completion Rate	Transfer Rate	Completion plus Transfer Rate
Rio Salado College	43%	43%	29%	72%
Saddleback College	61%	28%	29%	57%
Coastline College	27%	16%	41%	58%
Chaffey College	55%	27%	24%	51%
Portland Community College	51%	19%	30%	49%

Los Angeles Mission College	48%	23%	25%	48%
Compton College	42%	19%	45%	64%
Peer Average	47%	22%	32%	55%

An analysis of these student success outcomes benchmarked against peer institutions reveals:

- RSC is near its peers in retention rates
- RSC is above its peers in completion rates
- RSC is near its peers in transfer rates
- RSC is above its peers in completion and transfer rates

Accordingly, taking into account the population that Rio serves, completion and transfer rate is the most inclusive of the three measures, as it captures all entering credential seeking students throughout RSC's 40+ Monday starts.

Despite the limitations of IPEDS reporting on student outcomes because of RSC's unique 40+ yearly start dates, the college is committed to increasing these IPEDS outcomes as reflected in its [Strategic Plan](#) and [Strategic Enrollment Management](#) (SEM) Plan.

As part of its strategic plan, RSC has identified goals related to student goal attainment. Specifically, [goal one](#) reflects improved outcomes completion:

- Increase all entering credential-seeking student 3-year completion rate from 24.5% to 30% by June 30, 2026

As part of its Strategic Enrollment Management Plan, RSC has identified goals related to persistence and retention:

- Increase graduation rate within 150% of normal time for first-time, full time students from 8% to 22% by June 30, 2027
- Increase retention rates of first-time credential-seeking students from 36% to 46% by June 30, 2027
- Increase annual retention rates from 23% new to Rio credential seeking to 33% by June 30, 2027
- Increase new-to-Rio credential seeking annual graduation/transfer rates from 16% to 22% by June 30, 2027

In addition, RSC collects data and monitors the goal attainment of its "supplemental students" who are non-credential seeking students and comprise roughly 75% of the RSC population in any given academic year. A [student intent survey](#) was developed in Fall 2019 to capture specific student outcomes for non-credential seekers. Students are asked to declare their specific academic intent, including how many RSC courses they intend to take. These data enable RSC to track completion of non-credential seeking student goals based on course completions, and this information is incorporated into the [tracking of Strategic Plan goals](#).

Student Outcomes Tracking Through Data Tools

RSC's [analytics and reporting environment](#) incorporates a comprehensive suite of reporting tools (including Tableau dashboards) to enable monitoring of enrollment trends and student success outcomes, delivering operational datasets to working teams, and providing actionable insight to college stakeholders. An example was discussed in 3.E., whereby the Faculty Chair of [AHU245](#) utilized data sets for course revisions, resulting in retention increasing from 70% in AY2023 to 84.6% in AY2024.

In addition, the data tools allow the faculty and individual departments to disaggregate and analyze [enrollment management data](#) to identify factors that impact student retention, persistence, and program completion. This continuous analysis enables RSC to quickly identify ineffective initiatives and reprioritize resources.

To improve student outcomes, RSC is engaged in a number of initiatives, including:

- **“W” Grading Initiative**

RSC, had for a number of years, entered “Y” grades (equivalent to an “F”) for students with academic inactivity for 14 or more days. Students receiving a “Y” earned “0” points on their GPAs compared to a “W” which did not impact GPA. Based on [research](#) from the IR team, which showed the persistence and retention impacts on students with Y grades vs. W grades, in the Spring of 2025, Rio faculty adopted a new grading policy of awarding a “W” for students with academic inactivity of 14 days or more.

- **Guided Pathways**

The Guided Pathways model, detailed in Criterion 3.A., is designed to improve persistence among program-seeking students. RSC implemented the model in [Fall 2020](#) as a strategy to increase retention and completion in alignment with Strategic Goal One. A RSC Year 2024 [Guided Pathways Progress Report](#) reveals increased student outcomes in persistence rates, which have generally increased over the past several years, rising from 35% in 2019 just before GPS implementation to a high of 47% most recently in 2024.

- **FOI Advising Model - Academic Advising Department Redesign**

In order to effectively support the Guided Pathways model, RSC's Academic Advising Department was redesigned, with advisors specializing in one of the nine [Fields of Interest](#) (FOI) and using a case management approach to work with students. Advisors are tracking data such as course substitutions and course completions, along with data from student-facing tools, to confirm that students are becoming more successful in pursuing their paths and staying on track.

- **Admissions, Records and Registration (AR&R) Reorganization**

To provide additional support, Student Affairs reorganized its [AR&R structure](#) to support supplemental students taking courses for another college or university. Supplemental students are assisted regarding RSC policies and processes as needed, with advising provided primarily by the home institution. This allows for advising staff to be dedicated to serving credential-seeking students.

- **First Year Experience (FYE)**

Degree-seeking students who are new to Rio Salado College and the Maricopa Community Colleges as of Fall 2022, are required to take one of two first-year experience (FYE) [courses](#) as part of their degree program. These courses include goal setting, success strategies, financial

literacy, career exploration, and developing a career and education plan using assessments and other college resources. For AY2023-2024, FYE students had a [57% retention rate](#) compared to 39% for students eligible for FYE, but not enrolled.

- **HLC Student Success Academy (SSA)**

RSC joined the [HLC Student Success Academy](#) in Fall 2024. RSC has assembled a cross-functional team of Faculty Chairs, Student Affairs staff, and deans to collaborate with the Academy's experts and mentors in completing inventories, evaluating and reflecting on findings, and developing a student success plan. RSC has made a three-year commitment, and anticipates implementing its student success plan in AY2026-2027 to further improve student outcomes.

Since joining the HLC Student Success Academy, RSC has completed the [Student Data](#), [Current Initiatives](#) and [Infrastructure](#) inventories. The inventory results are shared across the college at [Cabinet meetings](#), [Dev Team meetings](#), [All Employee Meetings](#), and through [its dedicated internal website](#). RSC is currently implementing the Engagement inventory. In addition to the inventories, the RSC SSA core team has attended a number of workshops with HLC staff. Based on the findings from the inventories, RSC will develop a Student Success Plan in the summer of 2026 for implementation in Fall 2026.

- **Guild Outcomes Project**

In Fall 2022, RSC partnered with [Guild](#), which supports Fortune 500 companies offering employee education assistance programs. From this partnership, Guild identifies programs at RSC that are aligned to partner companies' needs, curates a list of relevant program offerings for employers/employees, and facilitates employee education assistance payments.

Beginning in Fall 2024, RSC engaged in [collaborative sessions](#) with Guild staff and Faculty Chairs to identify intervention opportunities to improve student persistence for Guild students. The results of this collaboration led to nine specific recommendations from Guild, with Rio selecting [three for development](#) in the spring/summer of 2025. The first project is focused on developing a new pre-course-start learner communications journey that streamlines content and inspires action. The second project is focused on integrating a resource into the first-year registration process that illustrates recommended first-year course loads in different learner scenarios. The third project is focused on revamping the course syllabus structure to support informed decision-making and enhanced time management for learners. Implementation of the [Guild Outcomes Project](#) launched in Fall 2025.

HLC Acceptance of RSC's Response on Student Success Indicators

In addition, [RSC provided a response](#) to HLC regarding its annual submission of student success indicators which showed its graduation rate being within the lowest 5th percentile of its peer group. RSC's submission detailed the extreme limitation of using the IPEDS graduation rate. RSC also noted that IPEDS data used for graduation rate is a significant lagging indicator and does not reflect RSC's current initiatives, which were detailed above. Replying to RSC's submission, [HLC stated](#) "After review, it was determined that the information submitted was sufficient and no further follow-up is required at this time."

Faculty Goals and Measures

As part of the District's 4DX framework to improve student outcomes, in AY2023-24, RSC Faculty adopted a Wildly Important Goal (WIG) to increase the course success rate for first time-in-college (FTIC), credential-seeking students in online courses from [49.4% to 52%](#) by Spring 2024. Having missed the target in Spring 2023, faculty decided to continue with the same goal to see if they could impact positive change. Adjusting strategies and interventions resulted in a 57% course success rate for FTIC students.

Faculty adopted a variety of [lead measures](#) to guide their work, such as setting clear expectations for students on day one of the course, modifying courses to include video and other enhancements, administering early interventions at the first signs of a student's struggle, and increasing student contact and engagement through a variety of methods. Each Faculty Chair then engaged in weekly commitments that aligned to their departments. Commitments included a wide variety of activities: emailing adjuncts with strategies for roster management, revising courses to better support first-time-in college students, communicating successes to adjunct instructors during department meetings, and utilizing media tools for student engagement.

Department-Level Goals and Measures

Leadership across RSC works with staff to enhance enrollment, retention, and completion outcomes. These department-level initiatives, driven by the strategic plan goals, are monitored on a regular basis and tracked via [dedicated 4DX scoreboards](#) and at an institutional level on the RSC [Strategic Goals dashboard](#).

Transfer Student Outcomes

Through guaranteed articulation pathways and partnership agreements, credits and credentials earned at RSC are accepted in transfer at all three state universities as well as over [30 other institutions of higher education](#). Supplemental students, whose academic intent is not to earn a certificate or degree from RSC, comprise nearly 75% of all learners, and within that population, 41% of students declare a specific intent to transfer. An RSC [Transfer Student Outcomes report](#) provides detailed data on transfer activity for the five years between AY2020 and AY2024.

In the RSC graduate alumni survey referenced below, over 25% of respondents indicated that their main goal for enrolling in an RSC program was to transfer to another college or university, and they were included in the 94.8% who stated that they were able to achieve their goals.

Graduate Transfer Success

Data from the National Student Clearinghouse on [subsequent degrees earned by RSC graduates](#) provide additional evidence that RSC credentials prepare students for advanced study.

Licensure/Certification Outcomes

- **Teacher Education Program**

The Teacher Education program is designed to prepare students for teacher certification and endorsement from the Arizona Department of Education. [Success of graduates](#) can be measured in two ways: student scores on AEPA/NES exams, which are required by the state prior to certification being granted; and job placement rates. On the AEPA/NES exams, 96% of all program completers from FY2021-24 successfully passed the assessment. For those students who disclosed their employment status, the [job placement rate was 74%](#).

- **Dental Hygiene Program**

[Student performance](#) on the comprehensive National Board Dental Hygiene Examination and the various clinical licensing exams are well within the national average for first attempt pass rates. The job outlook is very promising with the Bureau of Labor Statistics reporting that the projected percent change in [dental hygiene employment](#) from 2023 to 2033 is 9% as compared to the average growth rate of 4% for all occupations. Graduates report finding immediate employment and higher than anticipated wages.

Nationally, approximately 10 [new dental hygiene programs](#) have received initial accreditation approval in the past year and dozens of programs have increased student enrollment in their programs due to high demand for clinicians.

Other Outcomes

- **Paralegal Program**

The Associate in Applied Science (AAS) and Certificate of Completion (CCL) in Paralegal Studies at Rio Salado College continue to advance the college's mission of providing accessible, high-quality education to a diverse student population. The programs serve both traditional students and adult learners preparing for careers in the legal field. From 2022 to the present, 157 students have earned AAS and CCL awards in Paralegal Studies. Approximately 37% of these graduates were first-generation college students, highlighting the program's significant impact on supporting student achievement and broadening participation in higher education. Through a curriculum focused on current legal standards and opportunities for [practical experience](#), the Paralegal programs consistently [prepare graduates](#) for professional success.

- **Alumni Outcomes**

In a recent [RSC graduate alumni survey](#), respondents expressed high satisfaction with their experience with RSC, with 91% indicating that the College met or exceeded their expectations (n=550). The credentials they earned proved valuable in the workplace, as 75% indicated that their current position was related to the degree or certificate they earned at RSC, and 71% indicated that RSC provided the skills needed for their current job.

RSC draws upon alumni surveys for continuous improvement opportunities. These surveys reveal students searching for more engagement between peers and instructors in online classes, clearer guidance on accessing student resources such as their dedicated advisor, and greater consistency in the digital classroom experience across different courses.

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Criterion 3 - Summary

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness in fulfilling its mission. The rigor and quality of each educational program is consistent regardless of modality, location or other differentiating factors.

Argument

- RSC provides high-quality courses and programs through online, hybrid, face-to-face, ESP, dual enrollment, and correspondence modalities.
- RSC's student learning outcomes promote collecting, analyzing and communicating information; engaging in intellectual inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments.
- RSC maintains a unique faculty and instructional support model that is ideally suited to its nontraditional structure.
- A comprehensive network of student services and resources is offered in multiple modalities and locations.
- Assessment of student learning outcomes is faculty-driven, and measured at the college-, program-, and course-level through administration of nationally-normed instruments and ongoing, data-informed, PDCA improvement cycles.
- RSC has a mature, consistent, and sustainable process for conducting formal, regular program review.
- RSC is actively focused on the need to improve student persistence, retention and graduation rates, with initiatives that include the "W" Grading Initiative, Guided Pathways, FOI Advising Model, Academic Advising Department Redesign, Admissions, Records and Registration Reorganization, First Year Experience, HLC Student Success Academy and Guild Outcomes Project.

Sources

There are no sources.

4 - Sustainability: Institutional Effectiveness, Resources and Planning

The institution's resources, structures, policies, procedures and planning enable it to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational programs, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

4.A Effective Administrative Structures

The institution's administrative structures are effective and facilitate collaborative processes such as shared governance; data-informed decision making; and engagement with internal and external constituencies as appropriate.

Argument

MCCCD Shared Governance

As detailed in Criteria 2.A. and 2.C., the [MCCCD Governing Board](#) is composed of publicly-elected representatives from five districts that make up the Maricopa County area, along with two representatives for the County at large, as well as a non-voting annually-elected [student board member](#). Primary outputs for board members are identified in the [Board Job Description](#). [Board committees](#) are charged with gathering information on a given topic and reporting back to the full board. Examples include focus areas such as Board Policy, Budget and Finance, and Charter Schools. Under the overarching [Maricopa Governance](#) structure, the [administrative regulations](#) provide for day-to-day management of District operations. The Governing Board serves in an oversight role and delegates day-to-day management to the Chancellor, per [Board Policy 3.3 Delegation to the Chancellor](#). The Chancellor is responsible for all authority and accountability of employees, and delegates implementation of the administrative regulations to appropriate personnel, such as members of the [Shared Governance Executive Council](#). Other district-wide councils include the vice presidents of academic affairs, vice presidents of student affairs, occupational deans, etc. RSC is represented on all district-wide committees and councils, ensuring the ability to advocate for college-level needs at the district level of governance.

Rio Salado College Shared Governance Model

Collaboration and a "systems" approach to leadership are the hallmarks of RSC governance. These characteristics are clearly observable in the [multi-layered structure](#) that pervades each level of the organization. In particular, there has long been a noteworthy culture of closeness and collaboration between administration and faculty leadership that is atypical in some higher education settings. RSC has been recognized numerous times as a [Great College to Work For](#), including recognition for shared governance.

- The [Executive Team](#) (President, VPs, Associate VPs, and faculty senate leadership), which meets weekly, regularly reviews strategic plan progress and college data dashboards, such as enrollment goals.

- The [President's Cabinet](#) is an [inclusive leadership body](#) made up of college executive, faculty, and administrative leadership in addition to elected employee, adjunct faculty, and student senators. The Cabinet meets monthly in the fall and spring semesters, and discusses both strategic and relevant operational issues.
- The [Deans Council](#) includes employees at the level of associate dean and above who meet monthly to share information and discuss implementation of college initiatives and priorities.
- [RSC's Budget and Infrastructure Council](#), composed of cross-college representatives, enhances financial transparency, promotes responsible budget management, and oversees infrastructure-related matters at the college. Its mission is to ensure effective decision-making and accountability in these areas, facilitating sound financial management and sustainable infrastructure development in alignment with the college's strategic goals.
- The [President's Advisory Council](#), composed of external community members (see Criterion 1.B.), provide perspectives relating to college strategic priorities, help identify new opportunities and markets, and provide advice and assistance related to external challenges and political issues.

Faculty Governance

Because of the collegial and collaborative relationship between faculty and administrators, RSC faculty operates within the shared governance model through a variety of systemic and institutionalized processes that support the college culture.

- **Faculty Senate**

The faculty senate includes the entire [residential faculty cohort](#) as voting members, allowing all to have a voice in governance issues and the election of the faculty senate president. In addition to providing college-level leadership, the faculty senate president and president-elect serve two-year terms as RSC's representatives to the MCCCDC Faculty Association. The [Constitution of the Rio Salado College Faculty Senate](#) was last amended and approved in 2024.

- **The Vice President's Advisory Committee (VPAC)**

[VPAC](#), which includes the Vice President of Academic Affairs (VPAA) and faculty leadership, [meets regularly](#) to discuss issues such as strategic initiatives, academic policies, and faculty staffing. Faculty members of VPAC, dubbed the "VEEP" Team, advise the VPAA and act as residential faculty intermediaries to help solve problems and advance the teaching and learning agenda. The VEEP Team also serves as the College Faculty Staffing Advisory Committee. This collaboration ensures that faculty maintain an active role in college-wide decision making.

- **Instructional Councils and Curriculum Committee**

In addition to shared governance at the college level, most RSC Faculty Chairs are members of district-wide Instructional Councils as first described in Criterion 2.C. In this capacity, they serve as academic leaders and subject matter experts to ensure the currency, quality, and rigor of the common district curriculum. Additionally, the residential faculty Curriculum Design Facilitator and the VPAA serve as voting members of the District Curriculum Committee, as described in Criterion 3.B.

- **Adjunct Faculty Employee Group Representatives**

RSC has two [Adjunct Faculty Campus Representatives](#) that are elected by the MCCCDC Adjunct Faculty Association Employee Group (AFA). The RSC Campus Representatives engage actively in the President's Cabinet with a standing agenda item to provide their perspectives and

serve as a conduit to the RSC adjunct faculty.

Employee Governance

- **Staff Representation**

[MCCCD staff representation](#) consists of multiple representative bodies, including one Staff Senate and three Councils as part of shared governance across the Maricopa Community Colleges. The purpose of this body is to inform, empower and advocate for all employees.

The Staff Senate and Staff Councils provide valuable perspectives to the administration on matters of significant concern to classified, wage, and administrative staff. RSC employee representatives conduct [monthly coffee chats](#) for college staff. Feedback and concerns are shared at the President's Cabinet through a standing agenda item and at monthly meetings with the President.

- **Cross-College Committees**

RSC has a structure of committees that are interrelated and allow for participation in shared governance, collaborative planning processes, and operations across the spectrum of employees, including:

- [Development Team](#): cross-college incubation environment for developing and implementing the principles of Total Quality Management. The [team includes](#) executive leadership, mid- to senior-level administrators, and residential faculty. As college leaders, members often seek input of the larger Development Team to inform department/division decision-making.
- [Strategic Alignment Committee](#): cross-functional, collaborative [committee](#) in collaboration with the Institutional Research office. This group proactively aligns RSC's planning with the district-wide strategic plan, goals, and reporting processes and creates [an annual monitoring report](#) to update and highlight the college's progress toward goals and yearly budget priorities.
- [Learning Assessment Team](#): coordinates all aspects of student learning assessment and includes representation from Faculty Chairs (who serve as assessment coordinators for the college-wide student learning outcomes), senior academic administrators, and Institutional Research personnel.
- [Accessibility Council](#): addresses online accessibility issues in RSC courses and provides employees across the college with [resources, tools, and training](#) to design products with inclusivity and equitable access for all stakeholders.
- [Innovation Think Tank](#): crowdsources the incubation of ideas and increases engagement opportunities for all RSC employees. The group serves as a conduit for synthesizing, vetting, and recommending a multitude of innovative thoughts and practices.

Data-Informed Decision Making

RSC has invested in a sustainable infrastructure of data and information resources in the coordination of a strategic data vision. As indicated in Criterion 3.G., the Office of Institutional Research (IR) curates a [comprehensive set of dashboards](#) and interactive reporting through the Tableau platform, and maintains an expansive library of [business intelligence reports](#) to drive specific workflows and processes across the college. The IR team champions a number of data literacy initiatives, including brown bag [DataBytes](#), [newsletters](#) and customized training for

faculty, administrators and staff. RSC's data and information resources ultimately inform decisions on the overall strategic direction of the college.

The VP Strategic meeting (discussed in Criterion 2.A.) has a standing agenda item related to enrollment data and also receives weekly [enrollment reporting](#) that provides trends and updates in enrollments. Executive Team members have been trained to use Tableau dashboards so they can access data individually at point-of-need. Additionally, IR routinely presents data analysis to the team to assist with decision-making, such as [enrollment monitoring](#), [student outcomes tracking](#), and [labor market trends](#).

The college prides itself on holding conversations with intentionality that look at data, ensuring that the [data are shared across the campus](#) - such as with the Executive Team, President's Cabinet, Dev Team, and [All Employee Meetings](#) - and used continuously to drive student success.

Specific examples of data-informed decision making include: the [AR&R reorganization](#) based on student retention detailed in Criterion 3.G.; the [retirement of academic programs](#) based on low enrollments; the [Guild Outcomes Project](#) to increase persistence outcomes discussed in Criterion 3.G.; the expansion of semiconductor manufacturing partnerships based on the industry's growth discussed in Criterion 1.B.; participation in the HLC Student Success Academy based on student success indicators discussed in Criterion 3.G.; and curriculum improvements based on PDCA cycles discussed in Criteria 3.A. and 3.E.

Engagement with Internal Constituencies

- **Student Feedback:** Students provide feedback through a multitude of channels that are evaluated for action:
 - **EOCs:** [End of Course surveys](#) are utilized for improving student outcomes as described in Criterion 3.F.
 - **Email:** Students may [email the administration](#) directly with concerns, which are vetted through the Office of the President
 - **PSOL:** Rio administers the [Priorities Survey for Online Learners](#) every other year to measure student satisfaction and priorities, which is analyzed for appropriate action
 - **Other Examples:** Students also provide feedback through [RioLearn](#), SDX (discussed in Criterion 3.D.), and [Qless surveys](#) after utilizing One-Stop student services
- **Student Senator:** In 2019, the District initiated the [Maricopa Student Senate](#) (MSS), comprising one student senator for each MCCC institution. RSC's student senator engages actively in the President's Cabinet to advocate for student needs and concerns.
- **Student Meetings:** President Smith meets with student leaders from PTK, Honors, ACE and other student groups throughout the year for feedback.
- **Faculty and Staff:** Multiple opportunities are provided for employees to give ongoing input to the College President, including:
 - **All Employee meetings:** [Virtual meetings](#) held bimonthly that include strategic updates and Q and A opportunities.

- **Open Office Hours:** President Smith holds [open office hours](#) every week for employees to schedule 30-minute meetings to discuss ideas, thoughts, concerns, celebrations, and/or topics of interest.
- **CommuniKate with the President:** provides employees with an opportunity to share feedback with the president's office through an [anonymous link](#) that is routed directly to the President.
- **College-wide Planning Days:** An [annual event](#) sponsored by the President's office that includes strategic updates, a Q and A forum, and planning time to identify annual goals and complete department reviews.
- **AFIT Team:** represents RSC at the [Alliance for Innovation and Transformation](#) (AFIT) convenings to advance systematic, strategic models for continuous improvement. RSC is leveraging its Performance Success training discussed in Criteria 3.C., which includes [Clifton Strengths®](#), to enhance RSC's environment for [embracing change and fostering cross-college collaboration](#).

- **Adjunct Faculty**

Department meetings are held twice per academic year, where adjunct faculty ask questions, provide input, and provide feedback on course content and assessments. Adjuncts are also [surveyed](#), providing an opportunity for anonymous qualitative feedback.

Engagement with External Constituencies

President Smith engages with Rio's [President's Advisory Council](#) (PAC), which includes employers, community-based organizations, state and municipal agencies, and other educational institutions (see Criterion 1.B.). The PAC meets biannually to receive updates and provide insight and linkages for administrative leadership with RSC's external constituencies.

The engagement with RSC's PAC has resulted in collaborating with the Tempe Workforce Skills Accelerator, co-developing the Tempe Promise Program, and participating in the Great Cities, Good Jobs initiative, as well as securing corporate sponsorship for Dash with Rio, detailed in Criterion 1.B.

Also as discussed in Criterion 1.B., RSC engages with community and local organizations, providing support to local nonprofit organizations including the City of Tempe, Tempe Chamber of Commerce and Foundation, Tempe food banks, Tempe group homes, and community sponsorships.

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4.B Resource Base and Sustainability

The institution's financial and personnel resources effectively support its current operations. The institution's financial management balances short-term needs with long-term commitments and ensures its ongoing sustainability.

Argument

RSC has adequate financial and infrastructure resources to support delivery of programs and services in person, online, at the RSC locations, at partner locations across Maricopa County, and nationally.

Financial Resources

The MCCCCD has sound fiscal systems and proper controls along with strong planning and budgeting policies that support the entire District and its colleges. As previously indicated, fiscal resources are allocated annually to RSC from the MCCCCD. Revenue across MCCCCD is generated from property taxes, tuition and fees, grants, donations, and auxiliary enterprises. College operating budgets are based primarily on tuition and fees tied to enrollment, and on property taxes where a portion is identified to support [MCCCCD operations](#).

Centralized support and technical assistance are provided to all MCCCCD colleges by the [District Business Services](#) division to augment college operations. Services include accounting, auditing (external and internal), purchasing, surplus and auxiliary services, accounts payable, payroll, grants administration, and budgeting.

MCCCCD FY25-26 Budget

The District uses the fund accounting financial structure to manage its resources, guided by accounting principles as defined by the Government Accounting Standards Board (GASB). The FY25-26 budget compares the estimated revenue and expenditures from FY25-26 with the adopted FY24-25 budget, providing a base for future budgeted expenditure and revenue comparisons. Throughout the budget process, the District evaluates the ability to sustain approved initiatives in the future.

During FY2024-25, MCCCCD's Advisory Budget Council (ABC) began developing a new budget allocation model within a shared governance framework, guided by principles adopted by the Chancellor's Shared Governance Executive Council:

- Fiscal Responsibility: Utilize evidence-based best practices for accounting and budget management to ensure a balanced budget and resource efficiency across the system
- Student Success: Decision making is informed by and optimizes student success
- Organizational Cooperation: Balance college, district office, and system-wide needs to: support one another, ensure efficiencies of the system, and consider what is in the best interest of all employees and students
- Transparency: Create a budget model that is straightforward enough for all employees to understand how it was derived
- Innovation: Examine new approaches to budget development, when appropriate, that break away from old paradigms and assumptions

The goal of ABC was to develop a [new budget model](#) that ensured fairness in serving MCCCCD students by replacing the existing Enrollment Growth Funding (EGF) Formula. The EGF model had been used historically to allocate resources to the colleges primarily based on Full-Time Student Equivalents (FTSE) projections that sometimes resulted in increased or decreased allocations that presented operational challenges based on yearly changes.

The MCCCCD Governing Board approved this new approach to budgeting that includes allocation of General Fund resources to the colleges, District Office and system-wide pools. The allocations are now based on multiple factors including a base allocation, the prior 2-year averages of IPEDS headcount (12 months), and weighted, audited FTSE:

- Base Allocation: \$14M –Flat Operational Base Per College for fixed costs
- Headcount Allocation: 25% of Remaining College Allocation Pool –Based on Annual Headcount (12th month enrollment report (IPEDS))
- FTSE Allocation: 75% of Remaining College Allocation Pool – based on weighted FTSE
- Maricopa Grant (Tuition scholarships) Allocation: \$1M – based on 40% Pell Grants, 60% Poverty

The [MCCCCD FY25-26 budget](#) of \$1.7B includes a minimum of \$111.3 million in reserves for financial stability to serve as a buffer against external volatility (enrollment fluctuations, unanticipated expenses), ensuring MCCCCD and its colleges can maintain continuity of operations under varying conditions.

Rio Salado College FY25-26 Budget

RSC's [budget allocation](#) from the District for FY2025-26 was approximately \$66M, an increase of 1.2% from FY24-25. Budget allocations have historically been relatively stable year-over-year.

The FY2025-26 budget includes allocations for:

\$15.1M	Instruction	(22.8%)
\$16.6M	Academic support	(25.1%)
\$6M	Student services	(9%)
\$20.6M	Institutional support	(31.2%)
\$4.7M	Operations and maintenance	(7%)

Within these allocations, \$719,792 is budgeted for strategic initiatives and \$250,000 for additional one-time initiative opportunities. The high percentage allocated to Institutional Support reflects the coding of various Academic Support and Student Services administrative positions to that category. Based on adjusted coding for future budgets, Institutional Support is projected to decrease to 20%, while Academic Support will increase to 35% and Student Services will increase to 16%, without impacting the overall budget allocation.

RSC's funding derives from several sources, including:

- General Fund (Fund 1): This fund, which is the primary operating fund, supports RSC's essential operating expenses, such as salaries, benefits, utilities, and supplies, without restrictions. Fund 1 allocations are approved by the MCCCCD Governing Board annually.
- Auxiliary Fund (Fund 2): This fund encompasses revenues from out-of-state tuition, non-credit instruction, course fees, and food services. All such revenues received are controlled and managed by RSC.
- Restricted Fund (Fund 3): These funds are either grant funds, donations, or restricted use funds that are earmarked for specific uses, including student financial aid, grants (e.g., Title V, Carl Perkins), contracts, [Proposition 207](#) and [Proposition 301](#) (state sales tax revenues generated for public education).
- Capital Funds (Fund 7): These funds are allocated for new construction, significant remodeling, maintenance, and capital equipment purchases, with an assumption of a continued suspension of capital state aid.

It should be noted that the 2022 Team Report expressed concerns regarding Fund 2. The Team stated: "The [strategic] plan appears to require significant new resources or reallocation of existing resources. Yet, no direct evidence is provided to indicate how these initiatives will be funded. More to the point, in 5.B-3, RSC specifically describes financial shortfalls in a key area of funding (Fund 2)."

Since the Team's visit, RSC has engaged in Executive Team budget retreats that include identifying strategic investment priorities and dedicating the necessary budget allocations to adequately fund them, discussed below. Strategic investment priorities are tracked monthly at [VP Strategic meetings](#) and through [annual reporting](#), which is shared at the President's Cabinet.

Fund 2 is intended to be supported entirely through out-of-state tuition and auxiliary fees generated by RSC. Historically, Fund 2 experienced deficits despite growing out-of-state enrollments, which were offset by Fund 1 operating allocations. Following the Team Report, a comprehensive audit of Fund 2 was conducted. The audit identified that, after an out-of-state tuition increase, a coding change temporarily affected the allocation of a portion of Fund 2 out-of-state tuition dollars coming to RSC from the District Office. Following the correction, Fund 2 revenues now support on-going operational expenses.

Rio Salado College Budget Planning Process

The total base operating budget (Fund 1) for all MCCCCD colleges is calculated by the District Budget Office and approved annually by the Governing Board. RSC has complete authority to allocate the base budget to meet its goals and objectives each fiscal year.

RSC operates on a July 1 through June 30 fiscal year. [Budget planning](#) starts in the Fall after audited enrollment data for the prior fiscal year is released by the District, and continues through late Spring when the college budget is submitted to the MCCCCD Budget Office. The District's adopted budget is finalized and published during the first week of June.

The College uses an incremental development process for base operating budgets in which the current year's operating budget is the starting point for next fiscal year requests, and adjustments are made based on available budget allocations in alignment with priorities and strategic planning goals. An annual resource-planning process focuses on Unrestricted Funds, which include Fund 1, Fund 2 (Auxiliary Funds), and Fund 7 (Capital Funds) resources.

As discussed in Criterion 4.C., the RSC Executive Team holds regularly-scheduled [collaborative budget planning retreats](#) during which funding priorities are identified based on strategic goals, needs across the college, and available resources. Division vice presidents also work directly with faculty, deans, and directors under their purview to assess anticipated needs and manage existing budget allocations for the next fiscal year.

These needs are funneled to VPs through a variety of channels, such as: white papers that supported the [AR&R re-org](#) (discussed in Criterion 3.G.); [expansion of virtual proctoring](#); [expansion of staffing for international students](#); department reviews that outlined [IR's need for new computers](#), [staff needs for headsets](#), and [updated technology needs at locations](#); and development and scholarships for an Adult Education [credit bearing course](#). Notably, all of these requests were funded, and many became strategic investment priorities discussed below. Additional details on integrated budgeting and planning are set forth in Criterion 4.C. below.

After changes have been vetted and supported by the Executive Team, budgets are finalized by the Vice President of Administrative Services and the College President, and final adjustments are entered into the District's Maricopa Planning and Budget (MPB) system for delivery of a balanced budget. Finally, [governing-board-approved totals](#) are shared with the College President and Vice Presidents/Divisional Managers. Additional resource requests, such as [staffing](#), [marketing](#), and [location repurposing](#), can be made throughout the year and are evaluated against established strategic priorities and within resource availability.

For future financial stability and growth, RSC continues to invest and explore areas for expanded market diversification, including out-of-state online students and business-to-business partnerships. Tuition for students residing outside the State of Arizona is set at \$253 per credit hour, equating to \$7,590 per FTSE. These investments are gaining traction, with [national employer tuition assistance partnerships](#) adding net revenue in the auxiliary fund to support operations including salaries, benefits, and supplies.

RSC has sufficient resource base to support educational program offerings, and actively plans for maintaining and strengthening the quality of its educational programs through a robust process aligned with the 2024-2026 strategic planning goals and investment priorities. Current [FY 2025-26 investment priorities](#) identified by the Executive Team include:

- Consultants to frame development and implementation of next-generation digital learning environment (\$2M budgeted for FY 26)
- In-house development of an Assessment Management System (embedded with IS, IT functions)
- International education staffing expansion (\$82,633 budgeted for FY26)
- Continued development of Open Educational Resources (institutionalized within standard curriculum design and development processes)
- Remote Virtual Proctoring expansion (\$170,167 budgeted for FY26)
- Adult Education credit-bearing course scholarships (\$10,000 budgeted for FY26)
- Internal innovation micro-grants (\$250,00 budgeted for FY26)
- Contingency allocation (\$250,00 budgeted for FY26)

Fundraising

As indicated in Criterion 1.B., RSC engages in a number of fundraising events to provide aid and scholarships to students. A new Senior Development Officer joined RSC in July 2025 to lead RSC's fundraising initiatives, working closely with the MCCCD Foundation, internal

stakeholders, and external partners to support [strategic giving opportunities](#) that advance Rio's mission. In addition, MCCCCD Foundation launched [EmpowerEd](#) in December 2024 to raise \$20M. To date, over \$18M has been raised in [support of a number of initiatives](#) identified by the colleges within the district.

Enrollment Management

RSC developed a [2024-2027 Strategic Enrollment Management](#) (SEM) plan aligned to the MCCCCD SEM Plan that seeks to attract, recruit, engage, and enroll more students; retain and support students to reach their academic, personal, and/or professional goals; and graduate and transfer more students. The college has set specific KPIs, activities, and milestones to reach these goals. [Annual progress](#) toward these SEM goals are monitored and shared with the President's Cabinet.

[Enrollment projections](#) are generated on a regular basis to support strategic and enrollment management planning. Weekly enrollment updates are provided to the Executive Team that track year-to-year comparisons. The last three years have seen consistent year-over-year increases in student enrollment levels with FY24-25 enrollment up nearly 23% compared to FY21-22.

Grants

Prior to changes in Title V funding, [RSC was awarded](#) \$5–7 million annually in grant funding to support adult basic education students on a four-year cycle, as well as nearly \$3 million in grant funding to support underserved credential-seeking students for five years.

Physical Infrastructure

Rio Salado College's physical infrastructure is managed by the [Maintenance and Operations](#) (M&O) department, which ensures that all instructional and work environments remain safe, functional, and conducive to teaching and learning. The department oversees maintenance, repairs, renovations, and construction across the College's facilities, including the main campus in Tempe and additional college-owned [locations](#) that support Adult Basic Education programs (discussed in Criterion 1.B) and testing services (discussed in Criterion 3.D).

To support effective [infrastructure management](#), M&O utilizes several technology-based systems that enhance efficiency, accountability, and sustainability:

- Computerized Maintenance Management System (CMMS): Facilitates work order tracking, asset management, inventory control, and preventive maintenance scheduling.
- Building Automation System (BAS): Centralized network that monitors and controls key building systems such as HVAC, lighting, and ventilation to optimize performance and comfort.
- Energy Management System (EMS): Monitors and regulates energy usage across facilities to improve efficiency, sustainability, and cost savings.

The M&O department is led by the Director of College Facilities and is staffed by 17 full-time and one part-time employee. For FY2023–2024, the department operated with an annual budget of \$4.7 million, supporting ongoing maintenance operations, utilities, and capital renewal projects. For FY22-24, investments included \$4.3 million in [deferred maintenance](#) and \$2.1 million for [facilities projects](#). Over the past decade, RSC has focused on deferred and preventative maintenance of existing facilities, and there are no plans for future physical expansion.

Technological Infrastructure

As a college supporting large cohorts of online students and faculty, RSC places primary emphasis on ensuring that its online systems are reliable and scalable. Substantial budget resources have been devoted to a technology infrastructure which includes state-of-the-art equipment and appropriate backup systems for both the online systems and the physical plant. [The Division of Technology and Infrastructure](#) (IS Division) is headed by the Vice President of Technology and Infrastructure, with teams dedicated to Technical Support, Project Management, Networking, and Programming. Technology budgeting follows the general budget processes described above. The FY2025-26 [technology operational budget](#) is \$6.35M.

The annual [IS Division budget](#) includes salaries, benefits, retirement contributions, technology supplies, and licenses. Beyond salaries, benefits and retirement contributions, the largest operating expenses are investments for network security products and services, as well as for software and services for students, faculty and staff. For FY22-24, investments included \$1.6 million for [technology projects](#).

To ensure sustainability, the IS Division maintains a comprehensive [Technology Asset Inventory](#) that tracks all major equipment and systems, including network infrastructure, servers, instructional technology, and end-user devices. Each asset is assigned a projected end-of-life (EOL) date, warranty period, and performance history. This data informs the [annual technology refresh plan](#), ensuring timely upgrades and replacements before equipment becomes obsolete or unsupported.

RSC's structured lifecycle plan includes:

- Core infrastructure (servers, network systems, and storage) refreshed on a 4–5-year cycle.
- End-user and instructional devices are replaced every 3–4 years.
- Software and operating systems reviewed annually to maintain vendor support, performance, and cybersecurity compliance.

The IS Division uses vendor EOL projections, [usage analytics](#), and system performance metrics to forecast future needs and develop the annual budget. This ensures resources are allocated strategically and predictably.

Financial Management

- **Monitoring the Budget - MCCCCD**

MCCCCD generates a [monthly monitoring report](#) for the Governing Board's review and action that includes a detailed revenue and expenditure analysis, financial conditions and activities, and provides data for adjustments to financial planning and budgeting.

- **Monitoring the Budget - RSC**

RSC Business Services has developed an [enhanced set of budget reports](#) derived from enterprise systems data that support robust financial management and budget planning college-wide. In addition to FMS (Financial Management System) reports, Business Services provides [monthly reports to each Executive Team member](#), itemized by organization-, fund-, and expense type category. Further, RSC Business Services provides a [monthly budget-to- actuals report](#) to

Executive Team members and all managers with FMS access. This budget file allows for filtering of expenses by Vice President; Budget Manager; Fund; Department; Account; College Location; and FMS Account Summary Inquiry. Managers have received training and may review expenses on a daily basis if they so choose.

The external institutional environment of the MCCCDC has a considerable impact on college planning, especially in terms of financial management, direction of strategic focus, and new programmatic directions. RSC has added specific allocations for initiatives aligned with its strategic plan, described above. Further, to support its nontraditional model, RSC sustains sufficient resources and infrastructure to support all operations at its multiple locations.

Personnel Resources- Organizational Structure

[RSC's organizational structure](#) is divided into major units, each of which falls within the purview of a Vice President who reports to the College President. Specific operations within each unit are supported by sufficient numbers of Deans, Associate Deans, Directors, Managers, and Staff. As described in Criterion 3.C., the RSC faculty model encompasses a small cohort of residential faculty members who serve as Faculty Chairs of their academic disciplines. For the pay period ending June 30, 2025, RSC had 543 full-time employees.

Human Resources

- **Hiring Processes**

RSC abides by [MCCCDC guidelines](#) which follow federal regulations and define staffing, hiring qualifications, and hiring processes for each employee group. The MCCCDC is an EEO/AA institution and an equal opportunity employer, and all qualified applicants receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or national origin. The RSC Human Resources Department conducts [full-time recruitment and hiring](#) in accordance with District procedures. Administrators, managers, and faculty serve as chairs of hiring committees and are experts in the required qualifications needed from applicants, while HR personnel provide guidance throughout the advertising, interviewing, and hiring processes. The MCCCDC also mandates [annual training](#) for faculty and staff serving on hiring committees. RSC's position openings are advertised weekly on the [MCCCDC Human Resources website](#). Positions may also be posted on professional organization sites and in higher education trade publications.

As part of the MCCCDC, RSC HR operations are supported by district-wide systems including Human Capital Management (HCM), Student Information System (SIS), and Financial Management System (FMS), delivered through a PeopleSoft platform.

- **Adjunct Faculty Hiring**

As indicated in Criterion 3.C., adjunct faculty at RSC are hired through a centralized [Faculty Services](#) Department, which pre-screens qualified candidates and verifies credentials before scheduling interviews with the appropriate department faculty chair. The RSC adjunct faculty cohort is stable, as evidenced by the fact that of the 1,207 adjunct faculty who taught during AY2023-24, 762 had been with RSC for 5 years or more, and 561 had over 10 years of service at the College.

- **Employee Orientation, Training, and Recognition**

RSC devotes considerable resources to nurturing a workforce that has a deep understanding of college culture. The [Employee Engagement & Resource Center](#) is a comprehensive RSC office

which conducts new employee onboarding and ongoing training, provides resources for employees and supervisors, and runs programs such as Wellness and Awards and Recognition. The [Employee Engagement](#) website provides a wealth of RSC historical and cultural information, and the [Employee Resources](#) website provides information on professional growth, funding sources, and employee career enhancement opportunities.

- **The *Rio Wave* Onboarding for New Employees**

During AY2022–2024, over 700 full- and part-time new employees completed [Rio Wave](#) onboarding. Of these, 129 employees responded to the [Day 1 survey](#), with 96% reporting satisfaction with the training. On Day 2, 55 employees completed the survey, with 88% reporting satisfaction. Beginning in July 2023, Rio Wave expanded to a three-day model, incorporating feedback and suggestions from participants to further strengthen opportunities for engagement and connection.

- **Awards and Recognition**

RSC implemented a new proprietary [Awards and Recognition](#) system in 2020, designed to allow employees to recognize their peers and thereby reinforcing the college culture of teamwork and cross-departmental collaboration. Employees can award redeemable points to co-workers, honoring outstanding service that exemplifies RSC's values. Award recipients are nominated by co-workers, managers, and administrators.

During [AY2022–2024](#), RSC employees submitted a total of 144 peer-to-peer recognitions: 2 in 2022, 40 in 2023, and 102 in 2024. These recognitions highlight how employees are increasingly embracing the system as a way to celebrate collaboration, innovation, and service across the college.

- **Wellness**

RSC prioritizes wellness as a key part of its organizational culture. The [8 Dimensions of Wellness](#) are supported through resources such as a [fitness center](#) with personal training and yoga, onsite quiet rooms, and annual MCCCCD health screenings. Wellness programming emphasizes the [4 Practices of Engagement](#) and includes mobile health screening initiatives like the college-wide challenge, [Sight On Site](#) services, and campus [blood drives](#). Staff also have the option to participate in the [Personify Health Platform](#).

[Benefits Open Enrollment](#) reinforces this commitment by offering on-campus biometric screenings and vaccinations, while the [Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\)](#) provides additional mental and emotional health support. [HR Weekly newsletters](#) and the [Employee Resource Guide](#) further connect employees with tools and resources to support their overall well being.

RSC was recognized as a [2025 Great Colleges to Work For](#) based on an employee survey administered by Modern Think LLC, with special recognition in six categories:

- Professional development
- Faculty & staff well being
- Mission & pride
- Shared governance
- Confidence in senior leadership
- Faculty experience

Employees from 199 institutions participated in the survey in 2025, including 123 four-year institutions and 76 two-year institutions. RSC was named to the [Great Colleges Honor Roll](#), a status granted to the top 10 four-year colleges and the top 4 two-year colleges recognized most frequently within each size category.

Monthly Supervisors' Meetings

Monthly [supervisor's meetings](#) provide an opportunity for ongoing dialogue with colleagues, sharing best practices, and receiving information about RSC initiatives that need to be communicated to departments and team members. Approximately 75 supervisors regularly attend these sessions.

Student Affairs Quality Assurance Training

Quality Assurance training for Student Affairs personnel is detailed in Criterion 3.C.

MCCCD Professional Growth Funds

The MCCCD provides professional growth funds to employees for tuition costs towards additional coursework and to attend professional conferences. During the past three fiscal years, the District spent \$174,427 on tuition costs and \$644,142 for conference registration fees and travel costs for RSC Classified Staff employees.

MCCCD Professional Development Opportunities

The [MCCCD Professional Development program](#) provides ongoing training opportunities and resources, including [online training modules](#) on multiple topics such as personal and professional development, supervisory/leadership skills, technology skills, health and safety requirements, etc. In addition, as mentioned in Criterion 3.C., the MCCCD provides [career development](#) and [mentoring](#) opportunities.

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4.C Planning for Quality Improvement

The institution engages in systematic strategic planning for quality improvement. It relies on data, integrating its insights from enrollment forecasts, financial capacity, student learning assessment, institutional operations and the external environment.

Argument

Systematic Strategic Planning and Budgeting

In working to ensure the overall quality of its programs, services, and offerings, RSC engages in regular, systematic reviews of departments, functional units, and academic programs. As part of RSC's commitment to [integrated strategic planning](#), it joined the Society for College and University Planning (SCUP) in 2019. SCUP is the oldest and largest organization in the United States committed specifically to planning in higher education; it offers documents, webinars, and other resources to support colleges in continuously improving their planning processes for a sustainable future.

A [comprehensive compilation](#) of division and department plans, reports, and reviews guides planning and funding discussions conducted during the Executive Team budget retreats introduced in Criterion 4.B. The cycle is integrated by aligning strategy, budget development, adoption, and implementation across an expansion to three retreats beginning this fiscal year:

- Winter Retreat (mid-year alignment): Connects current-year performance to financial reality by reviewing results to date and identifying adjustments needed to stay aligned with strategic priorities.
- Spring Retreat (planning and development): Translates long-term strategic goals (e.g., the 2026–2030 plan) into concrete budget assumptions and funding priorities, informing the development of the upcoming fiscal year's budget before it is finalized and adopted (July 1).
- Fall Retreat (implementation and execution): Closes the loop by focusing on execution—implementing budget strategies, monitoring early impacts of the adopted budget, and making operational refinements to ensure outcomes align with the strategic plan.

A sampling of reviews that inform RSC's strategic planning and budgeting process include:

- Academic Program Reviews: discussed in Criterion 3.F. with examples of completed reviews
- [Annual Faculty Chair Reports](#): submitted annually to VPAA, includes Student enrollment trend data, student retention trend data, certificate/degree completers, PDCA's, outcomes/progress of past goals, goals for upcoming academic year and resource needs.
- Department Reviews: after beta testing in 2019, has become institutionalized through College-wide Spring Planning Day. In AY2023-24, [30 teams submitted](#) department reviews. Department Reviews are archived on the [Department Review Website](#). Most recently, the [2026 Department Review template](#) has been revised to include additional information on department outcomes, SOPs, resources needs, and opportunities to leverage AI.

- Project Manager dashboards: RSC employs numerous project managers across various divisions, including [Technology and Infrastructure \(IS\)](#), [Academic Affairs](#), [Institutional Advancement](#), [Institutional Effectiveness](#), [Strategic Initiatives](#), and [Strategic Partnerships](#). Project managers create and maintain dashboards for projects aligned to strategic goals and initiatives that are updated and published monthly.

Budget proposals are also included within the compilation, which are evaluated by Division Vice Presidents for possible funding during budget and planning retreats and cycles. Recent examples include:

- Annual Faculty Chair Reports: [funding for Math OER expansion](#); [graphing calculators for students through library loans](#); [increased hours for Reading lead adjunct faculty member](#)
- Department Reviews: funding [new desktop computers and document imaging tools for IR team](#); [headsets for AR&R](#) and [computer lab students](#); [technology upgrades at Community Development locations](#)
- Academic Program Reviews: [discontinuing programs with low enrollments](#) in the interest of fiscal stewardship
- IT Project Manager dashboards: [dental clinic software upgrades](#); [virtual labs software](#)

Student feedback also plays an important role in budgeting and planning. As noted throughout Criterion 3.D, the Priorities Survey for Online Learners (PSOL) results show significant gains in student satisfaction with registration, tutoring, technical assistance, and online library resources, which are funded through Student Services allocations.

Survey results also identified opportunities for improvement in online instruction, which are being addressed through the [Student Digital Experience \(SDX\) initiative](#) discussed in Criterion 3.D. and the Guild Outcomes Project described in Criterion 3.G. Additionally, the Executive Team recently approved a [budget allocation](#) for an Instructional Designer/Technologist to assist the faculty in advancing teaching and learning through the intentional integration and application of AI tools in online curriculum and assessment. Data from student course completions in AI-enhanced courses will be tracked to advise future planning and budgeting.

In the spirit of continuous improvement, RSC is engaging in a number of steps to enhance its budgeting and strategic planning for the 2026-2030 cycle. The [new strategic planning cycle](#) has launched and is aligned to maximize the Executive Team's 2026 spring retreat. A draft 2026-2030 RSC Strategic Plan will be released at the Spring Annual Planning Day for consideration in drafting Department Reviews. The [2026 department review](#) template has been revised to include additional information on department outcomes, SOPs, resources needs and opportunities to leverage AI, which will be completed and reviewed prior to the spring retreat.

In addition, the 2025 PSOL results, discussed throughout Criterion 3.D., provide relevant and timely student feedback to inform the 2026 retreats. In preparation for the spring retreat, IR will also compile the SEM results along with the HLC Student Success Indicators from the 2026 Annual Institutional Update.

For the Fall retreat, the [Chair Reports](#) that include budget and AI requests will be considered along with the Student Success Plan from RSC's participation in the HLC Student Success Academy.

Cumulatively, these student data points, along with annual Faculty Chair reports, project dashboards, and academic program and departmental reviews, will guide continued integrated strategic planning and budgeting efforts before finalization of the 2026-2030 Strategic Plan and AY2026-27 budget.

Systematic Tools for Monitoring and Evaluating Institutional Effectiveness

RSC has allocated significant budget to substantially improve its infrastructure and tools to guide data-informed decisions for integrated strategic and operational improvements, including the implementation of Tableau dashboards discussed in Criteria 3.G. and 4.A., the formation of the Strategic Alignment Committee (see below), and a Strategic Enrollment Management Committee that led to the development of the SEM plan described in Criterion 4.B.

Strategic Planning - MCCCCD

Contextualized by the [Governing Board Outcomes, Vision, Mission, and Values](#), the [MCCCCD's 2023-2026 Strategic Plan](#) resulted from extensive collaboration among over 300 employees, students, and community members. This collective effort produced four key priorities: 1) Student Outreach and Success; 2) Economic Resources and Sustainability; 3) A Cohesive Identity; and 4) Organizational Talent. In conjunction with MCCCCD's plan, a [Systemwide Strategic Enrollment Management \(SSEM\) Plan](#) was developed to unify efforts to drive enrollment growth, optimize student success, and ensure high-impact practices are adopted systemwide while preserving each college's unique identity.

The MCCCCD Chancellor presents [quarterly updates](#) on the strategic plan to the Governing Board including progress on specific goals. In addition, [year-end updates](#) are presented to the Governing Board.

Strategic Planning Process - Rio Salado College

Beginning in 2021, RSC formed a [Strategic Alignment Committee](#) (SAC) consisting of a [cross-functional strategic planning team](#) to ensure alignment across the college between strategic and operational goals as well as with MCCCCD's strategic plan. SAC promotes aligned reporting at the college and district levels.

Over time, SAC has expanded its membership and worked to [align RSC's draft 2024-2026 strategic plan to MCCCCD's strategic plan](#). The [draft 2024-2026 strategic plan](#) was shared with the Development Team, presented to the President's Cabinet, discussed at the college-wide planning day, and approved by RSC's Executive Team.

SAC is led by the Associate Dean for Strategy and Advancement, who has received extensive training in the Society for College and University Planning ([SCUP](#)) [Integrated Planning Maturity Model](#), completing the [SCUP Emerging Leader program](#) in [2022-23](#). RSC has achieved greater integration in its strategic planning processes as evidenced by the transparent integration of multiple planning sources into the college strategic plan, including the [District Strategic Plan](#), the College [Strategic Enrollment Plan](#), as well as Departmental efforts like [Department Review](#) and [4DX](#). The highlight of the work is the annual planning day that brings the entire college together to celebrate and provide updates on college-wide strategic goals, and includes dedicated planning time to identify department goals aligned to the college's strategic goals. The [2025 Planning Day](#) focused on integrating Futures Thinking, Design Thinking, and AI into RSC's planning efforts, as the college works to align planning while building planning capacity across

the organization. Given the coordinated planning operation across multiple entities within the college, RSC has reached the [Proactive Stage](#) of integrated planning maturity.

- **Publishing the 2024-26 Strategic Plan**

A draft of the final strategic plan goals were discussed and vetted through the [Development Team](#), Deans Council, President's Cabinet, and at a subsequent college-wide employee meeting in the Fall of 2024. After incorporating feedback from these groups, the new [Rio Salado College Strategic Plan](#) was published in late 2024. A two-year cycle was selected to implement, monitor, and evaluate the goals aligned to MCCCDC's planning cycle in support of furthering systematic integrated planning.

- **Operationalizing the Strategic Plan**

To operationalize the 2024-26 Strategic Plan, RSC continued to build upon the success of the 4 Disciplines of Execution (4DX) framework started as part of the previous strategic plan. A dedicated [4DX website](#) is a staging point for updating new employees on the 4DX approach and maintaining a repository of ongoing departmental 4DX efforts.

Since 2023, RSC has held an Annual Planning Day each spring, providing a college-wide platform for departmental goal planning, including a Wildly Important Goal (WIG) as part of the college's 4DX effort. Each team develops its WIG in alignment with one of the four college strategies, ensuring alignment between operational efforts and overarching college strategies. Additionally, with planning in the spring, teams can share their priorities and needs with their divisional leadership prior to the annual budget retreat. As of April 2025, 36 different departments had active [2024-25 WIGs](#) underway in alignment with one of the four College Strategies.

- **Monitoring the Strategic Plan**

RSC monitors progress toward the strategic plan and continuous quality improvement through two primary approaches: departmental 4DX work and college-level monitoring reports. RSC monitors departmental-level goals and progress through a [4DX website](#), where department goals are articulated and tracked annually. Teams share their progress across the college at [Development Team](#) and [College-wide all-employee meetings](#), and work on their annual planning processes during RSC's [Annual Planning Day](#).

The Strategic Alignment Committee, in collaboration with the Institutional Research office, creates [annual monitoring reports](#) to update and highlight the college's progress toward strategic plan goals and yearly budget priorities. An internal [college integrated strategic plan](#) site is open to all RSC employees, allowing access to historical data, current information, and progress monitoring.

Enrollment Forecasts

For AY2023-2024, MCCCDC engaged with [RNL on enrollment forecasting](#), including projection analysis for entering first-year, transfer, and adult students based on the market landscape and trends. For first year enrollment at RSC, RNL projected potential increases followed by small declines. Regarding transfer enrollment and adult education, RNL projected general stability.

Financial Capacity

- **Budget Requests and Procedure for Budget Planning**

The budget process is fairly consistent year-over-year. The [process](#) begins in August of each year through the budget adoption in May of each year. Any new budget requests are discussed and approved through RSC's Executive Team. Each budget cycle follows a funding model that uses [audited headcount and FTSE data](#) from the two most recent fiscal years ensuring that the funding allocations are responsive to enrollment trends. This consistent data-informed process provides a stable framework for annual budgeting.

- **Budget Allocation by Major Area**

The budget allocations follow standard accounting principles and are budgeted in accordance with the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO) functional accounting categories. Budget allocation changes are determined by the Executive Team to ensure resources are allocated in the appropriate major area.

Technology Planning

RSC's Division of Technology and Infrastructure (IS Division) [Strategic Plan](#) supports teaching, learning, and business operations by utilizing best practices in technology for higher education. The plan is aligned to the RSC and MCCCDC strategic plans, as well as the [MCCCDC Information Technology Services Plan](#).

In addition, planning for RSC's next-generation digital learning environment, RioNXT, reflects a forward-looking approach informed by analysis of instructional technology trends, student engagement data, and the growing demand for personalized, device-agnostic learning experiences.

Institutional Research

As indicated throughout this argument, [Institutional Research \(IR\)](#) is responsible for facilitating and monitoring comprehensive institutional effectiveness efforts across the College. Under the leadership of an Associate Dean, the IR Department is highly engaged in integrated planning, measurement, analysis, and data mining, as exemplified by the Tableau assets previously referenced in Criteria 3.G., 4.A., and 4.C. IR coordinates the reporting and distribution of college-wide assessments, provides student evaluations and reports, designs and administers surveys and other reports as needed, assists with research projects, supports grant data collection and analysis, and responds to ad-hoc requests. Further, as detailed in Criterion 3.E., IR is integrally involved in student learning outcomes assessment. Institutional Research also oversees the College's participation in mandatory reporting requirements and compiles regulatory data published on the public-facing website.

Environmental Scanning and Planning

In the Summer of 2024, the Enterprise Performance Office of MCCCDC published an [environmental scan](#) for RSC that leverages local and national research, Department of Labor statistics, and information provided by the MCCCDC Workforce Development Department. The scan informs program development and resource allocations with data on viability metrics, such as similar programs in the target area, and collecting market-need indicators such as employment data and salary projections.

In addition, the Dean of Academic Affairs and the Curriculum Department coordinate RSC's [new program research, vetting, and approval process](#), working closely with key RSC and community stakeholders. As part of this process, the College conducts additional program-specific additional environmental scans on needs, viability and industry support for the new program. A

recent example, which aligns directly with Strategic Plan Goal 2, was [Amazon Web Services Certificates of Completion](#).

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Criterion 4 - Summary

The institution's resources, structures, policies, procedures and planning enable it to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational programs, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

Argument

- RSC operates in a collaborative shared governance structure, leverages data for decision making and engages with college and external stakeholders.
- RSC has sufficient resources, both financial and personnel, to ensure sustainability.
- RSC engages in continuous improvement through integrated strategic planning that is informed by data, enrollments, student feedback, fiscal resources, department reviews, operations and environmental scans.

Sources

There are no sources.