

# Maricopa Community Colleges-Estrella Mountain Community College - AZ

HLC ID 2123

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OPEN PATHWAY: Mid-Cycle Review

Visit Date: 4/25/2016

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## Context and Nature of Review

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### Visit Date

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4/25/2016

#### Mid-Cycle Reviews include:

- The Year 4 Review in the Open and Standard Pathways
- The Biennial Review for Applying institutions

#### Reaffirmation Reviews include:

- The Year 10 Review in the Open and Standard Pathways
- The Review for Initial Candidacy for Applying institutions
- The Review for Initial Accreditation for Applying institutions
- The Year 4 Review for Standard Pathway institutions that are in their first accreditation cycle after attaining initial accreditation

### Scope of Review

- Mid-Cycle Review

*There are no forms assigned.*

## Institutional Context

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Located in Avondale, Arizona, a western suburb of Phoenix, Estrella Mountain Community College (EMCC) is the newest of ten colleges in the Maricopa County Community College District (MCCCD). It opened in 1992 and was initially accredited by the Higher Learning Commission in 1997. Its last comprehensive visit took place in November 2011.

Being part of the MCCCD, the College is governed by the Maricopa County Community College Governing Board, which is charged with approving district policy and the annual budget. This seven-member board is comprised of five representatives elected from geographical districts within Maricopa County and two at-large representatives. Board members are elected to serve four-year staggered terms. In an effort to strengthen ties to the community, the EMCC President also meets twice a year with a President's Community Advisory Council.

EMCC is an open-access public institution of higher education offering programming in developmental education, general education, transfer education, workforce development, and community education. It currently offers 30 associate degree programs and 58 certificate programs. The associate degree programs include eight University Transfer Pathway Degrees, twenty-one Associate in Applied Science Degrees, and a General Studies Degree. In 2014-2015, EMCC served 12,994 credit students. This figure represents a 3.8% increase over the number of students served in 2011-2012 (12,509). A highly diverse institution, in fall 2015, its demographics were as follows: 48.1% Hispanic, 32.5% White, 9.2% Black, 4.6% Asian, 1.6% American Indian, and 4.0% other. Its students are predominantly female: 57.8% female, 40.6% male, and 1.6% undeclared.

## **Interactions with Constituencies**

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*There are no interactions.*

## **Additional Documents**

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*There are no additional documents reviewed.*

## 1 - Mission

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

### 1.A - Core Component 1.A

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The institution's mission is broadly understood within the institution and guides its operations.

1. The mission statement is developed through a process suited to the nature and culture of the institution and is adopted by the governing board.
2. The institution's academic programs, student support services, and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission.
3. The institution's planning and budgeting priorities align with and support the mission. (This sub-component may be addressed by reference to the response to Criterion 5.C.1.)

### Rating

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Met

### Evidence

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The current iteration of EMCC's mission statement was approved by the Maricopa County Community College Governing Board in fall 2010. The relevance of EMCC's mission is evaluated during the strategic planning cycle by the College's stakeholders (internal college, community and statewide) and governing board. EMCC is a Hispanic-Serving institution, and the mission statement – values section - specifically addresses three areas relating to diversity to include social awareness and inter-cultural learning within a shared governance structure. EMCC's mission statement is widely publicized to employees, students and community members. EMCC's mission statement can be found on the College's website, in the online Academic Catalog, Student Life and Leadership Information Handbook, digital and print media, and college wide displays.

EMCC lives its mission of promoting success through learning by offering a mix of degree and certificate programs. General education is all inclusive, offering the traditional general education courses as well as academic clusters (business, science and liberal arts). A student who successfully completes one of these clusters may transfer to any of the EMCC's public universities – with financial incentives (scholarships and tutoring). EMCC, focuses on developmental education programs as part of its mission and values and exhibits this commitment as evidenced in multiple instructional delivery modes, specialized faculty, facilities to meet student needs, etc. In the past five years, EMCC has seen an enormous 19% increase in student success in developmental education classes. A sample of workforce development training is expressed through student institutes (teaching, public safety, energy, business) which prepare students for career readiness. Programs are guided by community input. Enrollment services align with the mission as evidenced in financial aid, testing, student advisement, library, Veteran Services.

The annual budget process promotes sustainability as exhibited in EMCC's five year Financial Resource Plan, which is aligned with the strategic plan. Multi-year strategic resource allocation is dependent on the Financial Resource Plan. The financial resource planning process is part of a larger District financial resource planning process and incorporates district-wide budget planning.

EMCC also has a Strategic Technology Plan. As part of its mission, EMCC has expanded on a 100% degree distance education program that aligns its mission to the Technology Plan and commits financial resources accordingly. This Technology Plan is explicit and includes many facets like software, hardware, training, network topology infrastructure.

### **Interim Monitoring (if applicable)**

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 1.B - Core Component 1.B

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The mission is articulated publicly.

1. The institution clearly articulates its mission through one or more public documents, such as statements of purpose, vision, values, goals, plans, or institutional priorities.
2. The mission document or documents are current and explain the extent of the institution's emphasis on the various aspects of its mission, such as instruction, scholarship, research, application of research, creative works, clinical service, public service, economic development, and religious or cultural purpose.
3. The mission document or documents identify the nature, scope, and intended constituents of the higher education programs and services the institution provides.

### Rating

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Met

### Evidence

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EMCC's mission statement is publicly articulated in multiple documents such as the Strategic Plan, Technology Strategic Plan, Annual Reports, and 5-year Occupational Education Plan, as well as the Catalog and the top rail of the website landing page under the community section, which also features the Comprehensive Master Plan.

There is evidence of the alignment of mission and strategic direction as illustrated in the Annual Budget Report which includes vision and values as well as a statement on EMCC as a Learning College. The Annual Budget Report includes accomplishments, e.g. a new performing arts center, a cyber security center, its sustainability awards which aligns with one or more mission elements, such as general and transfer education. In 2007 EMCC created eight state-of-the-art science labs and improved nursing laboratories in response to the growing demands of the West Valley community in the fields of bioscience and healthcare services. This aligns with the mission element of civic responsibility. EMCC was also ranked as one of the top 150 US community colleges by the Aspen Institute. The Aspen Institute recognizes colleges with high achievement and performance and recognizes institutions for exceptional student outcomes.

EMCC is known as a student-centered institution. A letter from the President as well as the history of EMCC, presents the institution as a Learning College. This shows a commitment to continually assessing college programs and policies to promote student success. EMCC is known for its community engagement as in Scholarships Remarkable Scholars, student conferences, community education: Kids College, Medicare- All you need to know. The West Valley Think Tank Group studies the path for students from elementary through college as well as elementary to career. Curricula is aligned from high school to college. The Skill Center for work force programs is integral in establishing the bridge between academics and real world applications.

### Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 1.C - Core Component 1.C

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The institution understands the relationship between its mission and the diversity of society.

1. The institution addresses its role in a multicultural society.
2. The institution's processes and activities reflect attention to human diversity as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.

### Rating

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Met

### Evidence

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EMCC is a Hispanic-Serving institution, and the values section of the mission statement specifically addresses three areas relating to diversity to include social awareness and inter-cultural learning within a shared governance structure. Diversity initiatives are included in the College planning document - direction 3 section. Within the last three years, Hispanic enrollments, along with the local Hispanic population, have increased from 40% to 45.6%, which is substantial. Structures and processes are now in place to accommodate this increasingly diverse society.

The Diversity Core Value team (together with HR) offers professional development on "Inclusiveness in the Hiring Process," and has a webpage to that effect. Diversity Leadership Alliance workshops are conducted in collaboration with EMCC. As part of its mission, the College invites leaders in diversity to present topics on cultural transformation. The College also maintains a Diversity Library.

The College's commitment to diversity is also demonstrated through various campus committees. These include, for example, the Asian Pacific Islander Club, Male Empowerment Network, PRIDE, Veterans Club, and Black Student Union. EMCC also sponsors a Disability Awareness Week on an annual basis.

It seems clear from the artifacts provided that EMCC has integrated diversity issues into the fabric of the College. This is demonstrated, for example, in the Office of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness Analysis Report, which discusses the International and Intercultural Education Assessment conducted in 2013, and which is guiding the College in its planning efforts.

The EMCC website posted data from an event called the One Billion Rising Event, which is part of the Comprehensive Assessment Tracking System. Results gleaned from this event show that 81% of the participants surveyed experienced an increased awareness of diversity issues (which is part of EMCC's guiding values).

The College's commitment to diversity is also in evidence in its marketing materials, which are available in Spanish as well as English. EMCC's medical interpreter program is also offered in Spanish. It is significant that for the first time since 2014, Hispanic students have overtaken white students in online course participation. Having expanded faculty and student workshops for e-learning will certainly promote a better understanding of the change in demographics and instructional delivery.



**Interim Monitoring (if applicable)**

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 1.D - Core Component 1.D

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

1. Actions and decisions reflect an understanding that in its educational role the institution serves the public, not solely the institution, and thus entails a public obligation.
2. The institution's educational responsibilities take primacy over other purposes, such as generating financial returns for investors, contributing to a related or parent organization, or supporting external interests.
3. The institution engages with its identified external constituencies and communities of interest and responds to their needs as its mission and capacity allow.

### Rating

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Met

### Evidence

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The President's Community Advisory Council provides a forum for community members to discuss strategic directions for the College as well as collaborative programming. One such example is the Kids College as part of the Community Education program. Other examples would include the bi-annual meetings between College leadership and West Valley community members that discuss governing board metrics and the Aguila Youth Leadership Institute. EMCC is also the Center for Diversity for its West Valley community, faculty, and students.

EMCC and its community understand that given existing and anticipated increases in enrollment (up 500 students within the last three years), they need to collaborate to ensure that career pathway programs are aligned, that jobs are available, and that faculty are qualified. Of special interest is the educational pathway offered at the West-MEC Southwest Energy Partners Campus that offers EMCC energy and industrial curriculum. This partnership between the EMCC - Western Maricopa Education Center and APS Palo Verde Nuclear Generating Station and supported by the Western Maricopa Coalition Excellence in Innovation Best of the West Award is exemplary.

EMCC understands its role as an integral leader of the community. Examples of this leadership role include EMCC's commitment to the core value of sustainability, both within the College and within the community (Earth Day, Burrowing Owl Project). EMCC has partnered with Chow Locally to bring this community supported agriculture program to EMCC for students, employees and community members. EMCC identifies with its external constituencies and communities of interest as demonstrated in the Transit Center. EMCC collaborates with the City of Avondale and maintains the Center, while Avondale maintains the Bus Center.

**Interim Monitoring (if applicable)**

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## **1.S - Criterion 1 - Summary**

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

### **Evidence**

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Criterion One stresses the need for EMCC to have a clear mission which is articulated publicly and that guides the institution's operations. The peer review team examined the Assurance Argument carefully and linked the attachments to the appropriate criterion subcomponents. The team agrees that there is sufficient evidence to support the mission and that it provides the overall foundation for student success through the learning college model. As a Hispanic-serving Institution EMCC has diversity as a guiding value to promote social awareness and inter-cultural learning within a shared governance structure and is consistent in meeting this important commitment via various instructional and student support venues. One such example is the program called the One Billion Rising Event which is part of the Comprehensive Assessment Tracking System. Results gleaned from this event showed that 81% of the participants surveyed, experienced an increased awareness in diversity issues. Four essential documents guide EMCC's operations: the Strategic Plan, Financial Resource Plan which is aligned with the Strategic Plan, Master Plan and Technology Plan. There is evidence that all of these documents align and are current. Part of EMCC's mission as a learning college is demonstrated in constructivist teaching and learning patterns. EMCC maintains a collaborative relationship with external constituencies as demonstrated in the Transit Center.

## **2 - Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct**

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

### **2.A - Core Component 2.A**

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The institution operates with integrity in its financial, academic, personnel, and auxiliary functions; it establishes and follows policies and processes for fair and ethical behavior on the part of its governing board, administration, faculty, and staff.

#### **Rating**

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Met

#### **Evidence**

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Estrella Mountain Community College and the Maricopa County Community College District demonstrate integrity in a variety of ways. At the district level, financial reports are publicly available online, and recent reports show financial health. The contingency fund is notably intact as of the April 2016 report, expenditures and revenue are on par with or better than prior years. Other evidence of integrity included a report on food service vendors, where four different vendors gave presentations to representatives of the Maricopa district including EMCC; further evidence shows creativity in contracting with 9 local food trucks to help with events for campuses (not just EMCC) that lacked sufficient catering funds. The college representatives were provided with detailed financial information about these contractors.

EMCC also demonstrates integrity by following through on recommendations to improve policies and processes for fair and ethical behavior. In the Blue Ribbon Panel on Internal Controls, one recommendation was to improve public stewardship via ethics training. Not only was this implemented as of the Feb 27, 2007 Governing Board meeting, evidence was also presented that this training remains part of the Mandatory Training and Disclosures suite (to be taken at the point of hire and every three years thereafter) alongside conflict of interest training (annual requirement), discrimination and harassment training (every three years), FERPA training and other topics.

To promote integrity and transparency in the College's management of fiscal resources, EMCC has developed an inclusive and collaborative budget development process. As part of this process, EMCC's Budget Development Steering Team (BDST) evaluates and ranks budget proposals submitted by all academic, student affairs, and administrative subunits. Using rubrics designed to ensure inter-rater reliability, the BDST ranks budget proposals based on their consistency with the learning college paradigm and the College's strategic priorities.

Academic integrity is promoted at EMCC in part through the policies and procedures published in the College's Academic Catalog. These cover, for example, academic integrity (cheating, plagiarism, etc.) and the potential consequences of academic misconduct. Policies and processes for student

complaints are also published in the Catalog.

As part of its efforts to ensure that the organization operates with integrity, one of the Board's Governance Policies (Policy D-15, 4.10 ) includes a Code of Conduct, which requires public stewardship and ethics training for each member of the Board. The Code of Conduct also states that Board Members are expected to "demonstrate unconflicted loyalty to the interests of the entire community of Maricopa County" and "avoid any conflict of interest with respect to their fiduciary responsibility." The Code also describes the process Board Members are expected to follow if they believe other Board Members are not acting in accordance with Board Policy.

Multiple other policies support fair and ethical behavior. Evidence includes faculty policies manuals that offer transparency into the expectations of salary, disciplinary policy, grievance procedures, and academic freedom. It should be noted, however, that within the minutes provided as evidence regarding the adoption of stewardship training, the faculty report contained evidence that the "meet and confer" process had been circumvented and faculty were not included in the process to implement new policies that would affect conditions of their employment.

### **Interim Monitoring (if applicable)**

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 2.B - Core Component 2.B

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The institution presents itself clearly and completely to its students and to the public with regard to its programs, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, control, and accreditation relationships.

### Rating

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Met

### Evidence

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EMCC presents itself clearly to its students and to the public. The Academic Catalogue, for example, was found to be thorough. On the website, program credit hours, progression and admission requirements (including but not limited to background checks, minimum grade requirements, course and prerequisite requirements, and curriculum mapping) are easily located and sorted by department and program.

Tuition costs are also easy to find on the website, as is a Net Cost Calculator tool to assist students in evaluating their costs in attending EMCC (tuition, books, room and board, other potential costs). Information about the Governing Board is also conveniently located under "About Us" on the website. Information about staff and faculty is also easily found in the online directory, although it appears most people chose to only list their name and e-mail rather than a full biography.

A Disclosures page on the EMCC website includes retention and graduation information for the college as a whole as well as information for making complaints. Links on the Disclosures page also lead to information about Gainful Employment and Equity in Athletics. Another link on the Disclosures page leads to information about institutional and program accreditation. While accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission was easily located and accurately presented, the information provided about program accreditation by the Accreditation Commission for Accreditation in Nursing (ACEN) appeared to be incomplete. Although NCLEX pass rates were properly published according to ACEN policy, the program's own completion rates, job placements rates for nursing graduates, and other student achievement data were not evident.

The Accreditation page on the EMCC website also notes that the College's nursing program is approved by the Arizona State Board of Nursing. While this is accurate, the Arizona State Board of Nursing recently issued a Notice of Deficiency to Estrella Mountain Community College. The Arizona State Board of Nursing requires all nursing programs within the state to maintain at least an 80% passing rate on the NCLEX exam. EMCC was issued a Notice of Deficiency because the first-time NCLEX-RN pass rates were 77.5% for 2014 and 73.3% for 2015. In addition, in calendar year 2015, the first-time pass rate on the NCLEX for LPNs was also below 80% (73.3%). The corrective action outlined in the Notice of Deficiency requires Estrella Mountain to correct these deficiencies within ten months of the date of the service of the Notice (which was 5/12/2016).

**Interim Monitoring (if applicable)**

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*



## 2.C - Core Component 2.C

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The governing board of the institution is sufficiently autonomous to make decisions in the best interest of the institution and to assure its integrity.

1. The governing board's deliberations reflect priorities to preserve and enhance the institution.
2. The governing board reviews and considers the reasonable and relevant interests of the institution's internal and external constituencies during its decision-making deliberations.
3. The governing board preserves its independence from undue influence on the part of donors, elected officials, ownership interests or other external parties when such influence would not be in the best interest of the institution.
4. The governing board delegates day-to-day management of the institution to the administration and expects the faculty to oversee academic matters.

### Rating

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Met

### Evidence

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Estrella Mountain Community College is governed by the Maricopa County Community College District Governing Board. The Board's autonomy is ensured in part by the fact that its members are publicly elected. Five of the seven members are representatives elected from geographical districts within Maricopa County and two are at-large representatives. All Board members are elected to serve four-year staggered terms.

The successful delegation of day-to-day operations to administration and faculty is evident in both the Governing Board Policies and meeting minutes provided to the Assurance Review Team. Curriculum committee minutes notably illustrated the proposal of structured pathways to better steer students towards degree completion and eliminate the students' wasted time and money. Not only did the curriculum committees definitively show faculty participation and governance, but academic priorities and the interests of the main college constituency- the students- were demonstrated.

Meeting minutes provided clear evidence that the Governing Board considers the interests of constituents in the decision-making process. Minutes included detailed reports from citizens, faculty, and students. Of note in early 2016, the faculty report praised the outgoing Chancellor for his commitment to the Maricopa community and student success. Furthermore, deliberations are on matters meant to preserve and enhance the institution. Of note on the Governing Board website was a lengthy and detailed PowerPoint presentation (2015 Monitoring Report) showing goal metrics on outcomes, including survey data comparing EMCC and the other Maricopa colleges to peer institutions. Areas of study included University Transfer Education and General Education, Workforce and Economic Development, Developmental Education, and Community Development and Civic and Global Engagement.

The MCCCDC Governing Board appropriately permits citizen and employee comments during open Board meetings and publishes those comments in the meeting minutes, which are publically available

on the Governing Board's website. The Team has noted that the minutes from January 26, 2016 contain comments from five individuals alleging disingenuous, unfair, inappropriate, and unprofessional conduct by Maricopa administrators towards individual employees and employee groups (such as the Maricopa Employees Group, the Arizona Conference of Police & Sheriffs, and the Professional Staff Association). The minutes also contain allegations of the awarding of a \$400,000 contract without due process and a lack of transparency in the Board's investigation of this issue. However, the institution has provided evidence that the allegations made on January 26, 2016 have been adequately addressed. An independent investigation conducted earlier in the year concluded that the failure to obtain Board approval for the contract in question "was the result of an inadvertent mistake," and that "there was no evidence whatsoever to support a violation of state or federal law."

### **Interim Monitoring (if applicable)**

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## **2.D - Core Component 2.D**

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

### **Rating**

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Met

### **Evidence**

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EMCC has demonstrated its commitment to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning in a variety of ways. For instance, the Residential Faculty Policy Manual stresses that faculty are entitled to instructional freedom in discussing aspects of their discipline. In addition, the College's Administrative Regulations illustrate the importance of academic freedom, discuss intellectual property rights, and disclose the ramifications of academic misconduct.

The institution has also provided evidence demonstrating that freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth are not limited to policies in handbooks. The Center for Teaching and Learning, for example, has had a wide variety of programs for faculty to lead and attend. In addition, grant money is available to employees to explore new initiatives.

EMCC students are also allowed freedom of expression in the pursuit of truth. Students participate in research conferences and honors expos, with IRB monitoring the research for compliance with ethics standards. The Fine Arts are also fostered at EMCC, with evidence presented of participation in student and faculty art exhibitions.

### **Interim Monitoring (if applicable)**

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 2.E - Core Component 2.E

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

1. The institution provides effective oversight and support services to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice conducted by its faculty, staff, and students.
2. Students are offered guidance in the ethical use of information resources.
3. The institution has and enforces policies on academic honesty and integrity.

### Rating

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Met

### Evidence

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The structure of oversight and support services to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice is evident in EMCC's Assurance Argument. The Library contains multiple videos, including a video on citation, and also has 24/7 chat services available. The Center for Teaching and Learning has guides for faculty to use TurnItIn. The IRB has a subcommittee, the College Research Review Committee, which oversees the review of student research, provides guidance to researchers, and serves as a campus resource to ensure research fulfills its ethical obligations. Contact information and guides are easily accessible on the website.

Students obtain guidance in the ethical use of information resources through a variety of ways at EMCC. A significant example is the opportunity to work with a mentor to prepare a presentation for the annual Student Conference. Their proposals are reviewed by faculty. Rubrics and sample proposals are easily accessible on the website. Guidelines are published, and external resources such as the Council on Undergraduate Research and the Purdue Online Writing Lab are cited.

EMCC defines information literacy as a general education outcome. The 2014 assessment of this outcome included data collection from twenty 100-200 level courses. From 2011 to 2014, research indicated several basis point improvements in each of the following categories: ability to recognize the need for information to answer a question, ability to recognize the information needed for the appropriate topic, and ability to identify key concepts and locate quality resources to meet that need.

EMCC policies on academic honesty and integrity are appropriately published for multiple stakeholders. For instance, information on academic honesty and integrity is readily available to students in the Academic Catalog. In addition, the EMCC Residential Faculty Policy Manual includes specific definitions of academic misconduct, including the definitions of cheating and plagiarism (unethical use of information), and the appropriate punishment for unethical academic practices.

### Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## **2.S - Criterion 2 - Summary**

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

### **Evidence**

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Evidence of both published policy and meeting minutes show positive aspects of acting with integrity and responsibility. There is a demonstrated commitment to student outcomes in the annual Monitoring Reports. The district demonstrates financial stability even amidst declining enrollment. Most evidence provided was at the district level rather than the Estrella Mountain level. Governing Board meeting minutes did uncover unflattering allegations although the majority of discourse was positive, reflecting a commitment to advancing the interests of all constituents.

## **3 - Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support**

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

### **3.A - Core Component 3.A**

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The institution's degree programs are appropriate to higher education.

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

### **Rating**

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Met

### **Evidence**

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EMCC awards certificates and degrees that meet academic and industry standards: (a) the interactive College Catalog describes individual programs/certificates; (b) Catalog lists how transfer credits are awarded to students and how classes transfer. The Interactive Catalog links directly to the class schedule search, class schedule, bookstore, and academic calendar; (c) Catalog describes how students qualify for internships and externships; (d) charts for general education pathways and general education curriculum are clear and provide oversight for sequencing of courses; (e) College Catalogs are archived from 2004-2015 and are easily accessible to students. These Catalogs provide a longitudinal overview of programs; (f) website is user friendly related to the program clusters (programs by interest) by name and provide separate links to degrees and certificates.

The EMCC Instructional Plan, a document that is in its mid cycle, is reviewed annually. Inclusive in the Instructional Plan is the General Educational Abilities Matrix, part of a rubric framework, which consists of domains of Bloom's taxonomy levels and which are consistently applied throughout the various discipline themes. The Instructional Plan includes a comprehensive section that delineates the sun setting of programs.

The College uses the CANVAS learning management system as its platform for e-learning. The Catalog clearly defines the various modes of instructional delivery using CANVAS. It specifies how much time students spend face-to-face or online in a hybrid environment. Additionally, the Center for Teaching and Learning is the hub for professional development which includes the consultation of web tools and CANVAS system trouble shooting and also emphasizes the academic rigor of e-learning. E-learning pedagogy luncheons that are held at the College on a semester basis showcase

new tools, models and active learning strategies that faculty can incorporate in e-courses.

Most impressive is the way program reviews are conducted for the e-learning environment. The College follows Quality Matters, which is a quality assurance tool for online education. EMCC has also set external benchmarks through CCSSE data. Regular e-program reviews focus on the department goals, budget alignment and student outcomes.

Some of the concerns mentioned in the "Program Review of E-Learning for 2015-2016" document provided in the Assurance Argument relate to web accessibility requirements. EMCC is closing the loop on its findings by restructuring the Student Orientation Program, faculty training on CANVAS, and offering new course development workshops.

EMCC reaches out to several communities. The Buckeye Educational Center offers various courses on a smaller scale via face-to-face and/or hybrid instructional delivery during the day and evenings. Students services at the Center assist students in their educational goal planning.

### **Interim Monitoring (if applicable)**

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*



## 3.B - Core Component 3.B

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The institution demonstrates that the exercise of intellectual inquiry and the acquisition, application, and integration of broad learning and skills are integral to its educational programs.

1. The general education program is appropriate to the mission, educational offerings, and degree levels of the institution.
2. The institution articulates the purposes, content, and intended learning outcomes of its undergraduate general education requirements. The program of general education is grounded in a philosophy or framework developed by the institution or adopted from an established framework. It imparts broad knowledge and intellectual concepts to students and develops skills and attitudes that the institution believes every college-educated person should possess.
3. Every degree program offered by the institution engages students in collecting, analyzing, and communicating information; in mastering modes of inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments.
4. The education offered by the institution recognizes the human and cultural diversity of the world in which students live and work.
5. The faculty and students contribute to scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge to the extent appropriate to their programs and the institution's mission.

### Rating

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Met

### Evidence

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Information provided in the College Catalog and website aligns EMCC's mission, vision and values with the program and course offerings at the level of a two-year College. The EMCC Instructional Plan sets the direction of programs and standards for quality. EMCC has adopted a prescriptive learning theory that has students create their own knowledge as part of the Learning College model.

Overall institutional student learning outcomes reflect an established framework that permeates throughout various levels of learning. General education outcomes are state-generated and each course assesses these outcomes in course-level assessments via a general education abilities matrix (completed rubrics were provided from various disciplines). Depending on student interest, students may opt to choose an academic track to fulfill their general education requirements.

One of EMCC's strengths is its attention to human and cultural diversity, which is one of the College's core values. These core values are published in various venues, such as the website, College Catalog, and District Diversity Calendar. Examples of its commitment to diversity include inclusiveness in the hiring process and the Higher Education Excellence in Diversity Award as well as a myriad of monthly 'diversity' events. Diversity concepts are embedded in several general education courses. EMCC also offers a standalone diversity course.

Faculty organize and support student events to include academic projects, juried art shows, science and sustainability activities, and more. Selected advisory minutes are included as

evidence. Additionally, faculty not only assist students in their scholarly research via EMCCs Honors Program, but also conduct their own research.

### **Interim Monitoring (if applicable)**

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 3.C - Core Component 3.C

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

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

### Rating

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Met

### Evidence

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EMCC's residential and adjunct faculty appear to be well qualified, with appropriate master's degrees or doctoral degrees as required. Nearly one third of the full time faculty have a terminal degree. Unique is the list of faculty minimum qualifications according to meta major or umbrella discipline. Faculty have a guide as to which 18 graduate hours meet the qualifications per discipline. This list is an interpretation of the October 2015 HLC document on faculty qualifications. This information is posted on the Maricopa County Community College District website.

With approximately 90 full-time faculty, the College's residential faculty to student ratio is satisfactory. However, at the present time, approximately 68% of EMCC's courses are taught by adjunct faculty and only 32% are taught by full-time faculty. This is due in part to the fact that, at present, more than 10% of the College's full-time faculty are "Service Faculty" (Information Resources and Counseling), rather than "Instructional Faculty." EMCC's goal over the next six years is to increase the full-time to part-time faculty ratio to 60% full-time faculty to 40% part-time faculty. Evidence is provided on the process to reach this goal.

EMCC has processes in place to evaluate instructors on a regular basis. A detailed faculty evaluation plan was provided to the Team, showing that residential faculty are evaluated every three years based on specific criteria. Adjunct faculty receive orientation, are evaluated during their first three consecutive semesters, and receive mentoring feedback.

Instructors at EMCC are accessible for student inquiry. Faculty office hours, for example, are provided to students on course syllabi and posted in Canvas. Instructional residential faculty are required to schedule a minimum of five academic support hours per week. In addition, many faculty are also available to students through tutoring services provided in EMCC's Academic Success Center.

EMCC supports professional development to help ensure that faculty are current in their disciplines and adept in their teaching roles. As part of its professional development efforts, EMCC offers faculty sabbaticals. It is impressive to see faculty completing their dissertations and being engaged in scholarly activities. Topics from high frequency testing to exploring the world's oceans will not only enrich the faculty, but also expand students' global perspectives. Faculty also participate in national organizations.

Staff members providing support services are also appropriately qualified, trained, and supported in their professional development. Professional development opportunities available for student support staff include the Estrella Leadership Development Program and the Women's Leadership Group mentor program. In addition, ongoing training is provided to student support staff via a variety of formats.

### **Interim Monitoring (if applicable)**

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 3.D - Core Component 3.D

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The institution provides support for student learning and effective teaching.

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

### Rating

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Met

### Evidence

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EMCC provides support services suited to the needs of its student population. These include, for example, advising, financial aid, counseling, and enrollment services. The College also provides disability services and veterans services. Most of these services are accessed through a single point of entry, the EMCC Welcome Center, and are available year-round.

All new students at EMCC are required to attend a priority advisement workshop. The College's website provides information about this workshop as well as links to the enrollment process. As part of this well-organized process, students meet an advisor right at the beginning of their College experience (new student orientation).

The EMCC Academic Success Center provides tutoring for approximately 5,000 students a year. Information about tutor availability is published on the web site, which is user-friendly. Located near the Academic Success Center is a Computer Commons, a place where students can work on computer projects for any course and receive assistance from computer lab technicians as well as learning facilitators. The Estrella Mountain Library is also located near the Academic Success Center and the Computer Commons. Library information and data bases are also available on the library landing page, which facilitates easy student access to research links.

The hiring of part-time staff specifically to support students in advising, but also with other support services, shows a commitment to the mission of a learning college. The evidence provided shows not only that EMCC offers robust support for student learning on the main campus, but also at its Buckeye Educational Center as well.

**Interim Monitoring (if applicable)**

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 3.E - Core Component 3.E

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The institution fulfills the claims it makes for an enriched educational environment.

1. Co-curricular programs are suited to the institution's mission and contribute to the educational experience of its students.
2. The institution demonstrates any claims it makes about contributions to its students' educational experience by virtue of aspects of its mission, such as research, community engagement, service learning, religious or spiritual purpose, and economic development.

### Rating

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Met

### Evidence

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A variety of co-curricular opportunities are available for students at EMCC. These include activities and clubs that support students socially and culturally as well as those intended to support classroom learning. Examples of the latter include the Drama Club, the Future Teachers Club, the Forensics Club, and the Psi Beta Psychology National Honor Society.

The Beta Alpha Xi chapter of Phi Theta Kappa (PTK) is another excellent example of co-curricular activity at EMCC. PTK provides students with opportunities for campus and community service and programming to develop their servant leadership skills. EMCC's chapter of PTK has earned Five-Star Status, which is the highest ranking a chapter can achieve. It has also been named a Top 100 Chapter out of over 1,250 chapters worldwide for the last four consecutive years. Many of the chapter's activities are displayed on the Beta Alpha Xi website, but there could be more evidence of student participation and learning as expressed through student surveys, agendas, or event minutes.

The Center for Service Learning and Civic Engagement is another excellent example of an attempt to encourage co-curricular learning at EMCC. The mission of the EMCC Service Learning Program is to integrate educational experiences with real life applications, in order to enhance student learning and critical thinking and better meet the needs of the campus and local community. Among other things, the Center offers workshops for faculty on how to incorporate service learning into their courses. The Center's webpage lists events for the semester and provides faculty with resources, such as sample projects and syllabi.

### Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 3.S - Criterion 3 - Summary

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

### Evidence

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EMCC provides significant evidence that fulfills the requirements of Criterion three by offering appropriate academic programs that reflect an established framework that permeates throughout various levels of learning. The EMCC Instructional Plan sets the direction of programs and standards for quality. EMCC has adopted a prescriptive learning theory that has students create their own knowledge as part of the Learning College model. General education outcomes are state-generated and each course assesses these outcomes in course-level assessments via a general education abilities matrix (completed rubrics provided). Further, EMCC demonstrates that student success and the learning college model is at the core of all educational offerings. Certificates and associate degrees meet academic and industry standards for both the transfer students and career and technical students. EMCC uses the CANVAS learning management system as its platform for online learning and appears to have a robust Technology Plan. Syllabi are provided for all three types of instructional delivery modes which highlight the individual components. EMCC provides support services to students and offers a structure to address the academic needs of the students. EMCC shows strength in this criterion especially where it relates to the list of residential and adjunct faculty who are qualified with appropriate master's degrees or doctoral degrees. Nearly one third of the full time faculty have a terminal degree. Unique is the list of faculty minimum qualifications according to meta major or umbrella disciplines to include the Buckeye Educational Center.

It appears that there are a variety of co-curricular activities that will appeal to most EMCC students. Many of the activities are displayed on the website, and there is evidence of student participation as expressed through student surveys and minutes. EMCC has the goal over the next few years to increase the number of residential faculty to 60% as currently there is a high number of adjunct faculty compared to residential faculty. The FY 16-17 Adopted Budget with Allocations document includes specific statements regarding this commitment as does the faculty staffing rubric.



## 4 - Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

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

### 4.A - Core Component 4.A

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The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs.

1. The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews.
2. The institution evaluates all the credit that it transcripts, including what it awards for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning, or relies on the evaluation of responsible third parties.
3. The institution has policies that assure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer.
4. The institution maintains and exercises authority over the prerequisites for courses, rigor of courses, expectations for student learning, access to learning resources, and faculty qualifications for all its programs, including dual credit programs. It assures that its dual credit courses or programs for high school students are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement to its higher education curriculum.
5. The institution maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes.
6. The institution evaluates the success of its graduates. The institution assures that the degree or certificate programs it represents as preparation for advanced study or employment accomplish these purposes. For all programs, the institution looks to indicators it deems appropriate to its mission, such as employment rates, admission rates to advanced degree programs, and participation rates in fellowships, internships, and special programs (e.g., Peace Corps and Americorps).

### Rating

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Met

### Evidence

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Estrella Mountain Community College (EMCC) evaluates the quality of its programs on a regular basis every three years. Prior to 2009, program reviews were limited primarily to occupational programs. EMCC has since expanded its program reviews to cover academic programs, administrative services, student affairs, and other areas. Under the direction of the Office of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness, the program review process is integrated with the College's division planning cycle and focuses on each program's connection to student needs, the correlation between program goals and student success, support for effective teaching and learning, organizational integrity, and future plans.

EMCC follows Maricopa County Community College District (MCCCD) policy when evaluating transfer credit and credit for prior learning. This policy was developed to create a more consistent evaluation of credit across all campuses. In evaluating transfer credit, course descriptions and course competencies are reviewed to determine equivalencies. When appropriate, faculty content experts are consulted in the appraisal process. Maricopa Community Colleges will not award credit for coursework completed at institutions that are not regionally accredited.

By policy, students enrolling in one of the MCCCD colleges may be awarded no more than 30 credit hours for prior learning. Prior learning assessments at EMCC include credit by exam, credit by evaluation, and college-level equivalency exams. The College also accepts CLEP, AP, and IB credits as well as credit recommendations from the American Council on Education (based on the evaluation of military experience). Credit received through prior learning assessment at EMCC is transferrable within the Maricopa Community Colleges, but does not necessarily transfer to other colleges and universities.

EMCC maintains appropriate authority over course prerequisites and course rigor regardless of where its courses are offered. Dual enrollment courses offered at high schools, for example, are bound by the same rules and requirements as courses offered at EMCC. Course prerequisites, course competencies, academic rigor, and faculty qualifications are the same for dual enrollment regardless of the setting. EMCC follows MCCCD policies regarding faculty qualifications, which are based on Higher Learning Commission guidelines.

In an effort to ensure and improve the quality of its educational offerings, EMCC maintains specialized accreditation for some of its programs. The EMCC nursing program, for example, is approved by Arizona Board of Nursing and accredited by the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN). In a letter dated April 8, 2016, the Arizona State Board of Nursing issued a Notice of Deficiency to the EMCC registered nursing program. With ten months to correct them, EMCC is working diligently to address the identified deficiencies and improve student success in the nursing program.

Since its initial accreditation in 1997, EMCC has been evaluating the success of its graduates in multiple ways. These include graduate exit surveys and graduate follow-up surveys (sent six months following graduation). The College also evaluates the success of its graduates through analyses of wage data provided by the Arizona Department of Economic Security and transfer reports provided by the three state universities. According to data in the 2013-2014 First-Year GPA Report provided by the three state universities, students transferring from EMCC did well in some areas, such as Computer and Information Sciences, but less well in others, such as History. This information is shared with division chairs and faculty in an effort to assess curricular connections and improve student success.

## **Interim Monitoring (if applicable)**

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 4.B - Core Component 4.B

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The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning.

1. The institution has clearly stated goals for student learning and effective processes for assessment of student learning and achievement of learning goals.
2. The institution assesses achievement of the learning outcomes that it claims for its curricular and co-curricular programs.
3. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.
4. The institution's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty and other instructional staff members.

### Rating

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Met

### Evidence

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The team report from the 2011 Comprehensive Visit noted that a few of the course syllabi sampled during the campus visit lacked competency or outcomes statements. This concern appears to have been addressed satisfactorily. The Assurance Argument asserts that all courses in the MCCCDC course bank include a set of competencies, and a sampling of the current courses in the MCCCDC course bank by the Assurance Review Team supports this assertion.

EMCC has provided evidence that it has clearly stated goals for student learning. A link to the EMCC General Education Abilities Matrix, for instance, provided clear direct evidence of the College's general education goals for student learning. In addition, evidence for the College's course-level competencies can be found in the MCCCDC course bank. However, the available evidence for the College's program-level goals was inconsistent and difficult to locate. While some programs (such as Accounting) have clearly-articulated program-level goals published on the College website, most do not. Furthermore, the Assurance Argument itself provides only indirect evidence of program-level goals for student learning. For example, the "SAAC Program Review 2015-2016" document provided in the addendum contains many references to "learning outcomes," but few examples of such intended outcomes (i.e., descriptions of what program graduates are expected to know and be able to do as a result of successfully completing an EMCC degree or certificate program).

EMCC's "Comprehensive Assessment Tracking System" (CATS) was created in 2012 to document assessment, the collection of assessment data, analyses of assessment data, and the changes that have been implemented to improve assessment results. The purpose of the system is to provide a platform that encourages faculty and staff to share best practices in assessment with the goal of improving student learning. Submissions to the Comprehensive Assessment Tracking System are available for faculty to review, discuss, and modify to fit their own needs. In addition, a "CATS of the Month Selection" is regularly on the agenda for the meetings of the College's Student Academic Achievement Committee (SAAC).

The 2011 team report observed that although there was evidence of progress being made to "close the loop" and use the information collected from assessment to improve student learning, this evidence was "spotty." Based on evidence provided in the Assurance Argument, this type of evidence is still "spotty." Although the Assurance argument includes evidence of general education assessment, and evidence was provided demonstrating attempts to improve student learning at the course level, the examples of course-level assessments in the Comprehensive Assessment Tracking System were what might be described as "classroom research," rather than the assessment of student learning. For instance, one example of a CATS provided to the Team analyzed the impact of giving four exams, rather than five in a biology class. Another analyzed the impact of covering a particular accounting topic in ACC230, rather than ACC111. While this type of research is clearly of value, little evidence was provided to demonstrate that faculty are assessing to what extent students are meeting course competencies and using that information to improve student learning. The evidence provided regarding assessment at the program level was also not directly linked to clearly-articulated statements of what students are expected to know and be able to do as a result of successfully completing an EMCC program.

The Estrella Mountain faculty have identified seven "General Education Abilities" that they strive to enhance in all EMCC students. These include: Communication, Writing/Composition, Information Literacy, Quantitative Reasoning, Critical Inquiry, Social, Civic and Global Responsibility; and Technological Literacy. Under the leadership of the SACC, these seven General Education Abilities are assessed following a process described as the General Education Abilities Assessment Cycle. This involves collecting and evaluating data on a three-year cyclical basis, and using assessment data to improve student learning.

### **Interim Monitoring (if applicable)**

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 4.C - Core Component 4.C

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The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational improvement through ongoing attention to retention, persistence, and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs.

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

### Rating

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Met

### Evidence

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Estrella Mountain Community College employs multiple strategies to improve student retention, persistence, and completion. These include an initiative called the Engage Estrella Mentoring Program (E2). E2 pairs students with employee mentors in an effort to increase student engagement with the College. From fall 2012 to fall 2015, E2 has made over 408 mentoring connections with 195 employee mentors. Students who were mentored had an impressive overall fall-to-fall semester retention rate of 80%. In comparison, the overall institutional persistence average for new students in 2013-2014 was 58%. EMCC's overall goal is to improve on baseline retention, persistence, and completion outcomes established at the start of each three-year planning cycle.

Another successful initiative designed to improve student success at EMCC is the College's Peer Mentoring Program (PMP), which was first implemented by the College's Counseling Division in fall 2008. Peer mentors serve as guides and role models for new and underprepared students. Among other things, they serve as a source of support for developmental education students by attending developmental classes and meeting individually with new students to provide support and encouragement. Since its inception, the Peer Mentor Program has employed over 50 students and provided support for nearly 3,000 students. The data show that students with Peer Mentors have higher retention and persistence rates than those who do not.

Another strategy to increase student success and completion at EMCC involves attempts to revise developmental education. Relatively recent faculty-led changes include: contextualized learning in developmental reading, accelerated learning in developmental English, and cooperative learning in developmental math. Since making these and other changes, the College has seen developmental

education completion rates increase from 58% in fall 2009 to 77% in fall 2014.

EMCC's processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs reflect good practice. The College's Office of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness is a critical resource for the collection and analysis of retention, persistence and completion data. This data is shared with the EMCC Leadership Council, analyzed, and used as the basis for strategic planning. The current strategic plan, for example, includes an initiative to "continuously monitor data related to retention, persistence, certificate and degree completion, and transfer" and a related initiative to "identify and implement high impact practices that promote higher course placement, retention, persistence, certificate and degree completion, and transfer. (e.g., early alert, boot camps, intrusive advisement, etc.)." In an effort to learn even more about best practices in student success and retention, EMCC has enrolled in the Higher Learning Commission's Persistence and Completion Academy.

### **Interim Monitoring (if applicable)**

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## **4.S - Criterion 4 - Summary**

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

### **Evidence**

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Estrella Mountain Community College has demonstrated that it has met Criterion 4. EMCC demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational program, learning environments, and support services through regular ongoing program reviews of both academic and non-academic program; it demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement through careful monitoring of student retention, persistence, and completion; and it demonstrates a commitment to educational improvement through its strategic planning process and its many programs designed to enhance student success.

## 5 - Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness

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

### 5.A - Core Component 5.A

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

1. The institution has the fiscal and human resources and physical and technological infrastructure sufficient to support its operations wherever and however programs are delivered.
2. The institution's resource allocation process ensures that its educational purposes are not adversely affected by elective resource allocations to other areas or disbursement of revenue to a superordinate entity.
3. The goals incorporated into mission statements or elaborations of mission statements are realistic in light of the institution's organization, resources, and opportunities.
4. The institution's staff in all areas are appropriately qualified and trained.
5. The institution has a well-developed process in place for budgeting and for monitoring expense.

### Rating

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Met

### Evidence

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The institution's resource base supports its current educational programs and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future. Evidence that this component is met includes the Financial Resource Plan (2015) for EMCC, which feeds into district planning. EMCC relies primarily on property taxes and tuition and fees from students. It is receiving less money from the State of Arizona, but this is not a problem unique to this district or state. The plan outlines how to offset the reduced funds through transfers of other funding sources. Revenue and expenditures are monitored on a monthly basis at the Maricopa district level according to reports found online. EMCC remains committed to enrollment growth but recognizes that with limited funding, program expansion isn't a viable option at this time. However, they are focusing resources on increasing the full-time residential faculty count to help provide better quality instruction and support to students. Further evidence that this Core Component is met includes survey data that compares EMCC to the other Maricopa colleges and other peer institutions. The NLSSI survey shows EMCC students are satisfied with physical and technological infrastructure at a comparable rate to peer institutions.

EMCC has invested in the growth of key human resources as demonstrated by the organizational chart and employee report. Hiring qualifications (minimum and desired) are easily found online. The employee onboarding training program was also diverse and included specific instructor training



modules such as FERPA. To ensure that hiring is fair and unbiased, search committees must also complete training and the search committees include employees from various departments. Faculty in particular have access to the Center for Teaching and Learning; the online calendar of events showed a variety of events regarding topics such as research and student support.

### **Interim Monitoring (if applicable)**

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 5.B - Core Component 5.B

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The institution's governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the institution to fulfill its mission.

1. The governing board is knowledgeable about the institution; it provides oversight of the institution's financial and academic policies and practices and meets its legal and fiduciary responsibilities.
2. The institution has and employs policies and procedures to engage its internal constituencies—including its governing board, administration, faculty, staff, and students—in the institution's governance.
3. Administration, faculty, staff, and students are involved in setting academic requirements, policy, and processes through effective structures for contribution and collaborative effort.

### Rating

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Met

### Evidence

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MCCCD's seven-member Governing Board is knowledgeable about EMCC and the other colleges in the district in part because they are all residents of the district and elected by the citizens of the district. To further ensure that the members of the Board are knowledgeable about EMCC and the other Maricopa colleges, new members are provided with a detailed orientation. In November 2014, for example, a consultant was hired to provide this orientation because four of the seven members were newly elected.

The MCCCD Governing Board provides oversight for the College in part by staying focused on Board Outcomes and other performance metrics. The four main metrics (University Transfer Education and General Education, Workforce and Economic Development, Developmental Education, and Community Development and Civic and Global Engagement) are fully described and reported upon, with full reports about progress towards achieving these goals available online.

Outcomes are reviewed annually at a special Outcomes Monitoring Retreat. This provides Governing Board members and district administration an opportunity to have in-depth discussions about ways to improve District performance.

MCCCD Board policies and procedures are designed to encourage the engagement of internal constituencies in the District's governance. For example, Governing Board meeting minutes show that constituents are given the opportunity to present reports on a regular basis. Employees and employee groups are also provided with opportunities to share concerns and air grievances.

Shared governance is also encouraged by the composition of the College's committees. The Budget Development Steering Team (BDST), for example, includes voting representatives from faculty and employee groups as well as the administration. Faculty are also provided with a voice through the EMCC Faculty Senate, which meets frequently with the College President and Vice Presidents to discuss college issues. Student input is encouraged through "Coffee Talks," a series of monthly

meetings in which students are encouraged to express concerns and share suggestions with EMCC administrators.

Several other committees also promote staff and faculty input into decision-making. These include, for example, the Academic Issues Team, the Faculty Staffing Committee, the Core Values Committees (Diversity and Sustainability), and the Student Academic Achievement Committee. Of these, the Student Academic Achievement Committee had the most information publicly available to demonstrate faculty and staff involvement and the consideration of student input via the classroom and other surveys.

Although a variety of committees were named in the Assurance Argument, finding current, publicly available information proved difficult aside from the SAAC. For example, the faculty assignment grid provided in the Assurance Argument appeared sparse. However, other evidence in the file for Criterion 2 included curriculum minutes, library committee minutes, and dance department minutes, which satisfactorily show appropriate contribution and collaborative effort.

### **Interim Monitoring (if applicable)**

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 5.C - Core Component 5.C

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The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning.

1. The institution allocates its resources in alignment with its mission and priorities.
2. The institution links its processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning, and budgeting.
3. The planning process encompasses the institution as a whole and considers the perspectives of internal and external constituent groups.
4. The institution plans on the basis of a sound understanding of its current capacity. Institutional plans anticipate the possible impact of fluctuations in the institution's sources of revenue, such as enrollment, the economy, and state support.
5. Institutional planning anticipates emerging factors, such as technology, demographic shifts, and globalization.

### Rating

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Met

### Evidence

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EMCC has provided ample evidence that the institution engages in systematic and integrated planning. The College's mission is to serve diverse learners in several areas, notably workforce development. As part of the planning, the institution engages in environmental scans of demographics including poverty rates, housing growth, wages by occupation, employment opportunities and growing occupations, and the demographics and graduation rates of its service area high schools. Understanding these data points about its constituents helps form the Strategic Plan, and evidence from financial reports logically demonstrates that the greatest allocation of resources is to instruction.

EMCC's strategic plan is clearly linked to the MCCCDC strategic plan. The overall strategy for the District is directly linked with assessment of student learning in the document "Strategic Vision: Student Progress and Outcomes Report" (2015). To advance all the colleges' missions, particularly EMCC's mission of serving diverse learners, the report measures several access indicators as well as retention and credential completion. Furthermore, at a micro level, the link between budgeting and planning shows in the budget proposal matrix, where budget requests must be accompanied by explanations of how the funding would advance student outcomes as outlined in strategic plans (e.g. "expand learning" or "help students graduate").

EMCC demonstrates an understanding of its current capacity, and this is linked with the Maricopa District budgeting and expansion process. The Governing Board, as evidenced in minutes, evaluates future funding in partnership with Arizona lawmakers. Financial reports likewise show nimbleness in responding to early warning signals about revenue flow. Also, EMCC's Strategic Enrollment Management Plan (2015-2019) mentions that planning must take into account both predictable and sustainable growth ("does not exceed the capacity of existing and planned human and capital resources"). This enrollment management plan also highlights EMCC's ability to anticipate emerging factors. Ten trends were identified that could impact enrollment, including recovery of jobs and area

population growth. Eleven potential outcomes of these trends were likewise identified, such as an increase in student persistence and increase in workforce development participation.

### **Interim Monitoring (if applicable)**

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 5.D - Core Component 5.D

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The institution works systematically to improve its performance.

1. The institution develops and documents evidence of performance in its operations.
2. The institution learns from its operational experience and applies that learning to improve its institutional effectiveness, capabilities, and sustainability, overall and in its component parts.

### Rating

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Met

### Evidence

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EMCC has provided extensive evidence of documented goals, documented progress towards goals, and long-range strategic planning. In terms of operational performance, EMCC's "2013-2014 Year End Accomplishment Report" and "2014-2015 Planning Report" document successful projects related to expanding the role of the Center for Teaching and Learning to serve more staff, investing staff resources and funds to enhance environmental sustainability, and moving more college processes online.

The Strategic Technology and Learning Plan discusses the technology climate and how it links to academic programs. Extensive detail is provided about technology and how it supports instructional design and e-learning. Although this particular report is from 2013 and mentions task forces and timelines, it was amended in the 2014-2015 strategic planning process.

The Strategic Enrollment Management Plan also discusses facilities and technology, with an analysis of seat capacity, technology level in classrooms, and other room restrictions. It mentions that that expansion will be limited in the near future due to funding. This report also discusses how, in order to support operations that support student success, an investment in human resources will be required, and EMCC has prioritized increased funding accordingly.

### Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## **5.S - Criterion 5 - Summary**

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

### **Evidence**

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EMCC has successfully demonstrated that it meets all four of the Core Components of this Criterion. EMCC shows that it has a thorough understanding of its mission serving diverse learners and that it strategically plans to continue serving this population even as its sources of revenue change. Environmental scans help identify future challenges and opportunities, and inform the strategic plan. Resource allocation is focused on student-focused initiatives, such as increasing full-time faculty. Metrics demonstrate that EMCC and its governing board stay focused on increasing student access, persistence, and completion by ensuring sufficient resources, appropriate structures, and well-designed processes.

## Review Dashboard

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Number	Title	Rating
1	Mission	
1.A	Core Component 1.A	Met
1.B	Core Component 1.B	Met
1.C	Core Component 1.C	Met
1.D	Core Component 1.D	Met
1.S	Criterion 1 - Summary	Met
2	Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct	
2.A	Core Component 2.A	Met
2.B	Core Component 2.B	Met
2.C	Core Component 2.C	Met
2.D	Core Component 2.D	Met
2.E	Core Component 2.E	Met
2.S	Criterion 2 - Summary	Met
3	Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support	
3.A	Core Component 3.A	Met
3.B	Core Component 3.B	Met
3.C	Core Component 3.C	Met
3.D	Core Component 3.D	Met
3.E	Core Component 3.E	Met
3.S	Criterion 3 - Summary	Met
4	Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement	
4.A	Core Component 4.A	Met
4.B	Core Component 4.B	Met
4.C	Core Component 4.C	Met
4.S	Criterion 4 - Summary	Met
5	Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness	
5.A	Core Component 5.A	Met
5.B	Core Component 5.B	Met
5.C	Core Component 5.C	Met
5.D	Core Component 5.D	Met
5.S	Criterion 5 - Summary	Met



## Review Summary

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### Conclusion

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Estrella Mountain Community College has provided sufficient evidence that it meets all five Criteria for Accreditation and their Core Components. The College's publicly-articulated mission is clear and it guides the institution's operations; the institution acts with integrity, and its conduct is ethical and responsible; it provides quality education wherever and however its courses and programs are delivered; it demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its programs and services; and the institution's resource base is adequate to support its mission.

However, the Team recommends that, in future iterations of its Assurance Argument, the institution strengthen the evidence it provides to document its efforts to assess student learning and use the results of assessment to improve student learning at the course and program level as well as in general education. EMCC should also more consistently publish its program-level goals for student learning and clarify how its co-curricular activities are assessed.

### Overall Recommendations

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#### Criteria For Accreditation

Met

#### Pathways Recommendation

Not Applicable to This Review

*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*