

COS MASTER PLAN - CHAPTER 1 – DRAFT 3

Historical Context

In 1926, Visalia Junior College was established as a department in a city high school. Initially, its mission was to provide inexpensive, lower-division postsecondary education to local high school graduates who intended to transfer to a four-year institution. As student interest in higher education increased over the next decade, Visalia Junior College grew. In 1938, a permanent Visalia campus was built. As the college grew, it formally became the Sequoias Community College District (SCCD) serving portions of Tulare County, Kings County, and Fresno County.

In the late 1990s, the Board of Trustees became aware that College of the Sequoias (COS) programs and services could no longer be accommodated primarily on the Visalia campus. To keep pace with its growing communities, expand student access across the District, and contribute to the economic development of both Tulare and Kings Counties, the board approved building additional sites to serve all residents of the District.

Geographical Context

Sequoias Community College District lies in the heart of the San Joaquin Valley, which is comprised of eight counties, including all of Kings County, most of Fresno, Kern, Merced, and Stanislaus counties, and portions of Madera, San Luis Obispo, and Tulare counties. With a population exceeding three million residents, the San Joaquin Valley is globally recognized as one of the most productive agricultural regions in the world.¹ The San Joaquin Valley plays a significant role in growing many of California's 200 commercially produced crops, making agriculture a leading economic engine of the region. This robust agricultural activity serves as a cornerstone of the region's economy, contributing 14% of GDP, 17% of employment, and 19% of revenues in the San Joaquin Valley ²~~(OBJ)~~.

Sequoias Community College District serves as a center for higher education and career-technical education, catering to the educational needs of local residents. Encompassing 2,893 square miles, the District's geographic borders include sections of Tulare, Kings, and Fresno Counties. While the following paragraphs specifically discuss the geographic borders of the District, COS also extends its service to a diverse range of students from surrounding areas and across the State.

<Native American Task Force info pending>

Tulare County

Tulare County, comprising about 80% of the district's boundaries, is a moderate-sized rural county spanning 4,839 square miles. Nearly half of the county is made up of public land, such as the Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Park and the Sequoia National Forest. The incorporated communities in Tulare County within the College of the Sequoias boundaries include, but are not limited to: Exeter, Farmersville, Lindsay, Goshen, Oroshi, Three Rivers, Tulare, Visalia, and Woodlake. Visalia, the county seat, is the largest of these with 143,966 residents in 2022.³

Kings County

Kings County, which includes about 19% of the district's boundaries, is a small rural county of 1,392 square miles, primarily dedicated to agricultural land. Corcoran and Hanford are the incorporated cities in Kings County within the COS boundaries. Hanford also serves as the county seat and is the largest city in the County with 58,470 residents in 2022.⁴ Also of interest, though not within District boundaries, Lemoore Naval Air Station is an economic driver in Kings County.

Fresno County

Fresno County, which comprises about 1% of the District's boundaries, encompasses both rural and urban areas. With 1,017,162 people,⁵ Fresno County is the 10th most populated county in California. Fresno county is notably recognized for its expansive agricultural land, foothills and vibrant cities. Fresno County's geographical diversity plays a pivotal role in the state's agricultural and economic sectors.

Higher Education in the Region

Sequoias Community College District (SCCD) is part of the California Community College system, the largest system of higher education in the United States, with 116 colleges organized into 73 districts. Today, the District offers various associate degrees, dual enrollment courses, career technical education (CTE) programs, and contract education classes. Specifically, the District offers 33 different Associate Degrees for Transfer and over 40 local associate degrees. In addition, 44 certificates of achievement and 41 skills certificates are available to students.

The three community college districts which border SCCD are Kern, West Hills, and State Center. For comparison, in the 2022-23 academic year, College of the Sequoias served 17,376 students. West Hills and Kern served 9,145 and 51,768, respectively, and the largest of the three neighboring districts, State Center, served 57,341 students.⁶

California State University Bakersfield (CSUB) is about 80 miles from Visalia and University of California Merced (UCM) is about 100 miles from Visalia. The closest public four-year university is California State University Fresno (CSU Fresno), approximately 50 miles from Visalia. The University, however, also operates a satellite campus which offers four bachelor's degree programs on the COS Visalia Campus.

To provide more opportunities in higher education, in Fall 2022, residents of the COS School Facility Improvement District #2 (Visalia, Cutler-Orosi, Farmersville, Exeter, and Woodlake Unified School Districts) passed Measure C, a \$95 million bond⁷ which will fund a University Center on the Visalia campus. This will allow the district to establish partnerships with four-year universities and provide students with more bachelor's and master's degree programs.

The District operates three primary campuses that provide a diverse range of comprehensive offerings, both on-campus and online, that fulfill transfer requirements and/or lead to associate degrees and certificates in a variety of majors. Each primary physical campus offers specific CTE programs which serve as anchor programs for the campus. In addition, all three campuses offer a full complement of student support services, including but not limited to library resources, matriculation, assessment, counseling, admissions and records, a bookstore, District Police, a Career and Transfer center, Access and Ability

Center, Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS), food services, job placement, outreach, student financial aid services, health services, basic needs support, mental health services, and educational support services. To learn more about the specific services, please refer to Chapter 4, and for specific Facilities information, please refer to Chapter 5.

Visalia Campus

The Visalia campus is home to the following CTE programs: Nursing and Allied Health, Administration of Justice, Human Services, Culinary, Fashion, Business, and Child Development. In addition to these anchor programs, the Visalia campus has specialized facilities and equipment available to accommodate performances for athletics and the Fine Arts Program, which includes theater and music. Instructional programs in Visalia are complemented by the full range of student support services listed above, as well as a Veterans Resource Center and a Welcome Center.

Hanford Educational Center

Since the 1980s, a small storefront with a handful of classrooms was operated by the District to serve residents in the Hanford area. In 1992, a facility was leased, setting the groundwork for establishing a permanent campus in Hanford. In 2001 the District entered a unique partnership with the City of Hanford and Hanford Joint Union High School District to purchase 180 acres through a tenants-in-common agreement. The land was used to build a new high school, an athletic complex, and a permanent COS Hanford campus.

In Fall 2006, residents of the College of the Sequoias Hanford Campus Improvement District #1 passed a local \$22million general obligation bond⁸ to build a permanent educational center in Hanford. This bond enabled the District to construct and equip the campus, which includes the Education and Public Safety Buildings. An Economic Development Agency grant, awarded to the City of Hanford and the District, contributed more than half of the funding for the Vocational Educational Building. The facility opened in Fall 2010, and total instructional and administrative space currently includes over 63,000 square feet.

In May 2015, the Hanford campus received official Center designation through the California Community College Chancellor's Office Center Status Process. This made the campus eligible for annual Center funding when it reached 1000 Full Time Equivalent Students (FTES).

The Hanford Center hosts the Tulare/Kings Regional Public Safety Training Center offering Commission on Peace Officer Standard and Training (POST) Basic Police Academy certificate, advanced officer training for local agencies, and fire programs. The Fire Program encompasses courses associated with the firefighter academy, the Certificate and Associate of Science Fire Programs, along with advanced firefighter training. Additionally, a paramedic program is underway and is slated to start in Summer 2024. Two other CTE programs housed at the Hanford campus are the Industrial Maintenance program and the Electrician Training program, working in tandem with the programs offered at the COS Tulare campus. In addition to these signature CTE programs, the Hanford campus also offers a variety of general education courses.

Tulare College Center

Prior to establishing a campus in Tulare, which is located eight miles from the Visalia Campus, the District

worked on enhancing student access by offering courses in local high schools and community centers. In 1998, the District purchased a 500-acre site in Tulare to house the Center for Agriculture Science and Technology and provide general education courses in a closer proximity to the residents of southern Tulare County.

The Tulare College Center opened in January 2013. Currently, the facility includes over 90,000 square feet of classrooms for general education courses as well as several signature CTE programs related to agriculture, architecture, industrial maintenance, and electrician training, laboratory space with a 12,000 square foot welding and construction shop, and extensive equine, livestock, farm, and horticulture facilities. These laboratories provide students with unique opportunities for hands-on experience related to their chosen program. In Spring 2023, the Tulare Center hosted a groundbreaking for the new Applied Technology and Skill Trades buildings. The 36,000 square foot complex will include three new buildings that adjoin the current Welding Technology building. It also will include a two-acre outdoor education area for teaching projects, student events, and industry partner activities for all District CTE programs. This complex is slated to open in Fall 2024.

Offsite Locations

Beyond the three primary campuses, the District extends its reach by offering classes at various offsite locations, primarily for its Dual Enrollment and English as a Second Language Programs. Generally, high schools and other community centers are chosen to provide higher education opportunities to residents living in less-heavily populated areas of the district, such as Lindsay, Farmersville, Oroshi, Exeter, Corcoran, and Woodlake.

Students attending these off-site locations are supported through student support services located at each of the three campuses, depending on the proximity of the off-campus site.

Other Contextual Background

Population Growth

The California Department of Finance projects that the population of both Tulare and Kings County, which comprise 99% of the District's service area, will grow over the next decade. Tulare County, with 480,788 residents in 2020, is projected to reach 535,463 residents by 2035. Kings County, with 154,745 residents in 2020, is projected to reach 171,517 residents by 2035. ⁹

The Economy

As of August 2023, California's unemployment rate stood at 4.6% which is only slightly higher than the national unemployment rate of 3.8%. The unemployment rate of Kings and Tulare counties remains much higher at 7.7% and 9.8% respectively. ¹⁰

In early 2023, 31.1% of residents living in California were poor or nearly poor. This is up from 28.7% in fall 2021. Without safety net programs such as CalFresh, the Federal Earned Income Tax Credit, the Federal Child Tax Credit, federal housing subsidies and Supplemental Security Income, an additional 8.4% of Californians would have been classified as living in poverty. Although safety net programs reduce poverty

in most inland areas, if removed, poverty would be 14.4% higher in the Central Valley and Sierra regions.¹¹

California Community College System

As part of the California Community College System, the Sequoias Community College District must follow statewide mandates and programs. As such, faculty, staff, and administrators have worked diligently to tie the local plans to the following statewide requirements for our 2025-2035 College of the Sequoias Master Plan.

Vision For Success

In 2017, the California Community Colleges Board of Governors adopted the Vision for Success¹², and set forth the following goals:

- Increase by at least 20% the number of CCC students annually who acquire associate degrees, credentials, certificates, or specific job skill sets that prepare them for in-demand jobs by 2021-22.
- Increase by 35% the number of CCC students transferring annually to a UC or CSU by 2021-22.
- Decrease the number of units accumulated by CCC students earning associate degrees, from an average of approximately 87 total units to an average of 79 total units by 2021-22.
- Increase the percent of exiting CTE students who report being employed in their field of study, from the most recent statewide average of 69% to 76% by 2021-22.
- Reduce equity gaps across all the above measures through faster improvements among traditionally underrepresented student groups, with the goal of cutting achievement gaps by 40 percent by 2021-22 and fully closing those achievement gaps for good by 2026-27.
- Reduce regional achievement gaps across all of the above measures through faster improvements among colleges located in regions with the lowest educational attainment of adults, with the goal of fully closing those achievement gaps for good by 2026-27.

At the time Vision for Success goals were set up, no one imagined the major disruptions and setbacks that students and colleges would face with the pandemic, with greatest impact on communities of color and low-income populations. In addition, societal damage affected communities from highly visible police killings, social unrest, and deepened social divides.

In July 2021, the Vision for Success was reaffirmed and stressed equity in a time of recovery¹³. The following Commitments were established:

- Focus relentlessly on students' end goals.
- Always design and decide with the student in mind.
- Pair high expectations with high support.
- Take ownership of goals and performance.
- Enable action and thoughtful innovation.

- Lead the work of partnering across systems.

Because community colleges are accessible and personal institutions, they can help students on an individual level to regain their hopes and rebuild their futures.

Student-Centered Funding Formula

One crucial component of the Vision for Success involves a shift in the funding model to the Student-Centered Funding Formula¹⁴. This formula prioritizes the funding of community colleges, tying it, at least partially, to students' achievements in the academic setting. The formula comprises three key elements:

- Base Allocation (70%): Primarily determined by enrollment figures.
- Supplemental Allocation (20%): Based on the count of students benefiting from a College Promise Grant, those receiving a Pell Grant, and students covered by AB 540.
- Student Success Allocation (10%): Tied to various outcomes, including but not limited to the number of students earning associate degrees and credit certificates, the quantity of students transferring to four-year colleges and universities, the number completing transfer-level math and English within their first year, and those finishing nine or more career education units.

Guided Pathways

Another integral part of the CCC's Vision for Success was the implementation of Guided Pathways¹⁵. While it has been changed since its start, The Guided Pathways framework is still the same. It creates a highly structured approach to student success that provides all students with a set of clear course-taking patterns that promotes better enrollment decisions and prepares students for future success in their academics and career in a timely manner.

- Clarify the Path – Create clear curricular pathways to employment and further education.
- Enter the path – Help students choose and enter their pathway.
- Stay on the Path – Help students stay on their path.
- Ensure Learning – Ensure that learning is happening with intentional outcomes.

The Pandemic: COVID 19

In March 2020, all California Community Colleges moved to online learning in days. Just as challenging was shifting to online academic counseling, library services, financial aid, tutoring, and other student support services. In addition, colleges were called upon to administer and coordinate new funding associated with the federal stimulus packages. Many colleges repurposed existing resources to meet the needs of students in acute financial distress during the pandemic. This included loaning technology (laptops and hotspots) to students and assisting them with housing and food insecurity and other support.

The effects of COVID-19 on transfer-intending students enrolled in California Community Colleges have been evident during these unprecedented times. Statewide, there was an enrollment decline of 152,332 students (20%) from Fall 2019 to Fall 2021. In addition, for first-time and continuing students, persistence

and course completion were affected negatively.¹⁶ Locally, College of the Sequoias rebounded in enrollment better than most.

Multi-Year Roadmap Between the Newsom Administration and the California Community Colleges

Included in the 2022-23 California State Budget, the Governor's Office and the California Community College system mutually agreed to prioritize advancing shared goals over the next five-year term. This is described in the Multiyear Roadmap Between the Newsom Administration and the California Community Colleges. Aligned with the Vision for Success and Guided Pathways, the Roadmap details the role of California Community Colleges in meeting and supporting the Governor's goal of 70% of California working-age adults earning postsecondary degrees or certificates by 2030.¹⁷

Vision 2030

In 2023, when Dr. Sonja Christian was appointed as the new California Community College Chancellor, Vision 2030 was launched¹⁸. It is a framework for bold and thoughtful action in policy reform, fiscal sustainability, systems development and for process and practice reform in the field. The framework has been guided by Vision for Success (2017), the governor's "Multi-Year Roadmap" (2022), and current issues and future considerations.

This work is designed to advance student success, access, support and socio-economic mobility with equity, and includes the following areas:

- People — Active partnership with people in the field to guide practice and provide data, technical assistance and needed support.
- Systems — Systems Development to remove barriers at scale. Examples: data systems and common ERP, common course numbering and intersegmental learning management.
- Resources — Lead state, federal and philanthropic development to support fiscal sustainability and maximize local resources.
- Policy — Identify and advance policy reform across state, federal, Title V and local district policies to unlock potential.

AB 705 and AB 1705

In Fall 2018, the California Community College system began implementing AB 705, ensuring that most students started in transfer-level math and English, rather than a developmental education sequence. Locally, these changes in placement procedures needed to be implemented by Fall 2019. Since implementing AB 705, statewide far fewer students had to repeat math coursework already completed in high school—moving from 78% to 47%. In addition, over 80% of minoritized students were placed into transfer-level math at their community college.

Research showed that AB 705's implementation across colleges was inconsistent, especially in Math. In Fall 2022, AB 1705 was signed and expanded AB 705 by further requiring community colleges not only to place students directly into transfer-level English and math courses, but also ensure that students enroll in those courses. In addition, the new law clarifies that a community college can require students to enroll in additional concurrent support if it is determined that the support will increase the student's likelihood of passing transfer-level English or math.¹⁹

Bachelor's Degrees Awarded by Community Colleges

A 2021 California law allows California community colleges to offer some bachelor's degree programs. The hope is to alleviate the student loan debt for future students and make bachelor's degrees more available to residents, both in terms of location and cost. The law allows 30 community college bachelor's programs to start each year²⁰.

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Cal-GETC

The California General Education Transfer Curriculum (Cal-GETC) serves as a unified general education route designed for California Community College students to satisfy lower-division general education prerequisites essential for successful transfer and admission to both the California State University (CSU) and the University of California (UC). The foundation of California's three-tiered higher education system has long been the facilitation of transfer, a principle established since the formulation of the 1960 Master Plan for Higher Education.

Historically, Community College students could utilize the CSU General Education Breadth pattern (CSU GE) for meeting lower-division general education requirements when transferring to the CSU, while the IGETC pattern was employed for those transferring to a University of California (UC) campus.

In a bid to alleviate confusion arising from the disparities in standards among lower-division General Education transfer pathways, AB 928 (Berman, 2021) mandates the creation of a unified lower-division general education pathway that satisfies academic requirements for transfer admission to both the CSU and the UC.

Consequently, the implementation of the Cal-GETC transfer pathway is set to commence in Fall 2025. Under Cal-GETC, each student will be categorized as having either achieved or not achieved Cal-GETC certification, regardless of their chosen transfer destination. Transfer students with catalog rights can retain their use of the grandfathered CSU GE or IGETC pattern, as permitted by the transfer institution.²²

In closing, this first chapter of the COS Master Plan sets the stage for understanding the historical, geographical, and educational contexts that shape the College of the Sequoias and the broader Sequoias Community College District. From its humble beginnings as Visalia Junior College in 1926 to its current status as a key provider of higher education in the San Joaquin Valley, COS has demonstrated a continuous commitment to expanding access and opportunities for its diverse student body. As the District navigates future challenges and opportunities, it remains anchored in its mission to serve the educational needs of its communities while adapting to evolving economic and demographic trends. The foundations laid out in this chapter provide a comprehensive backdrop that will inform and guide the strategic initiatives and goals outlined in the subsequent chapters of this Master Plan.

Endnotes

¹ USGS, "California's Central Valley": <https://ca.water.usgs.gov/projects/central-valley/about-central-valley.html>

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- ² Public Policy Institute of California Policy Brief, “The Future of Agriculture in the San Joaquin Valley”:
<https://www.ppic.org/publication/policy-brief-the-future-of-agriculture-in-the-san-joaquin-valley/>
- ³ US Census Bureau: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/visaliacitycalifornia> (July 1, 2022—V2022); See Vintage Year (final year of the series) info, as estimates may fluctuate).
- ⁴ US Census Bureau: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/hanfordcitycalifornia> (July 1, 2022—V2022): See Vintage Year (final year of the series) info, as estimates may fluctuate).
- ⁵ US Census Bureau: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fresnocountycalifornia> (July 1, 2023—V2023); See Vintage Year (final year of the series) info, as estimates may fluctuate).
- ⁶ California Community College Chancellor’s Office Data Mart Annual Student Count Reports:
https://datamart.cccco.edu/Students/Student_Headcount_Term_Annual.aspx (Data update is as of October 2022)
- ⁷ <https://tularecoelections.org/elections/registrar-of-voters/current-election-information/november-8-2022-general-election/local-measures-information/college-of-the-sequoias-bond-measure-c/>
- ⁸ <https://www.treasurer.ca.gov/cdiac/reports/elections/112006.pdf>
- ⁹ California Department of Finance Projections P2A spreadsheet:
<https://dof.ca.gov/forecasting/demographics/projections/> The regional population demographic estimates and projections used in this document were sourced from the State of California Department of Finance website in May 2023 (P-3: Complete State and County Projections Dataset). Please be aware that these estimates and projections are subject to change as the Department of Finance updates its data. The COS Giant Factbook annually updates service area demographic data, including population estimates and projections.
- ¹⁰ Bureau of Labor Statistics Local Area Unemployment Statistics County data file:
<https://www.bls.gov/lau/tables.htm#mcounty>
- ¹¹ Public Policy Institute of California Fact Sheet, “Poverty in California”:
<https://www.ppic.org/publication/poverty-in-california/>
- ¹² California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office (pdf): <https://www.cccco.edu/-/media/CCCCO-Website/docs/executive-summary/vision-for-success.pdf>
- ¹³ California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office (pdf): <https://www.cccco.edu/-/media/CCCCO-Website/docs/report/vision-for-success-update-2021-a11y.pdf>
- ¹⁴ <https://www.cccco.edu/About-Us/Chancellors-Office/Divisions/College-Finance-and-Facilities-Planning/Student-Centered-Funding-Formula>
- ¹⁵ <https://www.cccco.edu/College-Professionals/Guided-Pathways>
- ¹⁶ Public Policy Institute of California report, “The Effects of COVID-19 on Transfer-Intending Students in California’s Community Colleges”:
<https://www.ppic.org/publication/the-effects-of-covid-19-on-transfer-intending-students-in-californias-community-colleges/>
- ¹⁷ <https://dof.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/352/Programs/Education/CCC-Roadmap-May-2022.pdf>
- ¹⁸ <https://www.cccco.edu/About-Us/Vision-2030>
- ¹⁹ <https://www.cccco.edu/About-Us/Chancellors-Office/Divisions/Educational-Services-and-Support/equitable-placement>
- ²⁰ <https://www.cccco.edu/About-Us/Chancellors-Office/Divisions/Educational-Services-and-Support/What-we-do/Curriculum-and-Instruction-Unit/Curriculum/Baccalaureate-Degree-Program>
- ²¹ <https://www.cccco.edu/About-Us/Chancellors-Office/Divisions/Educational-Services-and-Support/What-we-do/Curriculum-and-Instruction-Unit/Curriculum/Baccalaureate-Degree-Program>
- ²² <https://icas-ca.org/cal-getc/>