

# Iowa State Board of Education

## Executive Summary

May 9, 2024



- Agenda Item:** Iowa Valley Community College District Interim Accreditation Report
- State Board Priority:** Postsecondary Success
- State Board Role/Authority:** Iowa Code section 260C.47(3) grants authority to the State Board of Education to determine whether the programs of a community college shall remain accredited.
- Presenter(s):** Amy Gieseke, Section Chief  
Bureau of Community Colleges and Postsecondary Readiness
- Anne Howsare Boyens, President  
Iowa Valley Community College District
- Barb Kline, Provost of Ellsworth Community College  
Iowa Valley Community College District
- Attachment(s):** One
- Recommendation:** It is recommended that the State Board grant continued accreditation for Iowa Valley Community College District (IVCCD). A state comprehensive visit will be conducted in academic year 2028-2029.
- Background:** Attached is a report of the evaluation of IVCCD for continued state accreditation as an associate degree-

granting institution. The Iowa Department of Education conducted the interview portion of the evaluation on October 18-19, 2023. This report reflects the review team's observations and determinations made during IVCCD's interim visit. As mandated by Iowa Code section 260C.47, the accreditation team, including two external peer reviewers, assessed IVCCD's compliance with eight Iowa State Accreditation Standards via a structured process of document review and interviews. The team also reviewed the most recent Higher Learning Commission (HLC) institutional accreditation report to ensure that any findings have been addressed. Iowa's process has been designed to complement rather than duplicate the HLC accreditation process.



# Accreditation Report Interim State Evaluation

Iowa Valley Community College  
District

**October 18-19, 2023—Fiscal Year 2024**



Department of Education

## Accreditation Team Members

### Iowa Valley Community College District

### Interim Accreditation Evaluation

### Fiscal Year 24 (Academic Year 2023-2024)

Amy Gieseke  
Section Chief  
Bureau of Community Colleges and Postsecondary Readiness  
Iowa Department of Education  
Des Moines, Iowa

Heather Meissen  
Education Program Consultant  
Bureau of Community Colleges and Postsecondary  
Readiness  
Iowa Department of Education  
Des Moines, Iowa

Joe Collins  
Education Program Consultant  
Bureau of Community Colleges and Postsecondary  
Readiness  
Iowa Department of Education  
Des Moines, Iowa

Jennifer Cunningham  
Dean of Arts and Humanities  
Kirkwood Community College  
Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Lora Vargason  
Administrative Consultant  
Bureau of Community Colleges and Postsecondary  
Readiness  
Iowa Department of Education  
Des Moines, Iowa

Kelly Friesleben  
Education Program Consultant  
Bureau of Community Colleges and Postsecondary  
Readiness  
Iowa Department of Education  
Des Moines, Iowa

Ann Laneville  
English/Communications Instructor  
Hawkeye Community College  
Waterloo, Iowa

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# Iowa Valley Community College District (IVCCD)

## Interim Accreditation Evaluation

Fiscal Year 2024

Conducted October 18-19, 2023

## Purpose of the Evaluation

The purpose of this review was a scheduled interim accreditation evaluation of Iowa Valley Community College District (IVCCD) by the Iowa Department of Education (Department), as mandated by Iowa Code section 260C.47.

## Institutional Overview

### College History<sup>1</sup>

IVCCD was organized in 1966 as one of 15 community college districts in Iowa. The district operates Ellsworth Community College (ECC) in Iowa Falls (founded in 1890), Marshalltown Community College (MCC) in Marshalltown (founded in 1927), Iowa Valley Business and Community Solutions (BCS) as well as Iowa Valley Grinnell (a satellite center established in 1993).

In January 1967, IVCCD's administrative offices opened at 19 South Center Street in Marshalltown. Marshalltown Junior College (MJC) and Adult Education became part of the district in 1967, followed in 1968 by Ellsworth Junior College (EJC) in Iowa Falls. In keeping with the previously-established missions of MJC and EJC, IVCCD became a comprehensive, multi-college organization, with enrollment centers at MCC, ECC, BCS and Iowa Valley Grinnell. In early 1969, the district administration office moved to 22 West Main Street in Marshalltown, where it remained until moving in 1983 to its current site at 3702 South Center Street, on the southwest corner of the MCC campus.

Voters residing in the IVCCD service area approved a \$7.5 million bond issue in 1989 for construction of ECC's Gentle Student Center and classroom expansions; MCC's B.J. Harrison Library, bookstore and renovations of the student union and Student Success Center; BCS's Conference Center and installation of the Iowa Communications Network fiber optic telecommunications system.

Seventeen years later, in 2006, area voters approved a much larger \$35 million bond issue for construction of ECC's Agriculture & Renewable Energy Center, Equestrian Center and Dale Howard Family Activity Center; MCC's Student Activity Center and Welding/Business and Technology Center; expansion of Iowa Valley Grinnell and technological upgrades and facility improvements districtwide. The 2006 bond issue also provided funding for the securing, renovation and revitalization of the Orpheum Theater Center at 220 E. Main Street in Marshalltown. This project received further funding from an Iowa Community Attraction and Tourism grant, and donations from supportive businesses and individuals.

In 2019, voters across 10 counties approved a \$32 million bond referendum, injecting crucial funds into IVCCD for various projects. These funds are strategically utilized to enhance safety, security and sustainability across the college communities. The bond supports improved learning and living spaces, enhanced safety and security measures, updated technology and vital infrastructure upgrades. Each enhancement is thoughtfully designed, with student experience at the forefront.

### Institutional Profile<sup>2</sup>

IVCCD, which serves more than 97,500 residents within its geographic boundaries, is a public, open-door institution operating ECC and MCC, which offer one-year and two-year career and technical programs, as well as a transferable

associate of arts (AA) and associate of science (AS) degrees. As such, Iowa Valley is one of only two Iowa community college districts operating multiple degree-granting institutions. Both ECC and MCC provide a wide array of student activities and athletic programs, in addition to their academic programs. The district also operates BCS, which offers training for business and industry, as well as adult education programs and services throughout the Central Iowa service area. In addition, Iowa Valley Grinnell offers both college credit and adult education programs and services in Poweshiek County. The IVCCD units share a common board of directors and president, as well as support functions that include business services, human resources, institutional research, information technology and marketing services.

ECC and MCC offer two types of academic degree programs: career and technical, and transfer. Career and technical programs, through which students earn certificates, diplomas, associate of applied science (AAS) or associate of professional studies (APS) degrees, teach specialized vocational and technical skills that prepare students for employment directly after graduation. Transfer programs award AA or AS degrees, which are intended for transfer to a baccalaureate-granting institution. Based on 2022 profile data, IVCCD ranked eighth in Iowa for transfer rates, and eleventh in success rates (i.e., percentage of students who graduated or transferred within three years). Although IVCCD ranks twelfth out of Iowa's 15 community colleges and districts in enrollment, it ranks fifth in credit awards granted. Belying comparatively low overall enrollment numbers, IVCCD ranks sixth in joint enrollment, and first in distance learning enrollment.

### Visit Overview

Staff from the Department's Bureau of Community Colleges and Postsecondary Readiness performed an interim accreditation review and site visit of IVCCD on October 18-19, 2023. During the visit, the accreditation team was overall impressed with IVCCD. It was apparent that IVCCD staff and faculty pride themselves on having a strong focus on student success. Many staff members have been with the college for a long time, and it is clear ECC and MCC are working together to collaborate and operate as one cohesive unit. Over the past few years, there has been a significant effort to improve assessment across campuses, as evidenced by the mapping of learning outcomes and the implementation of faculty learning communities, which bring together three to eight faculty members across the district for peer feedback purposes. Additionally, IVCCD's administrators have enhanced efforts to hear the needs of faculty and respond to those needs.

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<sup>1</sup>Information for this section was primarily obtained from: <https://www.iavalley.edu/about-the-district/>

<sup>2</sup>Information for this section was obtained from the IVCCD website and from the 2022 IVCCD Community College Profile Report.

# Assurance Summary State Standards

IVCCD's previous interim accreditation report from Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 required the college to follow up on findings in two areas. First, the Department found at its comprehensive visit that three instructors did not meet state minimum faculty standards for some of the courses taught in FY18. In the area of special needs, the Department noted that the nondiscrimination statement was not prominent, complete and/or consistent. The FY24 review team noted similar concerns during its interim review, again documenting findings in the areas of both faculty qualifications and special needs.

## Compliance with Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Criteria

The Department's accreditation team reviewed the most recent HLC report and information available at the time of this evaluation. IVCCD's most recent HLC accreditation letter provided adequate evidence that the college has continuing regional accreditation with no issues, concerns or findings documented. HLC has accredited IVCCD through 2024-25, with the next comprehensive evaluation visit scheduled for November 4, 2024. In preparation for this upcoming HLC visit, IVCCD has begun updating and gathering evidence for their assurance argument, and reviewing regulations for the federal compliance review component of the visit.

In the most recent HLC report, core components 4A and 4B were met with concerns. The HLC report stated IVCCD's program review process was inconsistent. It also noted that with too few student assessment results, the college could not adequately demonstrate whether its curricular and co-curricular programs had successfully improved student performance. Because of these issues, HLC required IVCCD to submit an interim report by December, 2021 demonstrating three key improvements. First, that the college had effectively implemented its newly-revised program review process, with evidence that the process leads to continuous program improvement. Second, that IVCCD had effectively implemented its newly-revised student learning assessment process, with evidence that assessment activity results were used to improve student learning in both career and technical education (CTE), and transfer programs. Finally, HLC required the college to show it had effectively implemented assessment of student learning in co-curricular programs, with evidence that data obtained from assessment activities was used to improve student learning. The HLC team that reviewed IVCCD's interim report concluded the college has continued to make substantial progress in the areas of assessment, program review and continuous quality improvement. It also noted that the college was able to make this substantial progress despite the challenges that higher education faced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

During its FY24 visit, the Department accreditation team saw evidence that IVCCD has continued to do work in the areas of assessment and program review. Examples of this work include reviewing the college's course and program learning outcomes, developing general education learning outcomes and developing co-curricular outcomes and projects for various co-curricular groups. IVCCD is also using Weave software to collect student assessment data and develop rubrics to measure outcomes. The college's new faculty learning communities enhance discussions and allow faculty members to review programs and action plans and to analyze program review data to support program changes. Additionally, IVCCD is a recent graduate of the HLC Assessment Academy, during which college staff invested significant time and resources into improving assessment at IVCCD.

## Faculty Qualifications

All community college-employed instructors who are under contract as of July 1, 2011, and teach CTE or arts and sciences (including adjuncts), must meet minimum faculty standards (Iowa Code section 260C.48). The Department accreditation team provided IVCCD a random list of 20 faculty members who taught credit courses in the previous year. IVCCD then produced personnel files for those faculty regarding qualifications, including supporting documentation such as college transcripts, employment applications to illustrate related work experience and third-party licensure/certification, if applicable. Members of the Department team examined the files to determine whether the qualifications of each faculty member complied with current Iowa Code faculty standards for the courses they taught during AY 22-23 (i.e., fall 2022 and spring 2023).

Following a thorough review of the 20 randomly-selected faculty personnel files, members of the Department team met with the provost of MCC (chief academic officer); academic deans from MCC, ECC and the Grinnell Campus; vice president of administration and the associate director of human resources to learn about the college's faculty qualification review process and to discuss a few concerns raised during the desk review. The majority of files showed IVCCD utilized the faculty qualification review process and materials distributed by the statewide Faculty Standards Council in an effort to establish statewide consistency and compliance with HLC and Iowa criteria. It is **recommended** that IVCCD better document on its faculty qualification form whether or not the courses an instructor is qualified to teach are *applied* arts and sciences courses. The college may also want to consider exploring the functionality of their student information system (SIS), which would prevent faculty members from being assigned to course prefixes for which they have not been qualified by the institution.

**Finding:** During the review of faculty files and site visit, the team noted the following issues related to faculty qualifications:

- Iowa Administrative Code 281 chapter 24.5(1) states that instructors in the area of arts and sciences shall have completed a minimum of 18 graduate semester hours in a combination of the qualified fields identified as related to the field of instruction and that these 18 graduate semester hours must include at least six credits of the specific course content being taught. While the majority of faculty members reviewed by the Department's team were well-qualified for the courses being taught, four faculty members teaching in the ART, BIO, MAT and CON prefixes were not adequately qualified, or did not have the proper documentation demonstrating they were qualified.

If the college would like to continue using these faculty members to teach these prefix courses, **IVCCD should within six months provide evidence to the Department demonstrating how these faculty are qualified for the prefixes being taught.**

- The Department team also noted that several faculty files were missing documentation, such as transcripts, rationale and/or evidence of qualifications. For instructors with a master's degree in a discipline other than the one they are teaching, there was little documentation showing where the appropriate graduate credit hours were coming from on the transcript. It was also evident the college was not using the faculty qualifications chart in "The Iowa Community Colleges Faculty Qualifications Guide" document appropriately. The college may want to consider a more centralized approach to qualifying faculty to ensure more consistency in the faculty qualifications process.

To address this finding, **the Department team will be reviewing 20 randomly selected files in six months to verify that qualification documentation is adequate and consistent. The Department team will also review IVCCD's process for qualifying faculty to confirm that adequate procedures are in place to support the institution in consistently and thoroughly qualifying faculty.**

## Faculty Teaching Load

The teaching loads of full-time instructors must not exceed the faculty load limits set forth in Iowa Code. This is the case for CTE instructors, as well as for arts and sciences instructors (Iowa Code section 260C.48). To check compliance with this standard, the Department team reviewed the instructional loads of a random sample of 20 faculty members for whom IVCCD provided documentation of their AY 22-23 teaching loads. A discussion with the provost of MCC (chief academic officer); academic deans from MCC, ECC and the Grinnell Campus; vice president of administration and the associate director of human resources about load processes clarified the steps the college takes to load both arts and science and CTE faculty.

IVCCD provided adequate documentation of the teaching loads of the faculty under review. Although some of the calculations had to be explained to the Department team, the documentation and explanation provided demonstrated that instructional loads were compliant. During the on-site visit, college staff noted that when a course does not enroll a minimum of eight students, faculty have the right to refuse it, or to accept it at an independent study rate. This indicates that independent study sections can have up to seven students in them, which defeats the purpose of the course being



“independent study.” Based on this and other observations from the review, the Department **recommends** the following:

- Review the credit cap for independent study courses and subsequent calculations.
- Formalize the mutual consent process used when faculty accept an overload assignment.
- Consider reducing the instructional loads of first-year instructors whose course preparations and in-service training demand a reduction, as stated in Iowa Code section 260.36(3).

**Finding:** No compliance issues were noted during the evaluation.

## Special Needs

Community colleges shall provide equal access to the full range of program offerings and services including, but not limited to, recruitment, enrollment and placement activities for students with special education needs or protected by state or federal civil rights regulation. Students with disabilities shall be given access to the full range of program offerings at a college through reasonable accommodations (Iowa Administrative Code 281 Chapter 24.5(3)), with information regarding how to access such accommodations provided in a disability statement. In addition, community colleges shall have nondiscrimination statements ensuring access to educational programs and employment for state and federally protected classes. This nondiscrimination statement must list all state and federally protected classes; provide the name/title and contact information of the person(s) designated to coordinate equity, Title IX and Section 504 compliance and provide contact information for the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) in Chicago, Illinois. The nondiscrimination and disability statements may be separate or the college may choose to combine them.

The Department team conducted a desk review prior to the on-site visit, in which they reviewed IVCCD’s Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and nondiscrimination policies, statements and practices in marketing and recruitment publications, handbooks, the college catalog, the college website and sample course syllabi. During the on-site visit, the team reviewed additional documentation and interviewed faculty, students and staff associated with disabilities services, to ensure compliance with this standard.

During the on-site visit, the Department team saw evidence of numerous college-wide efforts to create a welcoming environment for all students, provide accommodations for students with special needs and provide opportunities for underrepresented students in particular programs of study. Some of these observed efforts include:

- IVCCD has centralized student support, such as academic support services (“The Hub”), the “Hall of Care”, Behavioral Intervention Team (BIT), the Proactive Intervention Team (PIT) and an early alert system that helps connect students with resources and advisors. Students are aware of, and use, student support and accommodations services. They also spoke highly of “The Hub”, TRIO student outreach services and features such as the relaxation room, lactation room and multipurpose room.
- Reports disaggregated by student demographics are provided to admissions and recruitment staff to aid in the building of their enrollment plan.
- There is a comprehensive Title IX and grievance/complaint policy. Each campus has a dedicated Title IX coordinator, with a fourth coordinator dedicated to employees. IVCCD also has a strong system in place to meet Title IX requirements for investigators and decision makers to include training and student support.
- IVCCD’s Integrated Education and Training (IET) program teaches adult literacy and offers workforce-related activities. The Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) program covers basic English language acquisition skills, and teaches workforce ready skills.
- The college does a nice job serving underrepresented and Hispanic students, as evidenced by the Hall of Care, advisors and student tutors who speak multiple languages, a dedicated international advisor, support for English as a Second Language (ESL) students, translation of admissions documents into Spanish, MANGO software that assists with translation and scholarships for undocumented students.
- There are numerous diversity initiatives and programs such as the Marshalltown Education Partnership, Better Futures, Panther Partners, First Generation Friday, Ellsworth without Borders and the Panther Pantry.

- There are multiple ways of placing students in courses, and the college utilizes a co-requisite model for math courses, which occurs when a student takes a developmental math course at the same time as a non-developmental math course, stemming from a recommendation made in the most recent HLC report.
- The college’s Student Assistance Program and partnership with ACHIEVE Mental Health treatment center provide mental health resources for students.
- The inclusion of competencies and standards (outcomes) in the course syllabus, and the classroom assessments that are used to measure these standards, demonstrate transparency in what students are supposed to be learning, and how that learning will be measured.
- Students reported feeling safe on campus, and that the college feels like a nice, small community where they know everyone. Students also said faculty and staff are approachable, accessible and willing to help and accommodate students. Faculty confirmed this by discussing how they adjust course schedules to meet the needs of students, if necessary.

The Department accreditation team applauds IVCCD’s commitment to the success of all students. During the desk review and site visit, the team noticed the nondiscrimination statement was not in a prominent location in the student handbook. Therefore, the Department team **recommends** the following:

- Ensure the nondiscrimination statement is in a prominent location, similar to where it is in the faculty handbook. Currently, the statement is not listed in the student handbook until page 31, but is on page four in the faculty handbook.
- Discontinue use of the shortened version of the nondiscrimination statement, to ensure the continuous nondiscrimination statement contains all required elements.

**Finding:** The annual and continuous nondiscrimination statements must be prominent, complete and consistent on the college’s website and in major publications. Although the Department saw some improvement in this area since the last accreditation visit, with the statement included in most required locations, the team did notice instances of non-compliance:

- Continuous statement: During the desk review and site visit, the Department team noted the continuous nondiscrimination statement was either missing or not consistent on the college’s website, major publications and student recruiting materials. For example, the statement was missing from the printed sheet listing the Last Dollar Scholarship programs, from the concurrent enrollment and foundation donor contracts, the “IVCCD Faculty Professional Development Plan” (quality faculty plan) and the strategic plan. The team also noted wording discrepancies in the continuous statement across various documents, including course syllabi, during the visit. The college’s recent move to a syllabus template in fall 2023 should help alleviate discrepancies among course syllabi, if implemented with consistency and fidelity across the district.
- Annual statement: The Department team also noted the annual statement of nondiscrimination was missing components, including the Title IX coordinator’s name, titles and contact information; links to specific program admission criteria and (given the demographics of students served by IVCCD) a statement that lack of English language proficiency will not be a barrier to admission and participation in CTE programs.

To address this finding, **the Department team will review the continuous and annual nondiscrimination statements again in six months to ensure both statements are present, consistent and contain the appropriate information.**

### CTE Program Evaluation and Review

There are a variety of state standards related to offering CTE programs, which are included in Iowa Code section 258 and Iowa Administrative Code 281 chapter 46.7(4) and chapter 24.5(4). These standards include numerous requirements related to program and award length, program content, labor market demand, articulation, advisory committees and more. All CTE programs (including new programs and changes to existing ones) must be approved by the Department. Standards for CTE programs are included in “Program Approval: Guidelines for Iowa Community Colleges” and in the “State Accreditation Guide” on the Department’s website. Community colleges are required to review at least 20 percent of their CTE programs annually, using the standards provided in the aforementioned program approval guidelines. The Department team reviewed IVCCD’s CTE program review process, schedule and a random sample of

recent CTE program reviews, to ensure compliance with state standards. For standards regarding program advisory committees' composition, roles and responsibilities, the Department team reviewed a random sample of CTE advisory committee membership lists and meeting minutes to ensure compliance.

Based on the program review documents submitted for the desk review, IVCCD follows a three-year cycle for its program review and evaluation (PRES) process, including liberal arts and sciences. This cycle is more frequent than the five-year review cycle mandated by Iowa Administrative Code. IVCCD's program review process includes the use of Weave software to collect and disseminate program review data. Faculty members involved in program review are trained during the annual fall faculty workshop, and via other meetings throughout the academic year. Under IVCCD's processes, program faculty members must do a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis of their programs' curricular strengths, critical issues and opportunities for improvement. They must also analyze existing articulations with secondary and postsecondary institutions. In addition, program review documentation asks faculty members to analyze the current job market, and discuss how the program responds to changes in the fields for which students are being trained; summarize minutes from advisory committee meetings and detail actions taken and summarize the program's responsiveness to community needs, strengths and opportunities for improvement. Faculty members share the results of the previous year's program review at the fall faculty workshop, demonstrating that IVCCD is closing the loop on the program review process.

The Department team was impressed with the additional following practices related to program review at IVCCD:

- The college incorporates the assessment of student learning into its program review process. This is evidenced by the mapping of course-level student learning outcomes (CSLOs) to program-level student learning outcomes (PSLOs). Additionally, faculty members indicate whether the PSLO is "introduced," "reinforced" or "mastered," in the course, which is a good assessment practice.
- Program faculty members set action plans and goals during the program review process.
- The program review process is data-driven, and the data is disaggregated by different demographic groups. Examples include annual enrollment data, number of awards granted within programs, analysis of grades within the courses in the specific department, occupational data, retention data, graduate survey data and education outcomes from the Department. Programs also use feedback from advisory committees, employers/employees and former students to improve programs.
- During the process, program faculty are asked to assess recruitment strategies and initiatives used to balance traditionally-aged, non-traditionally-aged, non-traditionally-gendered, racial/ethnic minority and full-time/part-time students into programs. As a part of this process, faculty members also assess recruitment and initiatives aimed at creating a better gender balance across programs that have traditionally been male- or female-dominated. The college uses events like Women in Trades Day, college and career transition counselors (CCTCs) and job fairs to recruit underrepresented genders into programs.
- One component of the program review process includes the completion of a peer feedback rubric. If a program receives low scores, the district Academic Assessment Committee, which includes both faculty and staff representatives, examines the rubric and works with the program to improve based on feedback from the rubric.
- Faculty learning communities provide an opportunity for faculty members to discuss program review and action plans across disciplines.
- The program review process is tied to the institution's budget. Budget requests for equipment are vetted through a series of questions to determine need and alignment with the program plan and the overall college strategic plan.
- IVCCD connects the program review process to its mission, vision and values.

To continue improving the program review process, the Department accreditation team **recommends** the following:

- Include questions in the program review materials asking faculty members to assess the following: how program costs are proportionate to educational benefits received; how the CTE curriculum is articulated and integrated with the total school curriculum and other educational offerings; how the program removes access barriers to education and employment and how the program engages with the business community to recruit advisory

committee members. Consider aligning questions in the program review process documents with specific standards outlined in Iowa Code section 258.4(7), and Iowa Administrative Code 281 chapter 46.6(4).

- Map PSLOs to general education learning outcomes and/or to institutional-level student learning outcomes.
- Require the use of an advisory committee meeting template at all committee meetings to ensure robust, meaningful discussions around new programs and program changes.
- Ensure advisory committees are meeting twice a year. Continue to make efforts to recruit diverse advisory committee members.
- Explore ways to incorporate additional industry-recognized credentials or certifications into the CTE curriculum, activities and career and technical student organizations (CTSOs).

**Finding:** No compliance issues were noted during the evaluation.

## STICS Curriculum Review

The Department utilizes a web-based platform (State of Iowa Curriculum System, or STICS) for its program approval process, and maintains a database of approved programs and courses. This platform performs compliance checks on all programs offered by each college. The Department program quality consultant reviewed this compliance check for IVCCD's programs to ensure compliance with the state program standards. Additionally, the consultant conducted a manual comparison of IVCCD's approved academic programs in the state's database, with those provided in their college catalog.

There were only a few instances where awards were out of compliance in regards to technical core or general education credits, but there were several cases where the college catalog was not aligned with STICS. Most of the alignment issues centered around the credits, award description or general education courses not matching. During the desk review, the Department team noted several awards listed in STICS were not listed in the IVCCD college catalog. There were also two awards listed in the catalog, but not in STICS. However, the college was able to show the Iowa Department of Education approved these awards prior to STICS implementation. IVCCD has assured the Department they are making the changes needed to align awards with STICS, and confirming all awards are in compliance. The review also revealed discrepancies in the way awards were listed with programs (e.g., the business transfer major was listed with the Business AAS program, and the Agriculture APS degree was listed with the Agriculture AAS program). These issues were due to errors made during the Department's changeover from the old state curriculum system to STICS, and will be fixed by the software developer.

IVCCD has a robust curriculum approval process that involves multiple stakeholders, including input from advisory committees, and notification of curriculum changes to the Faculty Senate. As a good practice, all curriculum changes, including program modifications, are approved by the board of directors before they are listed in the college catalog. The college also does a nice job communicating curriculum changes with CCTCs. The college uses Acalog software for the course catalog, and Curriculog software for approving internal curriculum. Since Acalog and Curriculog are owned by the same company, they can "communicate," ensuring any changes that occur during the curriculum approval process can be reflected in the college catalog.

The Department team also noted during the desk review that there is a program called "Liberal Arts, Transfer Major AA" in the IVCCD college catalog. According to Iowa Administrative Code 281 chapter 21.3(2), community colleges shall exclusively use the term "transfer major" to record the completion of an approved transfer major program on the student's official transcript and other academic records, publish in the college catalog and market the transfer major program to current and potential students and the general public. Additionally, a community college shall not transcript, catalog or market an AA or AS program using other terms which contain or are synonymous with the terms "transfer" or "major" or which imply a specialization within a subject area. Thus, it is **strongly recommended** that IVCCD update the program listing to something that does not include the term "transfer".

The Department also **recommends** the college continue cleaning up its curriculum. This work includes matching the IVCCD catalog to STICS, removing inactive awards and programs from STICS, converting program electives and general education courses into course blocks in STICS, adding the two missing business administration awards to STICS, removing the recently-deactivated culinary apprenticeship program from the college catalog and obtaining updated

articulation agreements for the APS awards. The Department’s education program consultant for program quality will work with IVCCD on the specifics of the curriculum clean-up. The Department team **recommends** the college utilize the compliance report in STICS to frequently check for future compliance issues.

**Finding:** No compliance issues were noted during the evaluation.

## Strategic Plan

Community colleges are required to update their strategic plans at least every five years as a guide for the community and its decision-making (Iowa Code section 256.31(4)(a)). The Department team reviewed IVCCD’s most recent strategic plan and interviewed selected staff to ensure compliance with this standard.

The Department team reviewed IVCCD’s “2020-2026 Strategic Agenda Framework,” which covers a span of six years, instead of five years. Iowa Administrative Code requires that strategic plans are updated once every five years. College leadership explained that they felt the most recent plan should be extended by one year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They contacted staff at HLC, who concurred with the idea. Input for the IVCCD strategic plan was gathered from employees, faculty members, students and the community. Additionally, the college used surveys, workshops and focus groups to gather information. While gathering feedback for the plan’s strategic framework, the vision changed from a college-centric plan to a community-centric one. Because of this, the mission of the college was updated to address diverse community needs, and to foster an inclusive and respectful environment. IVCCD collaborates as a district on strategic plan objectives, and staff members present to the board of directors on different initiatives. Examples of strategic initiatives include membership in the HLC Assessment Academy and hiring a dean of assessment and student learning. Weave software, which is used for collecting data related to the assessment of student learning, is also utilized to track strategic initiatives. On an annual basis, the personnel responsible for certain outcomes examine the strategic plan-related projects from the previous year, report on them and determine the projects for the following year. The Department team was impressed with the college’s use of an institutional effectiveness dashboard to measure metrics in the strategic plan, and how equipment requests are tied to the strategic plan. The team was also happy to see a financial component was included in the strategic plan, to monitor the financial health of the college.

Although the strategic plan is well-developed, the Department team **recommends** IVCCD find ways to connect program review more directly to the strategic plan, so that faculty can better understand how their work connects to the overall institutional strategic plan. The Department team also **strongly recommends** the college move back to a five-year strategic planning cycle, as is required in Iowa Administrative Code 281 chapter 24.5(6).

**Finding:** No compliance issues were noted during the evaluation.

## Physical Plant and Facilities

Each community college must present evidence of adequate planning to the Department accreditation team, including a board-approved facilities plan. The community college’s plan must meet state and federal requirements, as outlined in the state accreditation guide. The Department team reviewed IVCCD’s most recent facilities plan, approved by the board of directors in September 2023, and interviewed the campus supervisors of plant services, vice president of administrative services, associate director of human resources, chief information officer, campus deans and other staff regarding the college’s facility planning process and decision-making structure, to ensure compliance with this standard.

The Department team was impressed with IVCCD’s facilities, which incorporated up-to-date technology, and were student-focused. The “2023-2028 Facilities Master Plan” is the most recent version of the plan, and the college assured the Department team that it is continuously updated to remain relevant. The college has numerous board policies around providing adequate and sufficient facilities, classrooms, laboratories and library services. IVCCD utilizes a ticketing system that allows the college to respond to work orders and issues that arise. A district committee that deals with capital projects has representation from different areas of the college, allowing faculty and staff to share equipment and technology requests for the next year.

The Department team was especially impressed with IVCCD’s strong commitment to safety, as evidenced by the number of safety improvements made following passage of a recent bond referendum. For example, the college made

improvements to housing security cameras at both campuses; there is a website dedicated to emergency notifications; each campus has an emergency guide and emergency procedures; security information is listed in housing information materials; the college has partnerships with first responders and local law enforcement; criminal incidence mapping is used for rapid response for law enforcement in tactical situations; staff are adequately trained in safety protocols and both campuses have safety and security teams with representation across the institution. Additionally, there is widespread access to automated external defibrillators (AEDs) and first aid kits at both campuses.

Overall, the Department team was impressed with the conditions of the facilities, the thorough planning around facilities improvements, safety initiatives and the responsiveness of planning processes to the needs of stakeholders. The team **recommends** that IVCCD include a direct link to campus safety reports in the student handbook, instead of describing how to navigate to those documents, allowing students to have direct access to those required resources.

**Finding:** No compliance issues were noted during the evaluation.

## Quality Faculty Plans

Iowa law establishes the process for community colleges to plan for faculty hiring and professional development. Institutional Quality Faculty Plans (QFPs) must meet the standards of Iowa Administrative Code 281 chapter 24.5(5). The Department accreditation team reviewed the "IVCCD Faculty Professional Development Plan," which is IVCCD's QFP, and interviewed members of the QFP Committee, to ensure compliance with this standard. The Department team also reviewed QFP hours for the random sample of 20 faculty members for whom the college provided documentation.

IVCCD's QFP was last approved by the college's board of directors in June, 2023. According to the desk review materials, IVCCD's QFP committee is composed of seven females and five males, four arts and science faculty members and three CTE faculty members, with equal representation across campuses. During the interviews, the college assured the Department team that it does its best to maintain gender balance, arts and science/CTE balance and campus balance. Faculty members on the QFP committee are appointed and affirmed by the faculty association. The Department met with the committee to discuss key components of the QFP, to ascertain that it meets compliance requirements. The committee typically meets twice a semester, and competencies are reviewed at these meetings. The QFP is reviewed annually by the QFP committee, with occasional minor updates, and the board of directors reviews the plan every June. The QFP operates on a two-year cycle, in which faculty members create goals and competencies in the first year, and try to meet these competencies in the second year. Faculty members track their own professional development, and discuss their professional development accomplishments with their campus dean.

The Department team was impressed with the following aspects of IVCCD's QFP process:

- IVCCD has a strong faculty onboarding and orientation program. Faculty attend orientation within two weeks of joining the institution. During that orientation, they receive a campus tour, are oriented with student services staff, academic departments and human resources and are introduced to the board of directors.
- The college also maintains a robust, one-on-one mentoring program to get new faculty oriented with classes. The QFP has a checklist of mentoring activities to accomplish, including discussions around program review. Mentoring is linked to the assessment of student learning and the development of CSLOs.
- Personnel from the newly-formed Distance Learning Division serve as mentors on technology in the classroom.
- The college utilizes district-wide faculty learning communities, which enable faculty members to discuss good teaching practices and assessment methodology. There are also professional development activities scheduled for the lunch hour one Wednesday a month, and all-staff workshop days held twice a year.
- Both concurrent enrollment and adjunct faculty are included in the QFP, and are invited to participate in the same professional development and mentoring activities as full-time faculty.
- The QFP articulates specific learning competencies, and lists curriculum development and training resources. The faculty handbook also lists some resources for good teaching practices.

IVCCD may want to consider developing a process to convert QFP activities to standardized units for more consistency and fairness in tracking, and adding expectations for how many QFP units are required during a specific time period. To further improve the QFP process, the Department team has the following **recommendations**:

- Consider linking competencies with strategic plan priorities, to help connect instructional professional development with institutional goals and objectives. Implement campus-wide formal opportunities to improve teaching strategies, curriculum development and evaluation strategies as part of faculty orientation and onboarding. These strategies may include a formal “Center for Teaching and Learning,” faculty leads that organize professional development activities or online courses in the learning management system (LMS).
- List activities for continuous professional development in an appendix, similar to what is done for orientation-related activities.
- Continue developing a more formal electronic tracking system for professional development to ensure better historical record keeping of QFP compliance. Consider making adjunct faculty part of the tracking system, so ongoing professional development for adjuncts is well-documented.
- Implement and document a more formal process for faculty members who are non-compliant with QFP requirements.

**Finding:** No compliance issues were noted during the evaluation.

### Senior Year Plus Programs

There are a variety of requirements for Senior Year Plus (SYP) programs offered to high school students jointly enrolled in Iowa’s community colleges. These requirements are included in Iowa Code section 261E. Currently, the Department utilizes the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP) accreditation process to ensure compliance with many statutory requirements (as required by the legislated Postsecondary Course Audit Committee, which is charged with reviewing samples of postsecondary courses delivered through SYP programs). The Department team reviewed IVCCD’s accreditation status with NACEP, interviewed select staff and reviewed documentation to ensure compliance with this standard.

IVCCD’s concurrent enrollment program has maintained NACEP accreditation, and is approved through AY 25-26. The program is overseen by the dean of the Iowa Valley Grinnell and a NACEP coordinator. It serves 13 Iowa school districts, and provides programming in various modalities, including at the high schools, through career academies and online. Each year, the SYP program at IVCCD serves 1,350 students, and has 34 faculty teaching concurrent enrollment courses. IVCCD’s program appears to operate well. Program staff coordinate and monitor programming within the IVCCD service area. This work ensures continuity of SYP program processes and procedures, and includes the use of faculty liaisons to make certain the rigor of programming offered within the area high schools is the same as that of courses taught on the college campus.

Overall, the Department saw substantial evidence in the college’s course prerequisites and admissions policies, add/drop policies, grading policies and course accommodations demonstrating that the college does not place undue restrictions on concurrent enrollment students. The team was particularly impressed with the following elements of IVCCD’s concurrent enrollment program:

- There are multiple ways IVCCD ensures consistency between courses taught in the high school, and those taught at the college campus. For example, concurrent enrollment instructors are provided a syllabus template and sample syllabi to use when developing their courses. Additionally, instructors are required to use Canvas, which is the same LMS used by the college, college email, college grade entry system and college end-of-course student evaluation process.
- IVCCD requires concurrent enrollment faculty to complete an orientation and training that involves meetings with the NACEP coordinator and faculty liaison. The concurrent enrollment adjunct handbook is comprehensive, and includes a detailed process for addressing faculty non-compliance.
- Concurrent enrollment course options are listed on IVCCD’s concurrent enrollment website, and are split out by different high schools, making it clear to students which courses are available at each location. The website also has a link to the “Your 4-Year High School Plan,” which helps guide students through the types of coursework to take in high school.
- Concurrent enrollment students have access to the PawPass student portal, which allows them to access their class schedule, review advising information, register for courses, access their degree audit and access other

services available to traditional college students. IVCCD also uses an in-house dual credit portal, which gives high school counselors access to their concurrent enrollment students' course information, and allows them to perform functions such as adding or dropping a course, and viewing test and placement scores.

Although IVCCD has a sound concurrent enrollment program, the Department team noticed inconsistent and antiquated language in concurrent enrollment documents. The Department team **recommends** that IVCCD review the language in the concurrent enrollment documentation. For example, the concurrent enrollment contract was missing a statement regarding background investigations; the student application has language about "self-pay" that needs to be removed; the student manual has numerous instances where the language needs to be modified and clarified and there is inconsistent Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) language between the documents. Additionally, the Department **recommends** that the college add language to its concurrent enrollment documentation about the exclusion of a teacher or instructor under suspension or revocation of an education license. The Department's education program consultant for program quality will work with IVCCD on specific details regarding documentation clean-up.

**Finding:** No compliance issues were noted during the evaluation.

## Compliance with Non-Accreditation State or Federal Requirements

Finding: No compliance issues were noted during the evaluation.

## Evaluation Team Recommendations

The Department's community college accreditation team recommends continued accreditation for Iowa Valley Community College District.

A state comprehensive accreditation evaluation is scheduled for FY29 (i.e., AY 28-29).