Assurance Argument
Aims Community College

Review date: 6/13/2022

1 - Mission

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

1.A - Core Component 1.A

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

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

Argument

1.A.1 Response

Aims Community College is an open-access school serving Colorado residents in the college's service area, offering two-year degrees, certificates in arts and sciences, and career and technical education. The college began offering courses in 1967 and has grown to a robust institution with four campuses. Through concurrent enrollment partnerships, Aims also encompasses several high school locations. Aims offers over 200 degrees and certificates from more than 50 academic areas of study with more than 4,000 daytime, evening, weekend, and online course offerings each year.

The college's mission begins in state statute and identifies the intended student base, an open admission school serving Colorado residents in the service area, and the types of programs Aims will provide. Since the 2016 portfolio submission, Aims began a new planning cycle to develop the strategic plan for 2018 – 2023. As a part of this process, the President and Board re-examined the college's Purpose, Vision, and Mission and officially updated them in February of 2017. Later in the year, the Board noted that the mission statement was missing the keyword, "diverse." Since the word diverse so strongly reflected the values of the Board and college, the mission was amended a second time in August of 2017 adding the word "diverse" to the mission statement "Provide knowledge and skills to advance quality of life, economic vitality and overall success of the diverse communities we serve."

As part of the strategic planning cycle, the Vision was updated to read, "First Choice: The Recognized Leader in Learning and Student Success." The mission statement confirms the college will fulfill its Purpose to "Build a Stronger Community" by "providing knowledge and skills to

advance quality of life, economic vitality, and overall success of the diverse communities served." On August 2, 2017, the Aims Board of Trustees approved Aims' new purpose, vision, and mission, centered around student success. Communication of this change is evidenced in 1.A.5. As well, Aims has created a web page that articulates the college's position on diversity and provides links to valuable resources at the college.

The college's core mission was developed with consideration of the need to serve local students and their families and meet regional workforce and industry needs in the northern Colorado service area in order to "provide knowledge and skills to advance quality of life, economic vitality and overall success of the diverse communities we serve."

Aims degrees and certificates are designed to fit into one of two tracks:

Transfer Track: Students can earn an Associate of Arts or Science Degree (AA and AS) and then transfer that credit to a four-year university on the path to earn a bachelor's degree.

Career and Technical Education Track: Students may also choose to earn an Associate of Applied Science Degree or complete a certificate program which will prepare them to enter the job market upon completion. (AAS or Certificate)

The 2020-2021, the IPEDS 12-month enrollment report is reflective of Aims' service area with an unduplicated headcount of 10,162, resulting in 3,423 FTE. More than half of the student population is female with 70.313% under the age of 25. The population in the service area leads to high utilization of financial aid, with 73% of first-time, full-time students receiving some type of assistance. In recent years, Aims has continued to see significant shifts in community and college demographics, especially the increase in Latinx students, currently at 33%, and other minority groups, including refugees from Somalia and Burma.

Over time, Aims has identified the unique needs of its students and is well-positioned to address those needs as seen throughout the college's strategic plan. Significant examples are highlighted.

In addition, Aims continues to be one of the most affordable colleges in the state, and froze tuition for more than a decade. The first tuition increase since 2011 will occur in FY23.

1.A.2 Response

Mission

Provide knowledge and skills to advance quality of life, economic vitality and overall success of the diverse communities we serve.

Aims believes education should be accessible to all individuals who can benefit from the courses and programs available. Offering opportunities to relieve the financial burden of college is a priority. Aims also strives to foster equitable access by working to increase enrollment of first-generation, non-traditional, and under-represented groups. Aims provides educational opportunities, which allow students to follow an individualized path, leading to a successful future. Students have the ability to progress in their academic journey as degree or certificate-seeking, or non-degree seeking for

professional development, continuing education, personal health and wellness enrichment, and other means to advance their quality of life.

In 2019, the college completed an environmental scan and participated in an economic impact study that looked at the value of northern Colorado public colleges and universities. Additionally, the Emsi program demand gap analysis helped the college understand gaps and overlaps in programming relative to the economic landscape of the service area. Furthermore, the Northern Colorado Regional Cluster Strategy, published in March of 2020 by the Northern Colorado Regional Economic Development Initiative (NoCo REDI), provides supplementary data to ensure program feasibility at Aims is tailored to the needs of the region.

Purpose

Build a Stronger Community

Aims continually seeks opportunities to ensure inclusivity, learning, and growth. For equitable education access to occur, targeted outreach and support is necessary for enrolling and retaining (see 3.D.1 & 4.C.3) diverse groups.

Aims also invests in regional programs and partnerships around northern Colorado. This sets up a pathway to career success for students while simultaneously enriching northern Colorado's economic development.

Vision

First Choice: The Recognized Leader in Learning and Student Success

It is the goal of Aims to provide a wide range of learning-centered programs and strategies in a supportive environment so every student can be successful. Aims promotes learning through best practices such as teaching with high expectations, increasing engagement, and encouraging active learning. General education courses follow the Learning College philosophy to contribute and shape scenarios that empower learning through discovery, shared learning environments, and construction of knowledge (see 3.B.2). Aims is continuously enhancing operations as a commitment to providing the most effective education for each student in alignment with strategy number two of the 2018-2023 Strategic Plan: enhance operational performance: maximize sustainable processes, systems, resource management, and employee support.

1.A.3 Response

Aims recognizes the important role it plays in students' academic and career success. By creating a thriving community built around inclusion and educational opportunity, the goal is for each student to receive an experience that empowers and prepares them for a successful future. The college's purpose, mission, vision, and policy identify the scope of service and intended audience (see 1.A.1).

The college's purpose identifies its connection to the community and service area and its responsibility to support community growth and strength.

The college's mission highlights that Aims believes education should be accessible to all individuals who can benefit from the courses and programs available. Offering opportunities to relieve the

financial burden of college is a priority while fostering equitable access. Additionally, the college's alignment to the state Colorado Common Course Numbering System and connection to community and industry needs outlined further support Aims' academic offerings are in alignment with the mission, vision, and purpose.

The college's vision directly highlights the goal of Aims is to provide a wide range of learning-centered programs and strategies in a supportive environment so every student can be successful.

1.A.4 Response

Academic Offerings

With more than 200 degrees and certificates, Aims' academic offerings align with the college's mission, service area, and industry needs, as well as pathways for transfer to four-year institutions. By providing relevant, affordable education to put people to work for in-demand fields, Aims is positioned to meet growing job opportunities in the region with employer and regional workforce challenges addressed in lines 54-62 of the strategic plan. Using environmental scans, program gap analysis, and feedback from advisory committees and industry partnerships, Aims thoughtfully considers academic offerings on a bi-annual and annual basis through the work of enrollment reports, advisory committee recommendations, feasibility studies, and BOT feedback from the community.

Feasibility Study Process

Since the college's last review, Aims has developed and implemented one new degree and 11 new certificates. The college has a systematic process for identifying potential new programs and certificates that align with community, regional, and service area industry needs. Aims employs the use of feasibility studies to determine whether or not to launch new programs and certificates. For example, feasibility studies helped inform the decision to add an LPN to RN program and an Engineering pathway. In the same way, the feasibility study informed the decision to not pursue HVAC and Plumbing programs. The Bachelor of Applied Science in Public Safety feasibility study, in part, led to Aims completing a substantive change application and conducting an HLC change visit in May 2022.

Student Support Services

Student support services encompass a wide range of unique benefits for students at various stages in their educational journey and provide distinct student supports for students from diverse backgrounds. Aims student service and support program offerings align and target these demographic groups and also support first-generation students or students with limited experience with higher education to develop a better understanding of how to navigate and develop skills for success as they begin their college journey.

Aims provides the Navigation Station (one-stop), Orientation, Aims 101 - First-Year Seminar, Pathway Advising, TRIO Student Support Services, peer coaches, mentors, and navigators, Learning Commons where students find support for academic needs (i.e. tutoring, library research, etc.) as well as support in completing their goals through Career Services, Transfer Services, Aims2UNC, Counseling Services, and Disability Access Services. Several support services are new since 2017 as a result of a Process, Reimagine, & Redesign (PRR) completed in August 2019. An example of such

process improvements are realized in the development of the Navigation Station--a physical, virtual, and telephonic support team designed to help students get to the correct support area with less effort on the part of the student.

Enrollment Profile

Aims enrollment reflects its mission as a public institution to provide knowledge and skills to advance quality of life, economic vitality, and overall success of the diverse communities it serves. Aims' service district is diverse in age, ethnic background, and goals. Total credit-seeking enrollment for the AY21 was 10,132 students with 67.97% undergraduates and 32.03% concurrent students. College-level students made up 69.14% in-district, 28.71% out-of-district (in-state), and 2.92% out-of- state. Aims' low cost per credit hour tuition and fees (see 1.A.1) allows an increased number of limited income, first-generation college students to comprise a significant portion of the college's population. Moreover, as it relates to diversity within goals and student success, 79.3% of Aims' student body has successfully completed general education courses, and 88.2% of students successfully completed vocational courses during the AY21.

Annual 2020-21 Student Profile

College Level – 5,415

- 62.33% Female
- 40.96% Traditional age (18-21)
- 55.49% First-Generation
- 30.40% Low-Income
- 41.65% Racial/Ethnic Minority (10 yr disaggregated data here)

High School Level – 2,857

- 52.90% Female
- 38.19% First-Generation
- 36.68% Racial/Ethnic Minority (10 yr disaggregated data here)

The demographics of northern Colorado – Weld County, specifically – are very similar, according to United States census data from 2021. Weld County is 30% Latinx, 49% female, 26% under the age of 18, and only 28% of residents hold a bachelor's degree, meaning 72.4% of Weld residents 24 or older have not obtained a bachelor's degree.

Quality of Life

Aims2UNC

Aims' efforts to develop programs and services align with the college's mission and student profile is seen in the Aims2UNC program. Aims2UNC provides comprehensive transition advising and support to program participants through transition to the University of Northern Colorado. Aims2UNC directly benefits the local community by reducing the overall cost of obtaining a four-year degree. This is particularly impactful when considering 91% of participants are from Aims' service area and 54% are pell-eligible. Aims' in-district tuition rate is approximately 78% less, per semester, than UNC's in-state tuition. Between tuition savings and the Aims2UNC institutional

scholarship, a student has the potential to save up to $19,029 by starting at Aims. As of May 2022, over 100 students have successfully completed their Associate's and transitioned to the University of Northern Colorado.

High School Programs/Concurrent Enrollment

Aims offers several unique programs providing college curricula options for students while completing their high school diploma. In AY2022-21, tuition saved by concurrently enrolled students totaled $1.7 million. The total number of concurrent students enrolled was 2,966 while 25,523 credits were earned and the average course completion rate was 97.5%. Details here.

Economic Vitality

Workforce Development and Innovation

The Center for Workforce Development and Innovation (CWDI) empowers students to succeed and enriches northern Colorado economic development by fostering workforce partnerships and customized training opportunities. It directly supports the lines 6, 12, 55, 48, 60, and 62 of the college's strategic plan. CWDI's Corporate Training program builds long-term workforce partnerships. By providing quality, cost-effective, non-credit, just-in-time customized training solutions for companies, this allows companies to upgrade the knowledge, skills, and abilities of employees within Aims' service area.

Commercial Drivers License (CDL) Training

The CDL Training program (non-credit), located at the Fort Lupton campus, provides accelerated job training in commercial truck driving, one of the top in-demand, high-wage careers in Colorado. The training program combines classroom instruction and in-truck driving experience. Additionally, the program is a state-certified, third-party testing site that enables Aims students to test onsite as well as help local businesses with their testing needs.

Success

Adult Education

Adult Education provides unique opportunities to community members and current students who are seeking assistance in obtaining a high school equivalency diploma (GED), learning English, or brushing up on academic skills to prepare for the rigor of the college classroom.

Continuing Education (CEd)

The college offers a variety of in-person and online non-credit courses and certification preparation programs for community members and business partners. CEd offerings provide workplace skill enhancement, customized and basic skills training for business and industry, and workshops and seminars for professional and personal development.

Supporting Diversity

Additional Locations

Aims' main campus is located in Greeley, Colorado. The college currently has 16 active additional

locations. Three of these locations (Fort Lupton, Loveland, and Windsor) are designated as "campuses" by the institution, yet fit the definition of additional locations according to HLC policy. While additional locations follow the same practices and procedures established by the college and are overseen by an Executive Campus Director, each location has its own programmatic focus and culture while also embodying the larger mission and purpose of Aims. As outlined in the 2021 Multi Site Visit, the special programmatic focus and culture of each location align with service area and community areas of need.

1.A.5 Response

Communicating the mission, vision, and values

The college's mission and vision are communicated to both internal and external stakeholders through many avenues. The mission, vision, and college values are included in the annual report to the public as well as on the Aims website and other publications, Program brochures, press releases, newspaper advertising, publications and products, and stories of student success in the Annual Report or on the website communicate the mission of helping students to fulfill their learning goals and objectives. In addition, the college posts its mission, vision, and values across campus, meeting spaces, and in public spaces to reinforce and articulate these during meetings. Furthermore, the college recently launched a brand refresh and an award-winning website update, to communicate these points more clearly.

Strategic Plan

Aims' purpose, vision, mission, and values feed direction into the strategies and objectives of the 2018-2023 strategic plan. The college asked, "What are the three most important things we need to get right?" The key strategies the college seeks to attain and measure are:

- Empower students to succeed
- Enhance operational performance
- Enrich Northern Colorado economic development

Every tactical line item in the strategic plan aligns with one of these three strategies. Aims publicly communicated the strategic plan framework both externally and internally. See line items 12, 17, 50, 54, and 56 which directly align with criterion one.

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1.B - Core Component 1.B

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

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

Argument

1.B.1 Response

Aims is one of only two community colleges in Colorado to operate outside the Colorado Community College System (CCCS). Consequently, 70% of Aims' funding is generated through a mill levy in Aims' taxing district of Weld County and portions of Adams, Broomfield, Larimer, Logan, and Morgan Counties (see 5.C.4). In support of the college's priority to its core functions of instruction, academic support, and student services, 70% of expenditures are allocated to these areas:

- Instruction - 42% of total expenditures ($31,164,855)
- Academic Support - 14% of expenditures ($10,348,958)
- Student Services - 14 % of expenditures ($10,015,570)

As a local-district college, rather than a member of the CCCS, Aims exercises oversight of its operations by a five-member Board of Trustees (BOT) whose members are elected from within the taxing district (see 1.B.1, 2.C, & 5.B.4). State funding comprises 14% of Aims' budget. Together with the college CEO/President, these elected individuals monitor and oversee the purpose, mission, vision, and policies of the college (see 2.C.4 & BOT Policies and Procedures).

1.B.2 Response

Aims is an open-access public institution. Aims does not have private investors and provides no financial returns to any external private interests. Aims places a high priority on serving community and industry needs of the college's service district. Further outlined in Criterion 5, the college receives feedback from the public, advisory committees, chambers, and industry professionals and remains agile to meet the needs of the community and industries the college partners with. This feedback occurs in both formal and informal ways at the BOT level, CTE advisory committees, community focus groups, individual partnerships in academic and auxiliary services.

Aims does not employ outside fundraisers who are commission-based. The college safeguards against any undue influence through procurement policies and procedures, State statutes guide procurement, and prescribed processes which again limit outside influence.

An example of the college's commitment to serve the public and remain agile is the concerted effort to address the Certified Nurse Aide (CNA) shortage in Colorado by creating an entirely remote and an entirely simulated clinical experience for Nurse Aide students, becoming a certified testing site, and partnering with a local hospital system to provide front line service employees (culinary and nutritional services or environmental services) to obtain their CNA licensure while continuing to work.

1.B.3 Response

Aims places a high priority on serving community and industry needs of the college's service district. Further outlined in Criterion 5, the college receives feedback from the public, advisory committees, chambers, and industry professionals and remains agile to meet the needs of the community and industries the college partners with. The mechanisms for engaging with constituents are outlined in 5.A.1 and in 5.C.3 under "community engagement."

Quality of Life see 1.A.4

- Faculty and Staff Community Involvement: Aims faculty engage with external stakeholders through community opportunities. Additionally, faculty and staff regularly volunteer through Aims-sponsored volunteer days at the Weld County Food Bank.
- Community Volunteer Leave: Procedure 529-01 states leave with pay may be granted to Aims employees for local/community and national volunteer opportunities up to 30 hours per year.
- Aims budgets annually to sponsor community events and efforts in alignment with the college's mission to "Build a Stronger Community." As this list shows, Aims' campuses host and sponsor dozens of stakeholder events and opportunities. Additionally, the college also hosts a myriad of events at Aims' locations that are open to the public.

Economic Vitality see 1.A.4

- The college's CTE certificates and degree programs have advisory committees which serve to link the needs of the external community with the college's mission (see 3.A.1).
- The new Welcome Center opened in December 2021. This facility, located at the Greeley Campus, reshaped the student experience at Aims while ushering in both cultural and economic opportunities for northern Colorado.

Success see 1.A.4

- Aims Foundation dedicates time and resources to stimulate community support centered on keeping the dream alive of achieving educational goals, through access, advocacy, and achievement.
- Tax Help Colorado is one of the college's impactful service-learning projects. Continuing its 14-year participation in the Tax Help Colorado program offers free tax help to the Aims community. The program at Aims has grown to serve nearly 1,500 taxpayers per year, with the help of IRS-certified accounting faculty, students, and community volunteers who prepare tax returns for low-income families.

Supporting Diversity see 1.A.4

- College for Kids (C4K) is a summer program at Aims that provides a unique, educational, and

fun experience for students ages 9 to 15, by providing an opportunity to "go to college."
- Fire Science and Criminal Justice Xplore Academy allows students to experience how rewarding a career in public safety can be. Supporting community agencies include: Loveland Fire Rescue Authority, Greeley Fire, Fort Lupton Fire, Berthoud Fire Protection District, Platte Valley Fire Protection District, Loveland PD, Greeley PD, and Weld County SWAT team.
- Holocaust Memorial Observances Week is co-sponsored by several Greeley area and northern Colorado community partners, including Aims. It is the hope that the values of these programs reach across the cultural mosaic of the the larger community.

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1.C - Core Component 1.C

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

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

Argument

1.C.1. Response

Aims offers curricular and co-curricular activities that prepare students for informed citizenship and workplace success.

Curricular

- Aims has three Career and Technical Education (CTE) academic divisions. CTE programs focus on skilled trades, applied sciences and career preparation formerly known as vocational education.
- Learning Outcome Assessment see 4.B.1
- Aims regularly engages in program gap analysis to identify community and industry needs. Additionally, Aims offers stackable certificates that allow students to quickly gain skills so they can enter the workforce.
- Aims VE-135 assessment report serves as the college's blueprint for creating and deepening high-wage, high-need work opportunities for graduates. Success in this area is operationalized and tracked.

Extracurricular Events

- Art faculty and their students regularly display their art for public consumption. A recent on-campus gallery show by an Aims faculty member considered the social assimilation of digital media tools and systems.
- An Aims theater group selected and performed the play Almost, Maine during the Spring 2022 semester.
- An Aims history faculty member recently researched and presented Nazi Civil Religion During the Third Reich: The Link Between Secular Religiosity and Violence in Hitler's Germany" on Holocaust Remembrance Day.

Co-Curricular

The Student Activities, Inclusion, & Leadership (SAIL) Office, the Center for Diversity & Inclusion (CDI), and the Transitions Center (encompassing career and transfer transition programs), lead a

significant portion of co-curricular programs and initiatives at Aims. Examples include:

- Student Government Association leadership positions are responsible for representing the student body and advocating on their behalf to staff, faculty, and administrators.
- Campus Activity Programming Board leadership positions are responsible for planning and implementing events for students.
- Student clubs provide students with opportunities to serve in executive student leadership positions based on interests.
- Peer specialists engage with students within the CDI through programming, social norming and educational campaigns, and facilitation of dialogue on challenging topics.
- Alternative Spring Break is a week-long co-curricular service-learning program.
- Catalyst is a non-credit career readiness and leadership program serving students who have completed one semester at Aims.
- Student Employment offers on- and off-campus employment opportunities for students regardless of financial need.

Curricular & Co-Curricular Collaboration

Additionally, the college-wide Council for Equity & Inclusion (CEI) oversees two subcommittees, Aims Read and the Human2Human Inclusion & Social Responsiveness Committee (H2H), that further demonstrate Aims' commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion and support student and employee development as informed citizens of a diverse and complex community.

- Aims Read is a college-wide common read program rooted in increasing awareness and reducing stigma about identities and experiences.
- H2H plans monthly events that explore the histories and current experiences of people from a variety of identities and backgrounds. The events are open to employees, students, and community members (see 1.C.3).

Career Services has traditionally developed programming and support services that mirror students' career-related needs which are typically reactive (an upcoming assignment or interview). Core services have included: aptitude, personality, and talent assessments, job search strategies and an online job board, application material and interview preparation, and student employment and job fairs. However, a community college student's career journey is not the linear experience that these service offerings suggest. At Aims, the student population in most need of assistance are transfer degree-seeking students who do not have access to the same faculty and staff professional networks as students in CTE programs. Beginning in AY23, Career Services will relaunch as the Career Studio offering proactive, high-impact, experiential work- and service-based learning experiences for students and alumni. The Career Studio model includes: 1) curricular and co-curricular career readiness, development and transition experiences based on NACE competencies and Aims' CLOs; 2) co-curricular work and service-based experiential learning opportunities, including: job shadowing, non-credit internships and project-based/micro-internships, and service-learning; 3) expanded campus, employer, and community partnerships to develop a culture of career everywhere focused on Aims' career pathways; and 4) a fully digitized Career Studio experience, including: implementation of Handshake and expanded online career support tools.

1.C.2 Response

Aims is committed to ensuring its students and employees, including those holding minoritized and marginalized identities, are treated equitably and feel welcomed and included across all departments and in all programs. Since the 2016 HLC Portfolio, Aims has strengthened and made more explicit its commitment to inclusive and equitable treatment of diverse populations through updating the college values, administering a college climate assessment survey, implementing policy and procedure review through the CEI, increasing sense of belonging initiatives through the CDI, and focused recruiting and hiring practices.

- Aims Values: In April 2017, the president/CEO, as College Council Chairperson, established and presented a charge to a subcommittee of College Council members, College Values Sub-Committee to re-examine in conjunction with the development of the 2018-2023 Strategic Plan. The process the institution underwent to determine its values was both rigorous and inclusive. Evidence collected on the development of Aims' values demonstrates a mixed-method approach to employee and student value alignment, using two questions to guide the process: 1) which values best indicate behaviors that are fundamental and/or irreplaceable and already exist within Aims; and 2) which values best describe how we want to work together? On February 7, 2018, the BOT approved Policy 5.

- College Climate Assessment: Aims is committed to fostering a welcoming college environment that grants equitable access to all students, faculty and staff. To take action on this commitment and gain deeper insight into the experiences of underrepresented and marginalized members of the Aims community, the Climate Survey Working Group (CSWG), made up of faculty, staff, and students, was established in fall 2020 to address line 14 of the strategic plan, including the administration of a Climate Assessment. In response to the assessment, the college created Action Items.

- Policies and Procedures: In 2017, the college's anti-discrimination policy and procedure were updated. Both the Aims Staff Association and Aims Faculty Association were established to ensure "effective and inclusive decision-making and communication" at the college. Aims has created a web page that articulates the college's position on diversity and provides links to valuable resources at the college. Notably, the President supports this work as seen in campus communications sent to the entire college community.

- While several entities, such as the CDI and CEI, specifically oversee Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) efforts at the college, all departments work to ensure equity and transparency in policies, procedures, and processes and work to remove barriers to college access for diverse populations.

  - CEI: As a critical element of the strategic plan, line 14 outlines the goal of "examine opportunities to positively impact campus climate to ensure inclusivity, learning, and growth spaces." One of the action items within this tactic was to "re-boot" what was called the *Inclusiveness Council*.
  - Policy & Procedure Review (P/P)**:** The CEI commits to providing feedback when P/P are published for comment on the College Council feedback forum or discussed in Open Forums whenever possible.
  - CDI: As a result of the strategic plan (line 13) and focus on diverse populations In fall 2018, Aims opened a physical space on campus where students from diverse backgrounds can find community and engagement opportunities.

- Financial Aid: Aims has significantly reduced barriers to access for students who do not qualify for federal financial aid and to students who lack familiarity with the inner workings of higher education processes, including first-generation students. A recent example of improvements to support students is the decision to auto award. Auto awarding institutionally funded merit scholarships removes the barrier of requiring students to complete an application to receive the award. Implementing this change increased the number of students receiving the scholarship by over 300% (523 students who applied in AY19 vs. 1667 through auto awarding in AY20) and the total amount in scholarships awarded ($662,000 in AY19 to $1,881,773 in AY20). This change significantly impacts the affordability of students' education and removes the stress of another form and deadline.

- Enrollment Management focuses on the prospective college-seeking population. The result of this focus is educating members of Aim's larger service area before they ever become a college student. One significant contribution is College 101 which takes place every fall and spring. Offered in English and Spanish, these sessions are held in-person at public libraries, at all Aims campuses, local area high schools, and virtually. Line item 17 of the strategic plan includes the creation of a strategic enrollment management plan. Implementation of the plan will occur AY24.

- Mediation, Advocacy, & Assistance Program (MAAP): Aims is committed to ensuring students have a fair and transparent path to resolve complaints, issues, concerns, or problems with a college employee or department, another student, or an instructional situation.

- Expressive Activity Policy, Procedure, and Process Guide: Aims values academic freedom and supports and encourages the exchange of ideas within the college community, including ideas that may be unpopular or controversial. At the same time, the college encourages respectful discourse and has the obligation to address issues of safety and illegal acts. The guide clearly communicate students' rights and to define parameters, in alignment with state and federal protections.

- Recruiting and hiring processes are key to the college's support of equity and inclusiveness. Positions are posted on minority-focused websites to recruit beyond traditional sources. By using a document called the Position Description Questionnaire (PDQ), which includes an in-depth description of all job tasks for a position and a determination of minimum and preferred qualifications, keeping the focus on position-specific skills – and away from protected status or other non-job-related attributes. The PDQ serves as the basis for the job posting, qualifications screenings, and scoring criteria.

- Title IX: In Aims' 2016 portfolio, the college wrote about Title IX efforts as overseen by the Department of Campus Safety and Security. Soon thereafter, Aims evaluated its Title efforts and determined that most Title IX cases involve students. To better support students, the college decided to relocate all Title IX work to the Student Engagement, Inclusion, and Success (SEIS) division. Campus Safety does continue to assist by ensuring appropriate safety measures are in place.

1.C.3. Response

Aims focuses efforts on the following endeavors and initiatives:

College Values & Vision: Aims updated the college [values statement](#) in 2018, which included highlighting the institution's commitment to fostering a climate of respect. The "Equity & Professional Respect," value reads: "We strive to promote an atmosphere grounded in fairness and civility with due regard, consideration, and thoughtfulness for the feelings, needs, and rights of others."

The college's statements of [purpose, vision and mission](#) contain words such as "stronger community", "student success" and "diverse communities" that also speak to the importance of respect. These are statements of who Aims is and how Aims operates, and serve as a focal point for the many ways in which the college promotes a culture of respect.

Recruitment & Onboarding: The college's job postings, recruitment efforts, and hiring processes help attract and select candidates who can make positive contributions to the college. In interview and hiring deliberations, Aims assesses candidates based on their professional qualifications and the extent to which their professional values appear to align with the college's values. Aims takes active measures to ensure that new employees know how to succeed at Aims. Aims' [new hire onboarding process](#) serves as an essential starting point for respect to take hold in the workplace. Designed and presented by the Center for Professional Development (CPD), this "welcome" session introduces employees to a wealth of [information](#), policies, practices, and the laws that govern employee conduct in an academic setting. Employees receive a comprehensive [Staff onboarding resource guide](#) that addresses these and other topics in depth.

Training & Professional Development: CPD offers [training](#) to help employees better perform their jobs duties and continue to grow professionally. Session topics have included: workplace respect, improving communication, collaboration, managing change, and enhancing resilience in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.

While most professional development efforts target specific groups or are individually driven, Aims hosts one annual event called [Conversation Day](#) that brings together employees from across the college for a day of community-building and professional development.

Equity in Learning: [The Faculty Teaching and Learning Center](#) (FTLC) hosted the [Equity Toolkit Workshop](#) in 2022, engaging faculty in evidence-based discussions and activities to address equity gaps in higher education. The workshop, created and curated by Colorado's Department of Higher Education, explored themes of Ongoing Self-Inquiry, Creating and Maintaining a Culturally Relevant Classroom Community, and Designing and Implementing an Inclusive Course.

In September 2021, The FTLC hosted a college-wide [Fall Faculty Conference](#), including sessions that addressed equity in the classroom:

- Culturally Sustaining Learning Partnerships: Design Principles for Equitable and Collaborative Teaching and Learning
- Accessible Video: Caption and Compliance Strategies
- Being a Warm Demander: A Practice for Connection and Equity
- Creating and Using Open Educational Resources
- Creating Inclusive Learning Environments

Furthermore, each semester, the FTLC team hosts [offerings](#) including a New Faculty Conference which includes a workshop entitled "Connecting the Science of Learning to Designing Equitable Instruction" connecting the neuroscience of learning to equitable teaching. In October 2021, "How do

I Infuse Equity Into Any Online Class?" explored what it means to teach equitably, including the introduction of five equitable teaching practices faculty can implement in their courses.

Additionally, the Learning Environments team hosted numerous workshops relating to accessibility in the classroom to ensure that faculty are equipped with the skillset to create accessible documents for all students and work towards eliminating student barriers to success.

Student Programming & Support: Aims celebrates its unique student populations, such as military-affiliated, undocumented and DACAmented, and a large and growing number of Latinx students (see 1.C.1).

Examples of co-curricular activities that deepen participants' understanding of a broad array of social identities and prepare students to enter an increasingly diverse workforce. Annual events celebrating Dia de los Muertos and Latinx Heritage Month bring awareness and greater understanding of the history and traditions of the Latinx community. Additionally, the college co-sponsors community events such as the annual MLK March Celebration and Greeley Multicultural Festival, which connect students to the community.

Accessibility and WebAim Training:Aims makes every effort to ensure the information available on the college's website is accessible to all. The goal is to deliver an experience that achieves a minimum level of AA conformance according to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines v2.1 (WCAG 2.1). Approximately 90 enrollments and 43 completions, across all divisions and employee types, have occurred since July of 2021.

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1.S - Criterion 1 - Summary

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

Summary

Aims remains a mission-driven institution, established to help support and educate the local community by Weld County in 1967. The college is closely tied to the community, with its own taxing district and a unique level of financial separation from the state system. Local economic growth has enabled the college's educational opportunities to expand to over 200 programs, serving a current annual program enrollment of more than 8,000 students, with 70% taking general education courses, 61% taking career & technical courses, and 7% taking basic education courses.

Aims' most recent planning cycle renewed the emphasis on diversity as an important component of the mission, providing local educational opportunities to populations often underserved. This is reflected in the immense support that Aims provides for these student populations. The college's minority enrollment has grown to one-third, with 33% identifying as Hispanic/Latinx which mirrors the growth of this population in Aims' service area. The institution is well positioned to address the needs of historically underserved populations through student supports and programming, including TRIO SSS Classic & STEM grants, Aims2UNC, and the Finish What You Started programs.

Aims is in a phase of growth, seeking to expand to the Bachelor's level. This will provide an opportunity to clarify the educational mission, which previously relied on the popular understanding of the purpose of community colleges.

Sources

There are no sources.

2 - Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

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

2.A - Core Component 2.A

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

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

Argument

2.A.1 Response

Aims' BOT adopts the mission, vision, purpose, and values of the college. Aims follows a model that encompasses the BOT crafting the mission, vision, and purpose of the college further explained in 1.A.1. Adopted in August of 2017, the mission was developed with consideration of the need to serve local students and their families and meet regional workforce and industry needs in the northern Colorado service area in order to "provide knowledge and skills to advance the quality of life, economic vitality and overall success of the diverse communities we serve."

2.A.2 Response

Assurance of Integrity in Finance & Auxiliary Services

As a local and state-funded institution, Aims strives to safeguard the college's financial resources. Aims has remained debt-free since 2013. The ethical use of taxpayer dollars is vital to realizing the college's mission of "Student Success." Moreover, it is essential to maintain the trust and confidence of all the stakeholders. Policy 1-105, Code of Ethics, exhorts employees to "serve Aims with integrity and honesty" and to "discharge their duties in an independent and impartial manner," and identifies numerous shall and shall not types of conduct as guidelines for employees to follow.

The college's financial functions are guided by administrative policies and procedures, including federal regulations and state statutes necessary to clarify and specify the application of college policy to address the financial operations of Aims. The college implements new or updated policies and procedures to ensure that the college remains in compliance and has adjusted its operating procedures accordingly. Aims Purchasing department works diligently to confirm the procurement procedure is observed and the Request for Proposal (RFP) and bidding processes are followed to ensure integrity is maintained when awarding large-dollar contracts.

- Procurement Process Standard Code of Conduct & Ethics and Procurement Procedure

- [Acceptable Use of Information Technology Policy](#)
- [Acceptable Use of Information Technology Procedure](#)
- [4-2000 Conflict Of Interest Policy](#)
- [4-2000A Conflict Of Interest Procedure](#)
- [4-300 Nepotism Policy](#)
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- [201 Capital Reserve and General Operating Funds Policy](#)
- [204-04 Signature Authority Procedure](#)
- [204-05 Contract Review and Termination Procedure](#)
- [212 Institutional Travel Policy](#)
- [212-01 Institutional Travel Procedure](#)
- [Policy & Procedure Reformation Process](#)

The college's budget [policies and practices](#) create record-keeping and approval requirements for all financial transactions as well as identify which system-generated reports and other documents should be accessible by whom, and for what purposes. The annual budget cycle includes [regular updates](#) to ensure all participating staff understand the college's financial conditions and their own responsibilities in the process.

Public reporting is completed with integrity, and the institution presents timely and accurate information through [reports accessible by the community, college community, as well as local, state, and federal governmental agencies.](#) The college has established [processes for](#) budget development and [resource allocation](#).

Business and Budget Offices are [appropriately staffed](#) to make certain the college maintains a strong system of internal controls that ensure resources are appropriately expended. These offices also ensure financial and operational information is accurate, reliable, and available to college departments. During the implementation of Workday HCM Finance (see 5.C.6), best practices and security were a top priority. To assist departments in understanding financial policies and procedures, [training is routinely offered](#) to review and update Aims employees on financial processes, including travel, budgets, and purchasing card (p-card) use.

Ensuring Aims complies with state and federal laws and regulations, an [annual audit](#) is performed by an independent firm as required by college [Policy 202](#). In addition, [a single audit](#) is completed as required by federal law to ensure various grant programs are in compliance. Aims has consistently clean audits and no reportable federal findings.

The college's only auxiliary services include the dining bistro and coffee carts on each Aims campus. The college is not reliant on auxiliary funding for operations and these auxiliary functions are self-supporting.

Onboarding

The requirement for the ethical treatment of applicants and employees is recorded in the policies and procedures. Examples include [4-101](#), [4-200](#), and [4-902](#). New employees are directed to review the Code of Ethics and these additional documents:

- [3-710D - Worker's Compensation](#)
- [4-902A - Discriminatory Harassment](#)
- [1-290 - Drug and Alcohol](#)

- [207 - Acceptable Use of Information Technology](#)

New employees receive access to an online [resource guide](#) and are required to review prior to beginning employment. As part orientation, employees are required to check a box to certify, "I have reviewed the attached links regarding Aims policies and agree to abide by the terms of these policies as a condition of my employment."

FERPA, Title VII, & Title IX

Employees receive a separate document regarding the [Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)](#) with an acknowledgment that they have reviewed and will abide by it. The Aims website also hosts a [guide](#) for parents who want to learn about FERPA and the rights that it affords them.

In 2017 Aims made [Title VII](#) training mandatory for all supervisors, annually. Employees who believe they have been the subject of harassment in violation of [Policy 4-902](#), are expected to contact the [Title IX Coordinator or Executive Director of Human Resources](#). When a report of harassment is received a thorough investigation is conducted. If the violation is confirmed, disciplinary action up to and including termination is allowed by college policy and procedure. An employee who wishes to file a grievance as defined by [Policy 4-1000](#) and follow [Procedure 4-1000A](#).

[Title IX](#) policies and procedures are directly aligned with the new ruling issued by the Federal Department of Education in August 2020. Based on this ruling, Aims revised and created procedures to ensure compliance. [Policy 623](#) clearly states Aims' commitment to ensuring an educational and work environment free from acts of sexual misconduct to the extent allowed by the ruling. Additionally, [Procedure 623-01](#) addresses how the college addresses acts of sexual misconduct. This procedure clearly and simply outlines the scope and jurisdiction of the college, definitions for prohibited conduct, information regarding the confidentiality of reporting sexual misconduct as well as resources for individuals who feel they are the victims of sexual misconduct. Moreover, the procedure outlines the process Aims adheres to when responding to formal complaints of sexual misconduct as well as the process for an informal resolution to complaints of sexual misconduct.

Aims also developed a Title IX [process guide](#) that details all aspects of the formal and informal complaint processes.

Fraud Hotline

To further support [efforts to ensure ethical conduct](#), the college maintains a [fraud hotline](#) (online) to enable anonymous reporting. Reports are received by the Executive and Assistant Director of Human Resources and then assigned to the appropriate staff member for investigation. Students may also report through the [MAAP](#) (see 1.C.2), and employees may also engage in the [grievance process](#) to report unethical conduct.

Academic Integrity

Aims has instituted a variety of policies and procedures to communicate institutional standards for the use of academic resources (see 2.E.1).

Faculty

- [Policy 2-100](#) further delineates ethical behavior. The college's Assessment of Student Learning and Academic [Program Review](#) process provides accountability for the integrity of the college's

academic offerings.
- Consistent hiring practices, assuring that all faculty, regardless of location or modality, meet the required qualifications is required by [Procedure 4-700](). (See 3.C.3)
- The college uses technology to monitor student resource use and ensure ethical academic practices. Use of *Turnitin* or similar software is allowed through [Procedure 5-601E](). (See 2.E)

Students

- [Student Code of Conduct](): Students are expected to conduct themselves in a manner compatible with a college community. Students must assume responsibility for their actions; observe federal, state, and local laws and college regulations; and respect the rights, privileges, and property of others.
- [Verification of Student Identity](): The college uses multi-factor authentication to access the student portal. Student exams are accessed through a course shell located in the college's LMS and includes a lockdown browser enacted during exams. Additionally, many departments use third-party proctored exams for high stake tests.
- [Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy]() establishes Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) standards for student financial aid applicants. SAP standards measure a student's performance in all terms of enrollment, including summer term and terms in which the student did not receive financial aid. The college also offers a [SAP appeal process]().
- [The administrative registration change petition]() is designed for students who have an extenuating circumstance that keeps them from complying with the drop or withdraw deadlines during a term.

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2.B - Core Component 2.B

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

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

Argument

2.B.1 Response

To ensure the accuracy of any representations Aims makes regarding academic offerings, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, governance structure and accreditation relationships Aims employs systemic processes across multiple areas of the college. To provide consistent communication to both internal and external stakeholders the Marketing and Communication (MARCOM) department coordinates all marketing and advertising. In addition, data included in marketing and informational materials are reviewed for accuracy by the Director of Institutional Research and the institutional data governance group. All college catalog information must be approved by the Registrar's Office following what is approved by the faculty-led Curriculum Committee.

Website

The website is the primary and most readily accessible source of information about the college for both internal and external audiences. The information and materials presented throughout demonstrate a commitment by Aims to present itself clearly and completely to students and the public regarding information about all degree and academic programs, degree requirements, faculty and staff, tuition and fee costs, governance, and institutional policies, and accreditation relationships.

The college follows a clear mission and vision, as evidenced in the statements shared with the campus community and public, at large through its website. It also establishes, follows, and makes publicly available policies and processes for equitable standards on the part of its administration, faculty, and staff.

Many academic programs are also separately accredited by state or professional agencies. The current college accreditation status, list of the specific program accreditations and associated agency accreditors, can be found on the college website.

The website also provides information about the four-campus sites, the course schedule, academic program offerings, and information for prospective and current students. The college is active on social media and can be reached from the home page connecting Aims, its community and programs, to students and alumni.

Consumer information provides prospective and current students with resources to readily and accurately estimate attendance costs for their program of interest. Additionally, the website offers information students need to consider; including: payment deadlines, fee descriptions, payment plan instructions, and the tuition appeals process. Information about student scholarships, student loans, and student employment are also easily accessible.

MARCOM works closely with the accreditation team and Compliance Oversight Committee to ensure the website accurately reflects academic offerings, requirements, faculty and staff, costs, governance structure, and accreditation relationships.

The college's ERP, Workday, is also linked and syncs changes every 24 hours to ensure accurate faculty and staff information. Faculty and staff rosters can be viewed on the website.

Catalog

The catalog, both current and archived, contains the catalogs from the past decade-plus years and are easily accessed from the college website. The current catalog offers specific degree requirement information for each of the college's programs, relevant academic policies, comprehensive student services information, and links to program requirements and total cost of attendance, by program, to guide and support students while enrolled at Aims. Example**:** The accounting degree requirements on the website will always match the Accounting Degree Requirements in the catalog and the degree and certificate sort tool. Changes are synched every 24-hours to ensure accuracy.

Student Communications Coalition (SCC)

The SCC was established as an outcome of the process, review, and reimagine assessment project undertaken in spring 2019. The SCC works to streamline and improve routine administrative student communications and represents more than 15 student service units engaged in initiating and coordinating student communications to leverage efficiency and media modalities. The coalition meets quarterly to review communications designed for text, email, social media, and other communication channels.

Student Handbook

The student handbook is updated annually and is available to students at the start of the academic year. It is available in hard copy and online**.** It contains information regarding financial aid resources, student support services, student code of conduct and responsibilities, academic policies, rights, and responsibilities, as well as information about campus safety and security, student activities, clubs and engagement opportunities. Representatives from across the college review content related to areas of oversight and new/updated information is submitted for review. The final draft of is reviewed by the Dean of Students, MARCOM, and Student Activities, Inclusion & Leadership (SAIL) staff prior to web and print publication.

2.B.2 Response

Aims ensures evidence is available to support any claims it makes regarding its contributions to the educational experience through community engagement by notating/citing references for data and statistics, transparently posting persistence, retention, and completion information, cost of education,

student fees and more. Additionally, Aims publicly publishes an [annual report](#) that overviews the college's vision and mission, strategic plan updates, general statistics and financial updates, and serves as a reporting and accountability mechanism for all stakeholders.

Research, Publication, & Creation of Materials by Faculty, Students, & Staff

Aims encourages its faculty, students, and professional staff to author, publish, and otherwise disseminate original materials related to their academic activities. [Policy 3-800](#) is provided to encourage the development and distribution of original work through the clarification of copyright and other rights for the developers and Aims.

Economic Development & Impact

Economic impact data are gathered via economic data analytics advisor [Emsi](#) and Aims' Institutional Research department. The study measures the economic impact created by Aims on the business community and the benefits the college generates in return for the investments made by its key stakeholder groups — students, taxpayers, and society.

Results of the [economic impact and investment analysis](#) reflect employee, student, campus, and financial data, provided by the college, for FY 2017-18. Impacts on Aims' service area economy are reported and are measured in terms of added income. The ROI to students, taxpayers, and society in Colorado are reported under the investment analysis.

To provide consistent communication to both internal and external stakeholders [MARCOM](#) coordinates all individualized location, division, department and program-level marketing and communication plans as necessary. Additionally, data included in marketing and informational materials are reviewed for accuracy by the Director of Institutional Research and the institutional data governance group.

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2.C - Core Component 2.C

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

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

Argument

2.C.1 Response

Aims Board of Trustee (BOT) Policy 19 outlines the role of the BOT. Board members are elected by the public for staggered terms of four years. Once the election is certified, new Trustees take part in the Board orientation process to become familiar with the college, duties, rules, regulations, and guidelines. In 2015, the orientation process was formalized and continues to evolve and become more robust. Additionally, information refreshers on topics covered during orientation may also be scheduled for work sessions or information items during Board meetings. Materials provided to the new Trustees can be viewed here.

Board meetings are open to the public as outlined in (C.R.S. 24-6-402 (2)(b)) and notified to the public (C.R.S 24-6-402 (2)(c)(I-IV)) as required by Colorado's Open Meetings Law. Aims has designated the BOT webpage as the posting site for Board meeting notifications, agendas, packets, and materials. The law requires that notice of a Board meeting must occur on the designated posting site at least 24 hours prior to the meeting. Aims typically posts the meeting agenda and packet to the webpage 5-7 days prior to the meeting in compliance with public notice laws. The only time the meeting is not open to the public is during an executive session (C.R.S. 24-6-402 (4)(a-f)) as allowed by statute.

Public Comment

As governed by Colorado Open Meetings law under the item titled "Public Comment," BOT meetings include a time for public comment and input directly related to the business and operations of the college on items before the Board. The public comment item occurs on every BOT meeting agenda.

Professional Development

Policy 81 outlines the Board's commitment to ongoing education and advocacy, recognizing their

importance and necessity for the welfare and governance of Aims. The Board consciously invests in its ability to govern competently and wisely to ensure Board skills, methods, and supports are sufficient to govern with excellence. The Board recognizes that educational and advocacy opportunities reach beyond the local level, to state and national levels. The Board further acknowledges education and advocacy must be balanced by fiscal responsibility. To this end, the Board establishes its meeting and travel priorities as part of developing the college budget.

Retreats

The BOT engages in educational and development opportunities as well as assessment and reflection. The Board holds retreats to consider accomplishments and challenges, further education, set priorities, or any other matters of Board concern. Themes and topics are developed by the Board and presented to the Board Chair and college CEO/President for implementation. These retreats are funded as the budget allows and are held in compliance with the Colorado Open Meetings Law C.R.S. 24-6-402.

Work Sessions/Reports

The Board recognizes the importance of regular reporting and interaction with college stakeholders to inform decisions. The BOT holds monthly work sessions to preview items that will come to subsequent BOT meetings. Additionally, the college reports regularly on strategic planning initiatives as well as a set annual calendar of subjects.

Finally, the BOT has access to legal counsel in order to inform decisions.

2.C.2 and 2.C.3 Response

The board reviews and considers the interests of students, community and service area constituents, industry, and the local economy while prioritizing and enhancing the college as evidenced by the following State of Colorado and BOT policies:

- Colorado Revised Statutes Title 23. Postsecondary Education § 23-71-123 and Colorado Revised Statutes Title 23. Postsecondary Education § 23-71-122 outline state requirements for educational boards.
- Build a Stronger Community: Policy 2 - Purpose states, the statement of institutional Purpose responds to the questions of "What is our cause? Why are we here?"
- First Choice: The Recognized Leader in Learning and Student Success: Policy 3 -Vision states, the statement of institutional Vision responds to the question of "What is the desired future for Aims Community College?"
- Provide knowledge and skills to advance quality of life, economic vitality, and overall success of the diverse communities we serve: Policy 4 - Mission states, the statement of institutional Mission responds to the question of "What is the overall function of Aims Community College?"
- Policy 19 states, "employing, evaluating, and supporting the college CEO/President as the institutional leader, monitoring the fiscal health of the college, setting and monitoring policy direction, advocating for the college."
- Policy 16 states, "public confidence in the integrity of Aims Community College demands that all Trustees demonstrate high ethical standards at all times. Trustees should discharge their

duties independently and impartially."
- **Policy 83** states, "The Board of Trustees will reserve time in its annual schedule of meetings to set its priorities for the year. These priorities should be determined, in part, from the outcomes of the Board's self-evaluation and the evaluation of the college CEO/President."

The Board and the president/CEO establish annual goals to prepare for each academic year. Not only does this provide a clear direction for the president, but also offers transparency to students, staff, faculty, and the community. As evidenced, the focus of the president's goals, with Board approval and oversight, show a broad internal and external focus. College stakeholders report bi-annual updates on the president's goals to the Board.

Furthermore, as demonstrated in these documents, the Board:

- remains informed through student, faculty, and staff reports at each BOT meeting;
- remains informed through Cabinet member presentations at each BOT meeting;
- remains informed through public comment; (Policy 46 and Procedure 46-01)
- has access to the economic impact report;
- approves the college Facilities Plan; and
- is involved in sunsetting and adding programs.

Finally, every BOT meeting ends with these questions to ensure the Board is appropriately focused on its duties:

Assessment of Board Meeting/Plus Delta

1. What did we learn?
2. What worked? What didn't work?
3. Did we focus on oversight? Strategy? Challenges?
4. Did we receive the information we needed to have an effective conversation?
5. Did everyone have an opportunity to speak?
6. Did we spend our time focusing on vision and purpose?
7. Did the Board speak with one voice?

2.C.4 Response

Aims and the State of Colorado have policies in place to preserve the Board's independence from undue influence. Trustees are subject to Colorado Revised Statutes and certain portions of the Constitution of the State of Colorado which set forth Standards of Conduct, and in particular, C.R.S. 24-6-203. Additionally, the Standards of Conduct provides for prior disclosure to the Secretary of State, of private interests that may impinge upon a Trustee's fiduciary duty and public trust. The Board concludes that in such situations, the Trustee shall recuse themselves from any participation, discussion, or voting on the matter. Public office is a trust created by the confidence that the public places in the integrity of its public officers. To preserve this confidence, it is the desire of the BOT to operate under the highest ethical standards (Policy 15-Conflict of Interest and Procedure 15-01- Conflict of Interest). Trustees are also required to discharge their duties independently and impartially (Policy 16- Code of Ethics and Procedure 16-01- Code of Ethics).

See also 1.B.2 for more information about processes to ensure undue influence does not occur.

2.C.5 Response:

The day-to-day management of the institution is delegated to the college President/CEO as outlined in Policy 70. The president/CEO is accountable to the Board acting as a body. The president/CEO is charged with performing the chief executive officer duties in accordance with the established policies and directives of the Board and the State of Colorado to administer the affairs and programs. Duties and responsibilities include:

- providing leadership and direction to the vice presidents, deans, directors, and other persons in leadership positions in the performance of their administrative duties and responsibilities;
- delegating to each such person the appropriate authority for supervision and administration of the area under their supervision and jurisdiction while remaining specifically responsible to the Board for the execution of such delegated duties and responsibilities; and
- providing and maintaining an effective system of campus governance at all campuses.

As evidenced in the organizational chart, college functions are delegated at the Cabinet level and conducted by faculty and staff.

Faculty Oversight

- Aims engages internal constituencies through shared governance and systemic processes that include planning, policies, and procedures. Policy 74, defines shared governance and establishes commitment to practice distributed leadership and democratic governance wherever and however practicable. In May 2020, the BOT adopted a procedure to guide the implementation of Policy 74. The procedure states that standing and advisory committees that are organized, managed, and tracked through College Council are "recognized as official college avenues of participation."
- Faculty are responsible for oversight of program curriculum and course content, both through the Curriculum Committee and through representation on state committees, such as the State Faculty Curriculum Committee (SFCC) and State Discipline Groups. State Discipline Groups monitor content, rigor, and student performance outcomes for each course. The CCCNS process is outlined here.
- Curriculum Committee oversees all program and course content through an approval process that has been developed to assure quality. All programs and courses must be approved by the committee, including any prerequisites or corequisites. Aims programs maintain authority over program-related curriculum.
- Learning Council provides a venue to vet issues and participate in shared governance surrounding academic affairs issues in alignment with Policy 74.
- Aims Faculty Association (AFA) unites faculty in the common goal of educating students and promoting the profession of teaching at Aims. Further, their purpose is to represent all faculty, their interests, and the interests of Aims. Pursuant to that purpose, these bylaws are set forth so that all faculty are represented. All issues dealing with faculty welfare will be the responsibility of the AFA members and their representatives. All issues dealing with college-wide operations and academic matters will be the responsibility of the entire faculty. This association is intended to be an independent organization of Aims faculty. Affiliation with any other organization does not detract from this independence. Aims in a non-union institution.

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2.D - Core Component 2.D

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

Argument

2.D.0 Response

Aims expresses the institutional philosophy on academic freedom through Policy 101, Academic Freedom. This freedom is moderated by the understanding that the instructor is responsible for not using the classroom for indoctrination or personal views. In addition, the policy encourages faculty to actively present different views and to be as objective as possible. The college encourages the free exchange of knowledge through its adoption of the Learning College philosophy which engages students as full partners who assume responsibility for their choices and encourages collaborative learning (see 3.B.2).

Policy 101 delineates behavior the college considers to be ethical. Standards related to ethical teaching and research practices are communicated to new faculty through the orientation process, reinforced through the faculty mentor program, and the online Faculty Toolbox. Any complaints about unethical faculty behavior are handled according to policy and procedure. Complaints that arise through a student concern would be addressed first through the student grievance process, outlined in Procedure 5-601C. Discipline resulting from faculty ethics violations is addressed according to Policy 4-800.

In the classroom, faculty teach to learning outcomes through engaging discussion and activities covering a wide-range of diverse political, religious, social and cultural philosophies, ideologies, systems, and ethical issues and movements.

- POS105 - Introduction to Political Science includes comparative political systems and political ideologies.
- LIT 205 - Race, Ethnicity, & Culture in U.S. Literature assesses "the impact of ethnicity in the creation of identity and an American canon."
- PHI 218 - Environmental Ethics tackles various cultural, philosophical and religious perspectives on the environment.
- WST200 - Introduction to Women's Studies addresses the historical basis of gender inequality and the intersectionality of sex, race, class, sexual identity, age, ability, religion, and white ethnocentrism.
- GEO106 - Human Geography holistically covers topics like nationalism, environmental consequences of human activity, and how political movements are affected by language, religion, and ethnicity.
- BUS115 - Introduction to Business examines the importance of business ethics, corporate social responsibility, and identifies how businesses participate in the global economy.
- BUS216 - Legal Environment of Business analyzes legal and ethical issues in business situations and identifies ethical dilemmas in business decisions.
- BUS217 - Business Communications & Report Writing defines legal and ethical issues in communication.

- CRJ145 - [Corrections](#) emphasizes the role of sociology and other interdisciplinary approaches to the field of corrections and society's response.
- CRJ268 - [Criminal Profiling](#) identifies the psychological and sociological explanations related to criminal acts.
- MAN128 - [Human Relations in Organizations](#) analyzes business ethics, politics, and influence of power in the workplace, evaluates the effectiveness of diversity, team dynamics in relation to productivity, and creative problem-solving.
- MAN230 - [Corporate Ethics & Social Responsibilities](#) discusses the challenges of making ethically and socially responsible decisions in a complex business environment with limited resources and competing stakeholder interests.

Aims faculty are supported and encouraged, along with their students, to freely express themselves in various extracurricular activities (see 1.C.1).

As outlined in 1.C, Aims values academic freedom and supports and encourages the exchange of ideas within the college community, including ideas that may be unpopular or controversial. At the same time, the college encourages respectful discourse and has the obligation to address issues of safety and illegal acts.

Aims faculty evaluation process, student course evaluations, classroom observations outlined in 3.C.4, and the [MAAP process](#) (see 1.C.1) help ensure faculty uphold the college's academic freedom policy.

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2.E - Core Component 2.E

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

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

Argument

2.E.1 Response

[Policies and procedures](#) govern and communicate institutional standards for the responsible use of academic resources, ethical learning and research practices. These documents outline prohibited behaviors, including: cheating, plagiarism, and complicity in academic dishonesty, along with the institutional response to violations of these standards. The [faculty handbook](#) also highlights information about ethics and student rights, responsibilities, and behavior.

Copyright & Intellectual Property

[Policy 3-850](#) outlines the college's commitment to the creation, discovery, and dissemination of knowledge, supports 1) the responsible, good faith exercise of full fair use rights, as codified in 17 U.S.C. § 107, by faculty, librarians, and staff in furtherance of their teaching, research, and service activities; 2) copyright ownership for creative, non-directed works by faculty, staff, and students and college ownership of directed employment-related works; and 3) protection of ownership rights for creators of works that require a different ownership model. [Procedure 3-850](#) controls the unauthorized distribution of copyrighted material through peer-to-peer file sharing.

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

The IRB, supported by [Policy I-700](#) and [Procedure 1-700A](#), assures ethical treatment of human subjects of any research that takes place on any of Aims' campuses. The Board is composed of faculty, staff and is chaired by the Executive Director of Institutional Research & Assessment. The policy and procedure require the Board to have written practices in place that comply with all rules, regulations, laws, and best practices relating to the research of human subjects. To ensure that the policy is enforced and effective, research projects are required to follow this [process](#). It should be noted that the IRB committee meets on an as-needed basis since requests are widely spaced.

Academic Honesty

Information regarding academic honesty is communicated through the [standard syllabus](#) policies that apply to all syllabi. Departments like [Nurse Aide](#) and [Emergency Medical Services](#) use program

handbooks to govern student expectations and behavior aligned to program policies, including academic integrity (see 2.E.4). In addition, faculty engage in academic integrity training and application via new faculty orientation, department training, and case study learning (see 2.E.4).

2.E.2 & 2.E.3 Response

While Aims rarely conducts research as described above, faculty, staff, and students are frequently involved in research that does not require regulatory compliance or fiscal accountability. For general research and scholarly practice, the college is dedicated to providing the necessary guidance on how to appropriately conduct research and complete assigned work ethically through the proper use of research and copyrighted materials, accurate referencing of sources, etc.

Communication and Training

Aims has instituted a variety of policies and procedures to communicate institutional standards for the use of academic resources (see 2.E.1). Policy 2-100 further delineates ethical behavior.

- **Faculty**
  - Communication of these standards begins with a review of ethical teaching and research practices with new faculty during the orientation process. It is reinforced through the faculty mentor program and online FTLC resources. New faculty orientation covers teaching practices, equity-minded classrooms, and student-centered approaches. The faculty mentoring program and EDU 260: Adult Learning & Teaching also cover the importance of integrity in scholarly practice.
  - The sabbatical process allows for faculty initiated research and is supported by procedure 529-01.
  - IRB oversight (see 2.E.1).
- **Employees**
  - Ethical standards are also outlined in Policy 1-105. Faculty are further bound by Policy 102, which holds faculty to the expectations of promoting moral integrity, fair and ethical treatment of others, and avoidance of conflicts of interest or appearance of impropriety.
- **Students**
  - All policies and procedures are communicated to students through multiple means, including publication in both an online and hard-copy of the student handbook, the online catalog, during new student orientation, and are linked through the consumer information disclosure.
  - The Dean of Students maintains a webpage focused on community standards and student conduct and presents consequences of violations ranging from behavioral interventions to disciplinary actions. Various career and technical programs use program specific handbooks outlining expectations regarding academic integrity.
  - Aims offers support and guidance for ethical research and use of information resources.
    - The Online Writing Lab is a resource providing students with information on how to find and evaluate sources, cite sources accurately, avoid plagiarism, and more. The site is open to the public and accessible 24/7.
    - Copyright guidance and research guidance is provided to students through the college's online Keifer Library.

- Additionally, syllabi and online course shells include academic honesty information .
- The college focuses on educating students about academic integrity and receive guidance on the effective use of research skills through competencies included in many common Aims courses. For instance, more than 50% of degree/certificate completers take ENG121: English Composition I, which requires use of research methodologies, integration of digital and print sources, and application of assigned style of documentation. Research is also incorporated into the curriculum of many general education courses and within all AA, AS, and AAS degree programs. Writing assignments in most courses require a research element.
- Literacy sessions and the development of LibGuides, webpages that provide research assistance and subject resource guides for each subject area at the college.

2.E.4 Response

Enforcement of the Student Code of Conduct resides with the Dean of Students as outlined in Procedure 611-01 and Procedure 5-601B.

The college uses technology to monitor student resource use and ensure ethical academic practices. Use of Turnitin or similar software is allowed through Procedure 5-601E. Aims currently uses Turnitin to monitor submitted student work for originality. The policy also requires faculty to include information in their syllabi about the monitoring system and the consequences for failure of use for submission of written work.

Faculty perform an intervention for the first violation of academic honesty standards. Tools such as the classroom management decision making guide, relevant program handbooks, and training materials serve as helpful guides for faculty and department chairs in partnership with the Dean of Students. Subsequent violations are handled through the Dean of Students office. Formal disciplinary data for cases of academic dishonesty with resulting sanctions from 2016 to 2021, can be found here.

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2.S - Criterion 2 - Summary

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

Summary

Despite its unique funding situation, Aims is a public institution and complies with all state laws and regulations governing higher education (and adequately finances all required activities). Its Board of Trustees is elected, and its meetings comply with the Colorado Open Meetings Law, keeping it accountable to the voters of the district. The operations of the Board are defined in bylaws and policy, and the president/CEO is appointed and reviewed by the Board. Financial accountability is enforced throughout the college, and a conflict of interest policy is strictly enforced.

Aims has experienced challenges through "The Great Resignation." However, difficulties arising from turnover and transitions have led the college to capitalize on this opportunity to consider organizational chart changes which will be implemented in fall 2022.

The college's five-year policy and procedure review has resulted in a formalized and systemic process. Applying this process has resulted in the development of new policies, frequently in response to identified continuous improvement efforts. An opportunity exists for the college to undertake a comprehensive review of its established procedures with a level of specificity that meaningful data can be collected. Much analysis of college service standards and performance continues to rely on subjective feedback.

Sources

There are no sources.

3 - Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources and Support

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

3.A - Core Component 3.A

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

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

Argument

3.A.1 Response

To ensure offerings are appropriate, Aims addresses student performance expectations in several ways. Alignment with the Colorado Common Course Numbering System (CCCNS) assures consistency in courses and programs. Additionally, defined and assessed program learning goals, advisory committee review and input, faculty-recommended course maps, specialized accreditation oversight, and program review address performance levels and expectations.

State Alignment

All courses and programs align with the CCCNS, which details a topical outline and expected competencies for each course offered. Course content is approved by the SFCC, which meets monthly, and State Discipline Groups, which meet bi-annually. Each State Discipline Group includes Aims faculty representatives who give input on new and revised courses. State Discipline Groups monitor content, rigor, and student performance outcomes for each course.

Curriculum Committee

Curriculum Committee meets monthly to ensure new courses or course revisions from the SFCC and/or the college are adopted and maintained. Additionally, the committee reviews and approves new certificates and degrees. Updates are documented through agenda and course adoption or course maintenance forms. New adoptions or changes are integrated into the college catalog on a bi-annual basis through the catalog review process.

Revisions to courses are also integrated into course syllabi using the universal syllabus template. Program chairs, directors, and deans review syllabi each semester to confirm course currency, content, and quality. Course currency and rigor are also supported by the new course development process. This process was defined in 2018 to support faculty in developing high-quality curriculum.

The process allows faculty to receive time, financial, and resource support from learning experience designers to develop new or significantly revised CCCNS curriculum. Examples of the process include course redesign, curriculum refresh, and modality designs.

Program Learning Outcomes (PLO) Process

Program currency is maintained by the academic program learning assessment process, which outlines specific steps Aims takes to develop appropriate PLOs for all programs, including general education. The initial steps for the PLO process occur every five years and include five steps described by the PLO process map. Through this process, courses are sequenced to ensure student knowledge-level is appropriate for the next step of the learning process, and courses are differentiated according to the level of expectations and knowledge-level of students.

Examples of PLO aligned curriculum maps include:

- General Aviation Pilot Program
- Graphic Design Program
- Production Agriculture Program

Specialized Accreditation & Governing Bodies

Many programs have specialized accrediting bodies that further define and guide expected student outcomes and program rigor. External reviews are part of the accreditation processes, which are then incorporated into the program review process (discussed below) to provide another layer of accountability regarding program rigor and student achievement. Additionally, program adjustments meeting the 25% threshold of content or credit hour change are reported to HLC.

CTE programs are required to provide annual metric information through the Colorado VE-135 report on graduation and placement data, which further indicates program relevancy in determining whether graduating students are being appropriately placed in related jobs.

Advisory Committees

CTE advisory committees are engaged regularly to evaluate the currency and required levels of performance for credentials. Committees are composed of a representative group of individuals from both business and community occupations. The primary purpose of the committees is to guide and advise CTE educators in establishing and operating programs. Committee membership must be composed of at least 51% business/industry and meet at least two times per year, once per semester (fall and spring). Members are selected for two- to three-year terms with the possibility of a one-term extension. Aims engages committees in the creation, revision, and sunsetting of programs. The industry insight, expertise, and direction members provide is a vital step in the process of program creation, revision, and deletion; program currency and rigor are also maintained with their input. Annual surveys also provide feedback.

Common Learning Outcomes (CLO) & Performance

Aims has five institutional common learning outcomes that all students should meet upon graduation: Written Communication, Problem Solving, Critical Thinking, Professionalism, and Oral Communication. To ensure that students are meeting the core competencies set by the SFCC as well

as Aims' CLOs, student performance for each course and program is evaluated through curricular assessment and program review processes.

Faculty-Recommended Course Maps

Faculty-recommended course maps for AA and AS degrees include many options for students to complete general education and elective requirements. Faculty-recommended course maps are also in place for several AA/AS Degree with Designation (DWD). While some general education categories like Communication or Mathematics might offer students only two choices, other categories allow students to choose from several possibilities.

Program Review Process

To ensure continuous improvement of academic programs, the program review process includes both an annual review of departmental data and a four-year examination of program data and quality which also align with the CTE program renewal cycle. Refreshed during the AY21, the annual program review process features an updated dashboard for each department allowing faculty and academic administrators to identify trends in enrollment, fill rates, run rates, and course success by modality. In addition, the dashboard enhances access to important demographic information on program students to inform decisions around academic support and other initiatives. Program directors and chairs facilitate conversations with faculty teams to identify trends, opportunities, challenges, and best practices.

For CTE programs, additional data is provided by employer surveys, which are conducted to gauge employer satisfaction with graduate performance. The survey is directly linked to the college's CLOs and PLOs and provides additional evidence of program curriculum meeting the needs of employer stakeholders and student performance.

3.A.2 Response

Aims provides undergraduate certificates and associate degrees. Aims CTE certificates are differentiated through scaffolding of certificates that lead to a degree. Advanced courses include more sophisticated outcomes at a higher-level of achievement (see 3.A.1). Curriculum mapping assists in ensuring learning outcomes are adequately addressed by the curriculum.

Through Policy 2-500, the BOT has approved the offering of four certificate and degree award options published in the college catalog. As previously described in 3.A.1, learning goals are articulated and differentiated in collaboration with the SFCC and Aims faculty discipline experts. Aims participates in the Colorado State Guaranteed Transfer (GT) Pathways ensuring courses are at an appropriate level. All courses and programs offered through Aims adhere to learning outcomes and are stated and reflected in several publications/documents. Additionally, Aims' CLOs apply to all programs and are articulated on the assessment central webpage as well as course curriculum maps.

In May 2022 Aims hosted peer reviewers for a substantive change visit for the college's first BAS in Public Safety. In support of this endeavor, faculty participated on a task force to create a philosophical statement defining the differences in rigor between associate's and bachelor's degrees. Since Aims has historically offered only 100/200 level courses, the task force considered the difference between 100/200 and 300/400 level classes. This statement was vetted through the

college's Learning Council for further review and faculty-wide feedback; feedback was incorporated and the statement was finalized in fall 2021.

3.A.3 Response

Aims uses the following means and strategies to ensure consistency of program quality, learning goals, and overall standards required for all courses across all modalities and locations:

- Outcomes assessments (CLO and PLO) processes are consistent across all modalities and locations.
- Faculty Observation & Evaluation: During full-time faculty evaluations, the annual plan includes dialogue on what went well, what was challenging, and professional development. Additionally, student course evaluations are discussed (see 3.C.4).
- Consistent hiring practices, assuring that all faculty, regardless of location or modality, meet the required qualifications is required by Procedure 4-700 (see 3.C.3).
- Aims follows policy and procedure to ensure all courses are created with the same credit hour definition and publishes it in the universal syllabus under Carnegie contact hours. As part of a monitoring report in 2019, Policy 112 and Procedure 112-01 were updated, and credit hour clock hour compliance was implemented. The reports are run multiple times before and during, academic terms to ensure courses are compliant.
- State Common Course Numbering Alignment: See 3.A.1 for a description of the CCCNS including SFCC, and State Discipline Group involvement. All course sections offered through distance or dual credit modes use the same topics and competencies.
- Universal Syllabus see 3.A.1
- Curriculum development or course revitalization process specifically addresses the unique needs of online/hybrid courses. Appendix D addresses guidelines for online/hybrid course development and Appendix E provides standard navigation expectations for online courses (see 3.A.1).
- Student Evaluations for full- and part-time faculty are reviewed and changes to delivery, course content, and assessments are discussed (see 3.C.4).
- Instructional Technology Support is available for every modality and at every site, including concurrent, additional locations, and online campuses.
- Professional development opportunities are available to all faculty (see 3.C.5).

Online- & Hybrid-Specific Supports

- Training for New Online Faculty: See 3.C.3 for information on online training and 3.C.5 for orientation to online teaching.
- Online Course Evaluations: New and revitalized courses that are offered online are evaluated to ensure the course meets specific criteria. A learning experience designer conducts the online course evaluation to ensure the course meet online requirements. Feedback is provided to the dean, chair/director, and the faculty for approval.
- Online Teaching Observation see 3.C.4

Concurrent Enrollment-Specific Supports

- Concurrent enrollment approval process ensures structure and consistency for courses.
  - Site schools complete instructor approval request forms for department chair approval.

- - Hiring process ensues (same HR hiring process as non-CE instructors).
  - Courses are submitted for approval; textbook, course material, syllabi, equipment, and other course components requested by department chair.
  - Upon approval concurrent sites may schedule courses.
  - See concurrent enrollment approval workflow for general education (concurrent workflow for process 4-700A), for CTE (concurrent workflow for 4-700 B), and for instructors who do not meet qualifications.
- Concurrent Enrollment Orientation: CE instructors are required to attend a fall semester orientation training which includes:
  - Teaching expectations
  - Title IX training
  - K-12 technology
  - D2L learning management system
  - Location-specific policies and procedures
  - College resources, department meetings, and more.
  - Beginning in fall 2021, the orientation was offered in an asynchronous, online format for instructors who join mid-term.

Concurrent enrollment course success info here.

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3.B - Core Component 3.B

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

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

Argument

3.B.1 Response

The general education curriculum provides relevant academic experiences and contextualized learning required to achieve the broad goals of the college mission statement. The institution provides students with academic opportunities to develop a global perspective and skills for future success.

Following the recommendation of previous HLC peer review teams, the college monitors general education to address the mission of Aims. Assessment of general education is aligned with requirements established by the state for general education.

In February of 2022, the college developed a general education definition and mission statement. Additionally, a general education assessment plan and course map was created to provide guidance on which courses need to be assessing which program-level learning outcomes (PLOs). Course maps provide the strongest picture of how learning occurs and is scaffolded in general education, and, more specifically, the Associate of Arts (AA) and Sciences (AS) degrees. Full implementation will occur in fall 2022.

General education course syllabi provide more detailed purpose, content, and intended learning outcomes specific to each general education course. Assessment of student achievement of these outcomes is conducted and analyzed for improvement (see 4.B). As described in 4.B, Aims programs have established curriculum maps to help students and faculty further dialogue on skill development as well as assure adequate opportunities for skill improvement.

Mission

The mission of Aims is to provide knowledge and skills to advance the quality of life, economic vitality, and overall success of the diverse communities we serve.

The college's general education program enhances the offering of a variety of associate's degrees, transfer courses, and certificates. Aims' general education courses are part of the CCCNS, which requires course outcomes to be current and consistent across the state. Aims faculty participate in two annual conferences: the statewide 2:2 conference which brings together discipline groups from the state's 2-year colleges to review course-level content and descriptions, and the Fac2Fac conference where 2-year and 4-year faculty gather to review existing and/or new Statewide Transfer Articulation Agreements (STAAs).

Participation in the bi-annual Colorado Fac2Fac conference ensures Aims faculty and interests are represented in the discussion and development of the STAAs. Additionally, Aims faculty participation ensures the Colorado STAAs, Aims CLOs, and individual course learning outcomes will enhance the general education courses at Aims. Thereby, assuring general education courses at Aims contribute to the overall mission and philosophy of the college.

- Associate of Arts (AA) & Associate of Science (AS) degrees both require a minimum of 34 semester hours of general education coursework. Included in this total are six credits of Written Communication; three credits of Mathematics; 15 credits of Arts, Humanities, History, and Social and Behavioral Sciences; seven credits of Natural or Physical Sciences; and an additional three credit course selected from public speaking, interpersonal communication, or introduction to PC applications.
- Associate of General Studies (AGS) requires a minimum of 22 semester hours of general education coursework. Included in this total are nine credits of Communication and Humanities; 3-5 credits of Mathematics; six credits of Behavioral, Social, and Economic Sciences; and four credits of Physical or Life Sciences.
- Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degrees require a minimum of 15-16 semester hours of general education coursework. Included in this total are three credits of Mathematics; three credits of English; and 9-10 credits of courses selected in the current general education approved degree electives list.

In fall 2023 Aims will offer the first Associates of Engineering Science (AES) degree.

Certificate program general education requirements vary according to need, but range between 0 and 17 semester hours.

3.B.2 Response

Aims programs, courses, curriculum, and co-curricular activities are all designed to engage students in information collection, analysis and communication, intellectual inquiry, and skill development that will support graduates in adapting to an ever-changing world. Aims grounds its program of general education in the Learning College Framework and asserts its role to "contribute and shape scenarios that empower learning through discovery, shared learning environments and construction of knowledge."

The general education curriculum is designed to build students' skills and attitudes for successful entry into the workforce and/or transfer into a four-year program, depending upon the program.

Aims established the following institutional Common Learning Outcomes (CLO) that are expected of all students graduating with an Aims degree:

Critical Thinking: Students who can think critically, apply thinking skills, and are able to evaluate real-world examples in terms of course content and knowledge. Examples of critical thinking include identifying and exploring issues, recognizing your audience and addressing them accordingly, and framing personal reference, and acknowledging other perspectives.

Problem Solving: Good problem solvers apply thinking skills to evaluate real-world examples in terms of course content and knowledge. Students with strong problem-solving skills will interpret the problem, develop a strategy to solve the problem, apply appropriate strategies and procedures, and arrive at a workable solution.

Professionalism: Students who are professional strive for excellence in their performance of required roles in their future professions. Professionals demonstrate accountability and ethical behavior, maintain a professional attitude, and conduct themselves in an appropriate and respectful manner.

Written Communication: Students should be able to demonstrate a high level of written communication skills as necessary for their future profession through the development and expression of ideas in writing. Students with strong written communication skills will include in their writing a clear main idea or theme, include appropriate content and context, organize their materials to suit the purpose of the document, and use appropriate conventions.

Oral Communication: Students should be able to demonstrate a high level of oral communication skills as necessary for their future profession through prepared, purposeful presentations designed to increase knowledge, to foster understanding, or to promote change in the listener's attitudes, values, beliefs, or behavior. A good oral presentation includes a central message with supporting materials, is organized, clearly delivered, and may involve interactions with the audience.

Aims is a Learning College. This framework, according to Terry O'Banion, "places learning first and provides educational experience for learners anyway, anyplace, anytime." From this framework, Aims developed the following Learning College vision statement: "The role of the Learning College at Aims Community College is to contribute and shape scenarios that empower learning through discovery, shared learning environments, and construction of knowledge." Aims identified five objectives to develop and assess Aims learning initiatives:

- Aims cultivates an organizational culture where policies, programs, practices, and personnel support learning as a major priority.
- Aims creates or expands recruitment and hiring programs to ensure that new staff and faculty are learning-centered and professional development programs that prepare all staff and faculty to become more effective facilitators of learning.
- Aims uses information technology to improve and expand student learning.
- Aims addresses strategies to assess and improve learning outcomes, improve assessment processes that measure the acquisition of the learning outcomes, and improve means for documenting achievement of outcomes.
- Aims creates and expands learning-centered programs and strategies to ensure the success of underprepared students.

3.B.3 Response

Human & Cultural Diversity Recognition & Growth Opportunities

Course curriculum and extracurricular opportunities provide students with growth opportunities and lifelong skills for living and working in a multicultural world. Aims also offers student support, health/wellness services, and leadership and growth opportunities. In addition to student support, Aims provides employee professional development that recognize human and cultural diversity.

Course Curriculum

- GT-transfer courses contain required learning competencies in diversity and global learning, such as psychology and sociology.
- Courses requiring human and cultural diversity outcomes
- Courses intended to engage our diverse population

Extracurricular / Co-Curricular

Many of Aims' student-facing experiences are provided through the Student Engagement, Inclusion & Success (SEIS) division.

- The CDI hosts a variety of events and programs that promote diversity and inclusion throughout the Aims community including:
    - Pride and heritage days/months, like National Coming Out Day and Latinx Heritage Month with educational and social programming, as well as military-affiliated and first responder suicide prevention fundraising event "22-Alive."
    - College-wide communications raising awareness about specific identities, important times (holidays, remembrance days, etc.), and advising on ways to create inclusive, welcoming spaces for students and colleagues of varying identities.
- The SAIL department supports the Associated Students of Aims Community College (ASACC), which includes all fee-paying students, and is represented by the Student Government Association (SGA) and the Campus Activities Programming (CAP) Boards. Additionally, SAIL uses student fees to support student clubs and organizations.
- Career Services offers students career readiness, development, and transition programming and support services.
- Catalyst is a non-credit career readiness and leadership program serving students who have completed one semester.

Health & Wellness

Aims recognizes the importance of developing students' self-awareness and awareness of others' experiences tied to both the individual and our collective community's physical, mental, and emotional well-being. Programs sponsored by ASACC or in collaboration with the CARE program (Campus, Assessment, Response & Education) aim to increase students' self-awareness of their mental health as well as fostering a community of care. Students, faculty, and staff have access to the physical education and recreation center (PERC) at no additional cost.

Student Leadership & Growth

Student participating in formal student employment opportunities like peer support positions, campus

activity programmers and student government executive officers, as well as students who serve on club executive boards, attend trainings, workshops, and conferences to support their personal and professional growth and development to live and work in our increasingly diverse and global society.

Employee Professional Development

Aims' commitment to develop employee awareness of human and cultural diversity in and outside of the classroom is also supported through employee professional development. See 1.C.3 Equity Toolkit.

Aims' CEI promotes an equitable, diverse, and inclusive climate by developing and informing initiatives, programs, and systemic practices.

3.B.4 Response

Faculty and students contribute to scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge towards the college's mission. These contributions are supported through professional development support and the tuition reimbursement policy and are evidenced through annual plans and board of trustee reports.

- Professional development enables the discovery of knowledge by faculty members and is offered through on-campus and virtual opportunities by the FTLC and CPD.
- Additionally, the FTLC offers $2,000 annually for each faculty member who wishes to attend an external academic conference for professional development or presenting academic/creative work (see utilization).

Full-time faculty contributions to scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge are assessed and evidenced in two ways. Adjunct PD and service is tracked and evidenced through the part-time faculty engagement stipend program, and faculty contributions to their fields, dedication to the discovery of knowledge, and scholarship is tracked and recognized through the FTLC's professional growth and development certificate program.

Student Contributions to Scholarly, Creative Work, & Discovery of Knowledge

Aims students are supported in their contributions to creative work and discovery of knowledge through a variety of events, programs, clubs, honor societies, publications, and more.

- Events/Grants support students in the discovery of knowledge and creative work by supporting field trips and guest visits. The Early College Hansen Grant enables concurrent enrollment students to participate in workshops, concerts, plays, and visits from local artists.
- Academic programs support students as they participate in creative and discovery work relevant to their disciplines.
- Clubs and publications support discovery of knowledge through a variety of hands-on professional development opportunities.

Learning College Philosophy

General education courses follow the Learning College philosophy to contribute and shape scenarios that empower learning through discovery, shared learning environments, and construction of

knowledge (see 3.B.2).

This philosophy informed the development of five institutional CLOs. CLOs define the expectations of an Aims education and provide the benchmarks against which the college holds itself accountable. These CLOs are essential to the development of general education in students.

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3.C - Core Component 3.C

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

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

Argument

3.C.1 Response

The hiring process is crucial to ensuring the overall composition of the college's faculty and staff reflects human diversity. College values, such as authenticity, truthfulness, and inclusiveness, reflect a commitment to a diverse and inclusive culture. Likewise, the college's mission speaks to the "diverse communities we serve."

Student Body Demographics

Annual 2020-21 Student Profile:

College Level – 5,415

- 59.71% Female
- 43.6%   Traditional age (18-21)
- 59.28% First-Generation
- 28.19% Low Income
- 42.15% Racial/Ethnic Minority (disaggregated data here)

High School Level – 2,857

- 51.95% Female
- 39.76% First-Generation

- 37.13% Racial/Ethnic Minority (disaggregated data here)

For racial/ethnic minorities, the percentage includes students who self-report a race/ethnicity of American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Hispanic/Latino, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, or two or more races.

The demographics of northern Colorado – Weld County, specifically – are very similar, according to United States census data from 2019.

Aims continues to recruit and hire with the goal to employ people whose human diversity reflects that of Aims students. According to a report submitted to the Board of Trustees, Aims is making positive strides. In 2020, the employee population had the following racial/ethnic characteristics:

- 65.8% White (down from 73.8% in 2019)
- 15% Hispanic or Latino (up from 12.5% in 2019)
- 2% Asian (unchanged from 2019)
- 2% African American (up from 1.2% in 2019)
- 15.2% Other or unknown (up from 10.4% in 2019)

Striving To Create A More Diverse Composition of Faculty & Staff

Human Resources is taking steps to create a more diverse employee body through the following strategies:

- Diversity Jobs.com and Vets.com see 1.C.2
- HR tracks the race and ethnicity profile of full- and part-time employees on an annual basis. The college increased Hispanic/Latinx and Black/African American employees in AY20.
- College Climate Assessment: Aims is committed to fostering a welcoming college environment that grants equitable access to all students, faculty and staff. To take action on this commitment and gain deeper insight into the experiences of underrepresented and marginalized members of the Aims community, the Climate Survey Working Group (CSWG), made up of faculty, staff, and students, was established in fall 2020 to address line 14 of the strategic plan, including the administration of a climate assessment. In response to the assessment, the college created action items.

3.C.2 Response

Aims ensures that there are sufficient numbers and continuity of faculty members to carry out classroom and non-classroom roles.

Aims Strategic Plan & Budgeting Process

Aims has an effective, well-developed process for developing budgets (see 5.B.2). Part of this process includes an annual college-wide review of all staffing needs. Cabinet members and their teams observe a systemic process and timeline to request new positions that align with the budgeting process. Through this process, deans, chairs, and campus executive directors collaborate to request funding for additional staffing when warranted. Annually, Academic Affairs conducts a position review to determine the creation and deletion of faculty positions.

Aims assesses and adjusts college-wide staffing through several avenues. All stakeholder groups, including external stakeholders and students, are represented in the strategic plan development process with additional engagement through planning surveys and focus groups. During the strategic plan implementation and the annual budgeting process, employees across the college are directly involved in the strategic plan implementation teams and committees as well as employees from various departments and programs, together they have direct input into their specific area's budget development and staffing requests. The college's program review process also informs the addition of faculty FTE.

Advisory committees provide another layer of engagement for external stakeholders during these processes. Included in the reflection process within the strategic plan development, the planning team reviews the Community College Survey of Engagement (CCSSE) and Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory results to better understand the perspectives of Aims student body.

Faculty Load

Faculty load is aligned with clock hour requirements, and faculty are in the classroom an average of 15 hours per week. The practice of 15/15/10- amounts to 10 hours of service outside of the 15 hours in the classroom and 15 hours that is designated for classroom preparation and assessment of learning. The 10 hours of service to the college community allows faculty to engage in a variety of service options such as Curriculum Committee, Learning Council, Curricular Assessment Committee, consultation, mentoring programs, and other professional development and committees. Faculty annual plans demonstrate a workload composition of teaching, service, and professional development. Faculty who take on leadership roles may be awarded course release in addition to the 10 hours that are awarded for service.

- Policy 4-702 describes guidelines for faculty productivity, including discipline-based staffing recommendations. Some college programs (ex: CTE and health sciences) require higher contact than others.
- Policy 4-701 describes full-time instructor's responsibility to meet the classes required by the contracted load, to be available to meet the needs of students in areas of instruction, to complete scholarly activities professional development, and service, and to participate in required departmental and institutional activities.
- The faculty handbook also outlines faculty load expectations.

Student to Faculty Ratio

The student-to-faculty ratio as reported in NCCBP:

	2020	**2019**	**2018**
Aims	11.2	13.7	13.6
NCCBP	15.3	15.5	15.5

To maintain continuity of courses and operations, the college has prioritized succession planning in the strategic plan (line item 43). Additionally, faculty traditionally serve in a transition year between announcing retirement and retirement; this assists the college in recruiting new faculty. As in many institutions and industries, the aging of the workforce has impacted retirement rates at the college. The employee turnover rate since 2016 has averaged 9.7%.

Adjunct Engagement & Support

Aims has several mechanisms to support adjunct faculty. Adjunct PD and service is tracked and evidenced through the part-time faculty engagement stipend program, and part-time faculty contributions to their fields, dedication to the discovery of knowledge, and scholarship is tracked and recognized through the FTLC's professional growth and development certificate program. Part-time faculty who complete ten hours of paid service and ten hours of professional development during the previous academic year are recognized and rewarded with a small stipend through the part-time faculty engagement stipend.

Furthermore, The Aims Adjunct Faculty Committee was established in 2013 as the Part-Time Faculty Task Force to evaluate part-time faculty issues and offer suggestions for improvement for the support and professional development of part-time faculty at Aims. It was decided in 2018 to change from a task force to a standing committee of the college.

Staffing Faculty Support Areas

Faculty support areas are an extension of the classroom. Staff in support areas such as the FTLC and Learning Commons are properly qualified to support faculty.

- Professional Learning Communities (PLCs): Piloted in fall 2019, Aims' Instructional Coach hosts semester-long PLCs for small cohorts (2-4 people per cohort) of Aims faculty. PLC participants meet weekly to engage with the instructional coach and each other as they work to expand and strengthen their teaching practice.
- The Learning Environments team provides instructional support and course design assistance for faculty. Topics include:
  - Creating and/or assessing learning outcomes
  - Alignment with Course Level Outcomes, CCCNS, and creating a course map
  - Organizing course content
  - Analysis of learning needs and tasks
  - Course check for meeting Quality Assurance (QA) standards
  - Choosing and learning how to use the appropriate instructional tools for the classroom
  - Accessibility training

- Learning Commons and Tutoring: Professional tutors are committed to partnering with faculty and students to support student success. Tutors provide personalized attention, practice and support students to be more confident.
- The FTLC offers training to all faculty via zoom or in-person professional development on Greeley Campus. Additionally, the FTLC provides an extensive new-faculty orientation to aid in onboarding and to support faculty success.

3.C.3 Response

Policy 117 states that all instructors (part-time, adjunct, concurrent, substitute, and temporary) must be qualified to teach according to credentialing procedures outlined in Procedure 117-01.

Appendix A details the credentialing expectations for all disciplines. Instructors who possess the minimum qualifications are credentialed through the use of form 4-700A. However, if an exception

of minimum qualifications [see form 4-700B] is appropriate, it may be recommended by the chair/director with the approval of the division/dean and CAO. The 4-700B form is a waiver of degree requirements and formally documents work experience, alternative credentials like equivalent experience, or further expands on the documentation of coursework deemed to be a relevant subfield of the discipline in which instructors will teach. Additionally, faculty members requiring CTE credentials obtain verification following the CTE credentialing process. No faculty member is permitted to teach without first being credentialed. This procedure is applied to all faculty members, regardless of location, status, or modality.

Furthermore, the college has policies and procedures that provide clear and consistent guidelines for the hiring process and protect against inappropriate influences on the process. Of particular importance are Policy 4-200, Procedure 4-200A, Procedure 4-200B, and the policy and procedure that address safeguards against nepotism.

Aims strives to attract candidates who possess the essential qualifications. Recognizing the importance of offering competitive pay, Aims conducts annual analyses of the total compensation for full-time and part-time faculty and proposes adjustments needed to pay at the 75th percentile. This objective, first identified in 2006, was reaffirmed in AY18 and made more tangible by benchmarking against the Mountain States Association of Community Colleges. As of AY20, faculty base pay ranked at the 76th percentile.

Faculty job postings include requirements for a background check and reference check, as well as the minimum qualifications for the position and the competitive benefits package provided. Job postings also inform applicants of documents that are required for full consideration, including the applicant's resume, cover letter, diversity statement, teaching philosophy, references, and official transcripts.

At the time of hire, faculty receive an email that outlines the requirement that an official transcript be sent to Human Resources. HR stores these transcripts electronically per an established standard operating process. This practice of requiring official transcripts for faculty positions helps to ensure the integrity and quality of students' education.

Aims also ensures that instructors are appropriately qualified by using a PDQ which includes a detailed description of the tasks and responsibilities for a given position and a statement of the minimum qualifications required. The PDQ forms the basis for the job posting, qualifications screenings, and the candidate scoring criteria. Academic Affairs has oversight and ownership of faculty PDQs. Faculty PDQs are written and reviewed by chairs/directors and deans.

Aims requires supervisors to review PDQs:

- Annually during performance reviews for all incumbents, which gives the supervisor and employee a basis for assessing whether the employee has maintained his/her qualifications.
- Anytime there is an opening for a position – and before the position is posted.
- When federal or state regulations necessitate a review.

Additional Qualifications for Aims instructors

Because online modalities utilize a learning management system and unique pedagogies, additional online training is required. Any instructor who wishes to teach in an asynchronous online environment must first complete the orientation to online teaching course (see 3.C.5).

Full-time instructors must complete EDU 260 (Adult Teaching and Learning) prior to the end of their third year in probationary status (see 3.C.5). The course is also encouraged for part-time faculty.

Instructors teaching GT Pathway courses are appropriately credentialed. Colorado State Guaranteed Transfer (GT) Pathways, in which the student earns a C- or higher, will always transfer and apply to GT Pathways requirements in AA, AS and most bachelor's degrees at every public Colorado college and university.

3.C.4 Response

All college personnel, regardless of location or modality, have the same evaluation and support systems. Human Resources processes are implemented consistently at all locations, including hiring, evaluating, and goal-setting activities. Orientations, support, and training are provided to all employees through entities such as HR, FTLC, and CPD, as well as supervisors and other department personnel.

All full-time and part-time faculty are regularly evaluated on an annual basis according to Policy 4-400. Evaluation practices include the following:

- Supervisors regularly review course evaluations to identify strengths and areas of improvement for faculty.
- Supervisors perform classroom observations using an observation instrument and resource packet for full- and part-time faculty, regardless of modality, on a regular basis. Prior to 2019, a lengthy teaching observation instrument was used. Out of a desire for a briefer instrument more aligned to the Learning College philosophy, the new version was created and implemented.
- Online courses require attention to course structure and other elements; therefore, a customized version of the online teaching observation instrument was developed, examples here.
- An annual planning process is required for full-time faculty employees. The process begins with completion of the faculty annual planning document. Prior to AY20, Aims used a three-year planning process for full-time faculty. However, a simpler and more frequent planning document was desired. In AY20, a new annual planning process was piloted and adopted the following year. During this process the supervisor reviews different ways to improve instruction and how faculty are staying current in their specialization. Observation examples here.

3.C.5 Response

The credentialing process (see 3.C.3) is maintained through the instructor evaluation process (see 3.C.4). Professional development resources are provided to ensure instructors continue to grow in their discipline knowledge and teaching skills. See Computer Information Systems and Radiology and Surgical Technology examples.

Support & Resources

The FTLC provides financial support for faculty maintaining disciplinary currency and teaching

adeptness by maintaining a budget for conference and tuition funding, sabbatical leave, and part-time compensation for professional development. Each year, all faculty are eligible to apply (Policy 4-1525 and Procedure 4-1525A) for $2,000 for external professional development funding. The policy also include funding for tuition reimbursement for Aims classes or up to $4,000 annually for full-time faculty wanting to further their disciplinary-based education through accredited institutions. Policy 529-01 supports full-time faculty with staying current in their academic disciplines once every seven years. Finally, part-time faculty receive hourly compensation for participating in college-wide, FTLC, or departmental professional development.

The FTLC provides ongoing professional development and supports the maintenance of faculty disciplinary and instructional skills. The FTLC AY21 annual report contains detailed information on the philosophy, staff, funding, and programs and initiatives provided. Needs for professional development offerings are determined on an annual basis through input from the FTLC Think Tank committee, annual survey, and post-event feedback.

Highlights of programming include:

- New Faculty Orientation see 3.C.2
- New faculty mentoring program: new faculty meet with a seasoned faculty mentor weekly over the course of a semester to discuss topics and questions that organically come up in the flow of the semester, readings from CPD 282/EDU 260, ideas and plans for their action research project, ePortfolio as well as complete multiple classroom observations. Participating faculty receive a three credit course release, allowing them to have a reduced course load their first semester to engage in the program.
- Professional Learning Communities see 3.C.2
- Teaching Squares provide faculty with an opportunity to learn by observing peer faculty members. Each teaching square cohort consists of a group of four instructors that observe each other within a four-to-five week period. Participants enhance their own teaching based on the shared observations and reflections of the Square partners. It is designed to be a supportive, non-evaluative process that promotes dialogue and reflection.
- In-house faculty conferences
- FTLC Fridays focus on learner-centered strategies, creating community in the classroom, and colleague connections.
- Signature Magazine is published annually and highlights the teaching and learning strategies reflecting the college's mission. The Aims Review is an annual publication featuring excellence across disciplines, celebrating exceptional work by students, faculty, staff, and alumni.
- Maintains a print book library and an e-library (BizLibrary) for electronic teaching publications/resources.
- EDU 260 - Adult Teaching and Learning see 3.C.4
- Tech Tuesdays provides workshops about teaching technologies including the physical technology in your classroom, various tools and video recording and editing technologies.

Additionally, customized training is provided for online and concurrent courses, since the pedagogy for those environments is unique. This includes online teaching training (required for new online instructors) and concurrent enrollment training (required for new concurrent instructors).

Recognition of Faculty Training

The FTLC recognizes the achievement of disciplinary currency and teaching adeptness in the form of

certificates and awards, including four [professional growth and development certificates](#) and a variety of [teaching awards](#). Part-time faculty who complete ten hours of paid service and ten hours of professional development during the previous academic year are [recognized and rewarded](#) with a small stipend through the [part-time faculty engagement stipend](#).

3.C.6 Response

Aims instructors are available for student inquiry though a variety of methods, which may include a variety of communication methods. Expectations for faculty availability are established as follows:

- [Policy 4-701](#) requires instructors to be available to students.
- [Faculty handbook](#) further outlines the expectations of availability to students in a variety of modalities: online course shell, email, virtual meetings, messaging apps, etc. Although formal office hours are not expected, faculty must make clear to students how availability will occur.
- [Universal syllabus template](#) contains information about faculty availability as well as communication modalities. Supervisors review syllabi to ensure that faculty can be reached for questions and help through office hours, online availability, phone, and/or email.

3.C.7 Response

Hiring

Employees are hired using fair and ethical practices that include ensuring potential employees have the background and experience to be successful in their roles (see 1.C.2 & 1.C.3). In the last three years, the college, and the Student Engagement, Inclusion and Success (SEIS) Division, in particular, has committed to hiring bilingual (Spanish and English) speaking employees, this is demonstrated by positions [requiring or preferring fluency in Spanish](#). Additionally, the college provides a tiered stipend, dependent on position requirement, to Spanish speaking employees.

Staff positions are filled by employees who meet at least the minimum qualifications for the position [at time of hire](#). After an employee is hired, Aims provides ongoing training opportunities for continued employee development. One such avenue for professional development is [Policy 4-1525](#), which promotes professional and personal growth through cost sharing/coverage of tuition expenses. [Procedure 4-1525A](#) details the availability of tuition waivers or reimbursements.

Onboarding

Designed and presented by the [CPD](#), a "welcome" session introduces employees to a wealth of [information](#), policies and practices, and the laws that govern employee conduct in an academic setting (see 1.C.3).

Faculty onboarding (see 3.C.3). Additionally, each semester, Aims hosts a [new faculty conference](#) that welcomes the new cohort of faculty members.

Department-Level Training

The [SEIS](#) division provides training for staff at the [department level](#). Department training starts with

a formal training plan to familiarize new staff with college policies, procedures and processes. Examples include pathway and financial aid advisor training with both including shadowing experienced staff during a variety of student advising and financial aid appointment types.

SEIS staff are required to complete Title IX (Bystander) Training and FERPA training. Additionally, based on the technological systems and software they will use in their unique role, they complete training modules and coaching from vendors who can help provide basic understanding and nuances of the technological software they use.

Co-Curricular Training

Staff who develop co-curricular programs are typically trained by their supervisor or a senior colleague. For example, the CDI's Latinx Engagement Coordinator receives supplemental training with a greater emphasis on the foundational elements of co-curricular programming. Once this understanding is established in the context of Aims, the employee works to develop new programs moving through a coaching process with their supervisor, similar to the Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle; however, it also offers a primitive phase where current gaps in programming are identified as well as assessment of successful co-curricular program characteristics that resonate with students in a local environment.

As additional professional certifications and training are needed to support student success, SEIS staff have been supported by CPD funding (see 5.B.1) and by the department's annual budget to attend these trainings. An area of the division receiving specialized training and certification is personal counseling; these staff provide case management support to students through the CARE program.

Learning Commons - Tutoring Qualifications & Training

The Learning Commons (LC) are located at the Greeley, Loveland, Fort Lupton, and Windsor campus. The LC services are divided into four areas- Library Services, Tutoring Services, Online Learning Services, and Computer/Technology Assistance Services.

Professional tutors are committed to partnering with students to help students succeed. Tutoring is available in a variety of subject areas both in person and remotely. Aims is certified by the College Reading and Language Association (CRLA) and adheres to CRLA training policies and programs. Tutoring positions are organized into four tiers. Tutors are required to have a documented grade of "A" or "B" on official transcripts in the courses they will be tutoring. Tutor interviews are conducted by the assistant director of tutoring along with a faculty liaison from the department of the tutoring subject.

Tutors are trained following CRLA standards. Initial tutor trainings are individualized to the tutor and subject matter. Trainings are led by the assistant director of tutoring and the content faculty liaison to align curriculum needs. Following initial training, tutors attend monthly professional development sessions. Students are invited to provide feedback about tutoring services that can then be incorporated into future trainings.

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3.D - Core Component 3.D

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

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

Argument

3.D.1 Response

The college provides comprehensive and holistic student services to support its diverse student population. These support services are offered in various modalities, including: in-person, telephone, email, and virtual formats.

Navigation Station

The college has implemented a one-stop model, the Navigation Station, as part of strategic priority one, empowering students to succeed. Navigators provide personal assistance to new and continuing students through a broad scope of services. Navigators proactively contact new students, after they apply, to assist them through the enrollment process. Navigators focus on creating positive student experiences, aiming to make the transition to college smoother by offering new students a single point of contact through the onboarding process and removing enrollment barriers.

Pathway Advising see 3.D.3

Financial Aid

This department awards and distributes financial aid through multiple means, including grants, scholarships, loans, and work-study funding. Sources include federal, state, institutional, and private donors. The Financial Aid website also has financial planning tools available for students, including tuition and fee estimator and access to a free financial literacy platform. A recent example of improvements to support students is the decision to auto award (see 1.C.2).

Disability Access Services (DAS)

DAS provides accommodations and success coaching to eligible students. Staff conduct intake appointments, determine individualized course accommodations, notify instructors of such accommodations, and make available a variety of assistive technologies. DAS staff also provide support and guidance to instructors to help them provide the accommodations and better support

students in the classroom.

Transitions Center

- Career Services see 1.C.1
- Transfer Services assists students with researching colleges and universities and with navigating the transfer process.
- Aims2UNC see 1.A.4
- Finish What You Started, a $1.25M Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative (COSI) grant awarded to Aims in fall 2021, supports students through both scholarships and academic, personal, and transition success coaching through June 2025. Eligibility requirements are determined by the Colorado Department of Higher Education.

Equity & Inclusion Services

Aims is committed to ensuring every member of its community learns and works in an environment free from harassment and discrimination. The SEIS division oversees all reporting, investigation, and resolution of student complaints and grievances through the following ways:

- Title IX see 1.C.1
- Anti-Discrimination & Harassment
- MAAP see 1.C.2

Consistent with federal Title IX laws, as well as federal and state anti-discrimination and harassment laws, the college works to ensure students and employees are properly trained, report, and comply with all established laws and non-discrimination policies of the college. In compliance with Violence Against Women Act the division is also responsible for collaborating with departments to provide awareness programming and bystander intervention training which encompasses dating violence, domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking.

TRIO Student Support Services (SSS)

Aims has two TRIO SSS grants - STEM and Classic. TRIO serves nearly 300 students annually by working side by side with eligible students to aid them in successfully reaching their academic, transfer and/or career goals.

CDI see 1.C.1

Campus Assessment, Response & Education (CARE)

The CARE program is designed to assist members of the Aims community in responding to students in distress while providing critical campus and community resources. Students who appear to be in distress, seem overly anxious, emotional, stressed, or who are acting out of character, and the situation is not urgent, are reported to the CARE team. CARE specifically addresses non-emergent concerns with the goal of protecting the health and well-being of the student.

Hunger-Free Campus Initiative & Arty's Panty

In summer 2021, Aims launched a Hunger Free Campus initiative to enhance Arty's Pantry, which supports students experiencing food insecurity. In May 2022, the Colorado Department of Higher Education announced Aims' designation as a Hunger Free Campus.

3.D.2 Response

Career Pathways

Aims implemented the guided pathways model and all students select one of the college's six career pathway which provides clear paths to students' academic program end goals. Students are also encouraged to select a program of study, if they know the specific program they would like to pursue.

New, degree/certificate-seeking students are required to meet with an advisor. Advisors use a multiple measures approach when determining student readiness. All new students are required to take the College Student Inventory (CSI). The CSI results are used by advisors to develop rapport and assist students as they develop educational goals.

Learning Support & Preparatory Instruction

Students may take AIMS 101, a non-credit course, incentivized by a three credit tuition scholarship or AAA 109 (three credit course), each addresses time management, motivation, reading, and study strategies. Department-specific initiatives are also offered to students:

- MAT 075 Condensed College Algebra Prep
- MAT 093 - Algebra Lab.
- Developmental courses to build skills related to reading and writing.
    - CCR 092 - College Composition
    - Reading
- Adult Education offers a math brush-up for students to boost their skills before taking a college-level math class.

Library, Tutoring, & Device Checkout

All students have physical and remote access to the college library and the college learning commons with access to computers, internet, and personnel available to assist with research needs. Students have access to the following:

- publisher material
- 24/7 chat reference cooperative: students have access to librarians to help them with their research at all times.
- Laptops for check-out, as well as Wi-Fi hotspots
- Calculators
- Textbooks (and other items) for short-term usage or the entire semester
- Remote tutoring: available for Accounting, Biology, Math, Reading & Study Skills, and Writing.
- Face-to-face tutoring is available at locations dependent upon tutor availability and subject matter based at locations.

Simulation Rooms, Apparatus, & Enrichments

- High-tech Simulation Mannequins: Simulation rooms attempt to simulate real-world situations students encounter in the field during the first weeks of a course; activating critical thinking early on.

- Guest Lecturers: Enrichment topics for the EMS program include dive rescue, mental health for first responders, Krav Maga personal defense, tactical SWAT medicine, and an introduction to the fire service.
- Flight Simulation: The Aims Flight Training Center provides students access to flight simulation, flight services, tablets, and computers that allow them to prepare for every aspect of their flight courses including weather planning, checking bulletins/ notices, building/ filing flight plans, reviewing checklists and procedures, and studying flight profiles. Digital access to these resources mirrors the aviation industry enhancing the student experience and overall success.
- In spring 2022 Aims broke ground on a new simulated city at the Windsor campus which will further enrich public safety educational offerings.

Station Life (Windsor Campus)

Aims has created a station life space in the Windsor Public Safety Institute. The space mirrors first responder job settings and features:

- lounge
- kitchen with student refrigerators
- cross-fit gymnasium with trainers
- locker room with showers
- food pantry
- student chores/ responsibilities
- uniform policy
- study areas

3.D.3 Response

Identified in strategic priority one in the 2018-2023 strategic plan, the Pathway Advising department implemented a case management process to guide students into appropriate courses and encourage them to take advantage of academic and co-curricular support services. Case management is a proactive and holistic advising process that fosters student success through relationship building, assisting in the development of career and academic plans, and tracking student progress. Case management is a shared partnership among professional pathway advisors, faculty, academic programs, and students.

Pathway advising utilizes multiple tools, processes, and practices to create a holistic, case management model, including:

- assigning all degree/certificate seeking students to an advisor who specializes in advising for specific academic programs within an pathway of programs;
- a communication plan to proactively outreach to students, targeting key dates and deadlines using communication tools such as mass emails, individual emails, calling campaigns, texting, marketing on campus and other electronic formats;
- holds placed on students who change their program of study to ensure they build an academic plan outlining the pathway to completion of their new program;
- academic success coaching focused on the whole student;
- continuous professional development and training for staff; and

- required interactions between students on academic probation and their advisor

Advisors have manageable caseloads, allowing advisors to get to know their students and anticipate needs. Students are strongly encouraged to meet with their advisor every semester.

The case management process is not only based on education, coaching, and outreach but also student advocacy. Examples of advocacy include the following:

- Evaluate and refine internal advising policies and procedures that impact student success and retention;
- Evaluate and advocate for changes to policies and procedures outside of advising to improve student success, retention, and completion of programs;
- Develop and foster CTE faculty relationships to support a co-advising model
- Maintain strong partnerships throughout Academic Affairs to provide feedback on course section management, scheduling, and evaluation of appropriate course overrides and prerequisites to support students through timely completion of degree and/or certificate; and
- Appropriate referrals to other SEIS students and co-curricular support programs are facilitated through Pathway Advising, including the TRIO (see 3.D.1) and Aims2UNC (see 1.A.4) programs.

3.D.4 Response

Infrastructures and Resources

Effective teaching and learning require infrastructure and resources to support students and faculty; Aims prioritizes its resources to support classroom activities. All departments have classrooms and resources appropriate to their educational offerings. The college also maintains excellent relationships with local medical and health facilities that ensure students have quality clinical sites.

The college works continuously to renovate its instructional areas, including upgrades in technology and specialized spaces that directly support academic programs, including:

- Annual Academic Special Projects Summit: Academic departments identify and submit needed equipment for their classrooms and labs. The prioritized list has been fully funded for the past 5 years.
- Aviation program's eight-year replacement plan ensures students are training on current aircraft with up-to-date technology.
- Federal Perkins funding supports classroom and lab equipment.

Through an ambitious series of past and ongoing campus renovations and new construction projects, the college has invested over $174 million in new construction and renovation of existing buildings since 2014. The focus of this work has been designed specifically to enhance student learning and the student's campus experience.

Helping to assist the college in prioritizing and planning for future building and renovation projects, the college conducted a Space Study Analysis in 2018. This report identified areas of improvement including additional study and formal and informal gathering space for students and a significant shortfall on general meeting and assembly space for the college. Resulting notable projects include a 100,000 sq/ft Welcome Center completed in December 2021. Additionally, opened in January 2022,

was the renovation of the College Center which has been transformed into a new [Student Commons](). This project increased gathering spaces for students, including an expansion of the CDI and SAIL departments. This project was paid for with reserve and operating budgets with no additional cost to taxpayers or students.

Aims has invested over $76 million in [academic spaces]() since 2014 to ensure academic programs have the classrooms, labs, and training space to support their programs. [Notable projects]() supporting academic programs, include:

- [Applied Technology and Trades Center]() (Greeley Campus) completed in 2018 providing new and expanded space for CAD, Industrial Technology, Construction Management, and Welding programs.
- [Aims Flight Training Center](): [purchase]() and renovation occurred in 2019.
- [Simulated City]() see 3.D.2

Technology Infrastructure

Information Technology Services (ITS) is the central information technology organization and provides an advanced computing environment and technology support for students, faculty, and staff. The use of technology is governed by [Policy 207]() and [Procedure 207-01]() ensuring technology is appropriately used and secure.

Services

- [Help Desk]() supports student learning and the needs of faculty, students, and staff responding to teaching, computing, or technology problems.
- Learning Environments is a key partner in developing and supporting an active teaching and learning environment designed with a student-centered approach.
- [The Technology Resource Advisory Committee]() (TRAC) with representation from administration, faculty, staff, and students, collaborates with ITS to identify and address campus technology requirements.

Notable ITS Support:

- Operates 175 labs with over 997 computers. Student devices in carts available for instruction include 1,144 laptops and 601 tablets.
- Supports nearly 1,400 desktop and laptop machines for faculty and staff use.
- Provides devices for checkout including 1,082 laptop and mobile devices.
- Operates a robust network consisting of over 344 wireless access points.
- Supports over 2,540 unique wireless users per month and over 4,721 unique wireless devices per day.
- Provides support to the LMS, Desire2Learn's Brightspace used by over 468 instructors and 7,521 students.

The college follows a four-year plan to replace computers, ensuring access to the latest technology in student labs, classrooms and open computer labs throughout the college. Faculty and staff computers are also replaced on a four-year cycle to ensure they are equipped with current technology.

ITS maintains a cycle of repair and replacement as evidenced by the [project list]() of accomplishments the department maintains. One academic initiative of note was the creation of a separate isolated

network for teaching cyber security courses by the CIS program in a secure environment.

To ensure the security and continuity of information resources on campus, a new state-of-art data center was built on the Greeley Campus in 2017. Physical security was greatly improved by implementing limited badge access to select authorized users and requiring 2-factor authentication to enter the data center. Multi-factor authentication for faculty, staff, and students provides enhanced security and the college holds robust insurance coverage as part of the cyber protection policy. College-wide training occurs annually for all faculty and staff with additional ITS-led mock phishing attempts to highlight additional security and training needs.

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3.S - Criterion 3 - Summary

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

Summary

Aims grants certificates and associate's degrees but is in the process of applying for its first Bachelor's program authorization. As a result, Aims has spent a great deal of time examining its general education program philosophy, learning goals, and assessment processes.

Expanding to four-year degrees requires greater breadth and depth of general education, and demands that the college ensure that Bachelor's students mastery of the Curricular Learning Outcomes exceeds that of a lower degree level. In preparation, Aims has engaged in extensive curricular mapping to support the implementation of a standardized assessment system in general education courses. The College's Career and Technical Education programs have concrete skill outcomes that continue to be assessed as appropriate to the field, and these students also benefit from the improvements in general education.

In addition to ensuring consistency in curriculum through standard practices for course and syllabi design and instructor credentialing, the college regularly trains and evaluates faculty and staff. Advisors work hard to develop a personal relationship with students, providing structure and organization at an individual level that greatly increases the chances of student success.

By soliciting broad feedback from students and faculty, the college regularly reexamines these processes to make additional improvements. While the college serves an outsized role in providing educational opportunities to females in its community, it has expanded its standards for diversity and actively seeks out minority job applicants and prospective students.

Sources

There are no sources.

4 - Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

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

4.A - Core Component 4.A

The institution ensures the quality of its educational offerings.

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

Argument

4.A.1 Response

Academic Programs Review Process

Program review includes an annual review of departmental data and a four-year examination of program data and quality which is aligned with the state's program renewal cycle. These two processes ensure ongoing continuous improvement of academic programs.

Annual Review

- Dashboards: The dashboard design was made more robust based on feedback from chairs and faculty during AY21, the annual program review process features an updated dashboard for each department allowing faculty and academic administrators to identify trends in enrollment, fill rates, run rates, and course success by modality. In addition, dashboards enhance access to important program-level student demographic information to inform decisions around academic support and other initiatives.

- Program directors and chairs facilitate conversations with faculty teams in order to identify trends, opportunities, challenges, and best practices. In addition, teams identify action items to improve programs. Departments are also invited to identify additional data points that would be beneficial for review. Advisory committees also provide feedback. A summer 2022 retreat with faculty, chairs and directors, deans and the Academic Affairs leadership team will address additions and changes to data points.
- BOT presentations review data and provide information gathered from departments that highlight data is used for continuous improvement and action plans.
- Results of these discussions, named program review narratives, are summarized and shared with the academic dean for review.
- Upon completion, narratives are forwarded for review by the assistant vice-president of Academic Affairs.

Four-Year Examination

CTE programs engage in program assessment in preparation for the renewal of their programs through the Colorado State Board. Using the Program of Study Self-Assessment (ACTE), programs examine the quality of their program offerings in twelve distinct categories.

After completing the self-assessment, CTE programs generate a program of work (AAS Graphic Design and Rich Media and AAS Construction Management) which identifies strategies for improving program performance in one or more of the areas assessed. CTE programs share the plan with stakeholders including program advisory committees. The self-assessment and program of work are reported to CCCS as required by the state for program renewal. View CTE self-assessments. Integration of the use of the 4-year review process with Arts and Sciences programs is part of the 2020-2023 academic plan. Recently the program of work were updated to this format.

Currently, program are reviewed every year. Beginning in AY23, Aims will create a schedule that includes an in-depth review of programs every four years.

Closing the Loop

The annual program review process requests that departments identify one or more improvement activities based on the data reviewed in that cycle. These improvements may be linked to other projects informed by direct assessment of student learning, the four-year program review/renewal process, or continued discussions regarding program viability. Departments report their action plan each year, which is subsequently reviewed and accepted by the academic dean. Finally, departments report on the completion of activities to support their action plan in the next review cycle.

Academic deans and the CAO hold an annual planning retreat and discuss priorities for improvement along with setting goals for improving the program review process. These goals focus on ensuring that programs have the necessary data to make informed decisions, appropriate training to use the data, and support to implement action plans. In addition, team members from administrative services engage in dialogue with the academic team to ensure they are aware of program improvement activities and budgetary impact.

Due to a change in leadership, the release of the program review dashboard 2.0 was delayed six months. Three years (AY19, AY20, AY21) of program review data was distributed on 3/15/22. A training was held for deans, director, and chairs by Institutional Research & Assessment (IRA) to facilitate the use of the updated dashboard and data.

AY22 program review data will be available by June 15, 2022. This will provide four years (2018-2022) of data for leadership teams to review and plan for the future. By September 2022 all chairs/directors will meet with deans to discuss goals and data points to plan continuous improvement efforts for AY23.

Continuous Improvement and Quality Initiatives

Colorado State VE-135 Report

CTE programs submit student success data annually through the VE-135 report. In 2021 the state process changed from a five-year review to a four-year review. CTE programs are required to submit information on skills attainment, job placement, and employer satisfaction, all of which provides additional measures of program rigor and quality. This report includes completion and placement results, which are also used for the employer satisfaction survey VE-135 program review data is incorporated into the annual program review and used to make program improvements.

Discontinuing a Program

Annual program review and other quality initiatives related to programs assist in the ongoing evaluation of program viability. Program and departmental data help inform discussions with advisory committees to make recommendations relative to program discontinuation. Sunsetting a program follows a workflow outlined in program sunsetting. The decision to continue or discontinue a program is based on several key factors including, but not limited to:

- program enrollment
- program completion
- program costs
- graduate placement
- industry demand
- ensuring students currently in the program can be accommodated properly

Programs are also evaluated to ensure they continue to meet the evolving occupational requirements, knowledge, skills, and abilities of the workforce. Advisory committees include industry representatives who help guide the revision of courses and programs. This ensures students will receive training in the skills and technologies that are currently in use in industry and ensure currency of programs through curriculum review and revision. CCCS review cycle for CTE programs compares results for each program to state threshold numbers. If program numbers do not reach threshold requirements, the program may be renewed with conditional status or given a shorter renewal cycle rather than receiving a standard program renewal.

Specialized Accreditation & Peer Review

Aims utilizes other tools to review and improve programs, including analysis of data required by the state or program accreditors. Program accreditation processes and licensure pass rates, as required by many health sciences programs such as Nursing, Surgical Technology, or Aviation, provide an additional layer of program review. Chairs/directors and the curriculum committee monitor course and program rigor through alignment of course objectives with CCCNS competencies, which assures Aims is offering courses and programs comparable to those of other higher education institutions in

the state. Specialized accreditation reports are reviewed by chairs/directors and deans as well as the Director of Accreditation and Compliance to ensure feedback and action items changes are implemented.

4.A.2 & 4.A.3 Response

Policy 603 states Aims will evaluate proposed incoming transfer credit for educational quality, comparability of coursework, and appropriateness to the student's chosen course of study. Procedures relating to transfer or award of credit are made readily available to stakeholders through the College website and catalog.

Evaluation of Transcripts

The Registration and Records staff use the transfer evaluation process for reference once official transcripts are received. Determination of transfer credits occurs through two paths:

- **Path 1:** Registration and Records staff maintain an internal library of transfer equivalencies in the college's student information system. Faculty have approved these staff to confirm the equivalency of transfer courses that have a clear connection to the learning outcomes of an Aims course. If there is any uncertainty about the equivalency, the transcript proceeds to path 2.
- **Path 2:** Transfer requests not covered in path 1 are sent to the appropriate academic division or department, which evaluates the course(s) to determine equivalency to Aims' courses. The faculty, chair/director, or dean, when necessary, determines equivalency to Aims' curriculum. Details such as catalog course descriptions, course syllabi, and other pertinent course content information are used as part of the analysis. Tracking documents are maintained on secure internal shared drives and are accessible by the appropriate staff involved in the transfer evaluation process.

Aims transfers in all courses that are equivalent to any Aims course, whether or not it applies to the student's currently declared program of study. If a student changes programs, an updated evaluation is triggered in the degree audit system, and the student is able to see updated transfer course equivalents against the new program requirements. To assist in the evaluation process, the college has developed internal transfer support and training documents, which provide instructions on how to correctly evaluate a transcript using consistent standards.

Students have the right to contact Registration & Records and challenge credit transfer decisions. Students also have the opportunity to follow the appeal process listed in the college's catalog. Providing an appeal process is a strong example of the way Aims grounds its policy, procedures, and practices in institutional values.

Standardized Course Descriptions

Course descriptions are standardized by the SFCC to facilitate transfer of credits among Colorado institutions. A course description, topical outline, and standard competencies are included that must be addressed through the curriculum. Review of new and revised courses through the SFCC also ensures course offerings fulfill required competencies and are appropriate to community college degree and certificate levels.

Credit for Prior Learning

Aims follows policy and procedure, along with internal and state agency guidelines to set standards for awarding credit for prior learning and accepting transfer credits. Prior learning assessment recently went through the policy reformation process and updates were implemented in April 2022. Aims awards credit only for documented, rigorously evaluated learning, not merely for work experience. This assures that Aims remains in alignment with all Colorado institutions that may later accept Aims credit. Additionally, the Arts and Sciences challenge exam project began summer 2021 and will be completed in December 2022. Students find information on credit for prior learning on the website.

Consistency across the state is also assured through the state of Colorado Registrar Council, which is made up of representatives from every community college in the CCCS. The council meets on a monthly basis to discuss topics that are relevant to and determined by the membership.

Student Academic Record

Accepted transfer credit is documented on the student's permanent record as credit only, with no indication of grade or quality points, and does not affect the student's Aims Grade Point Average (GPA). Students must complete courses with a C or higher to be considered for transfer credit.

4.A.4 Response

Consistency of Processes

Aims maintains full control and authority over all courses regardless of modality or location. Aims' philosophy of instructional management and oversight emphasizes consistency of process at all locations. The college has a unified structure of department chairs/directors and deans who oversee their respective program offerings at all locations and 16 active additional locations. Three of these additional locations (Fort Lupton, Loveland, and Windsor) are designated as "campuses" by the institution, yet fit the definition of additional locations according to HLC policy. All locations, including concurrent, are under the authority of the chief academic officer.

Standard instructional oversight practices include:

- Chairs/directors and deans ensure all instructors are held to the same academic rigor and assessment standards, regardless of location or program.
- Course informational module standardization, standard navigation and course design support.
- Program review - reports and data are evaluated for established student success markers (see 4.A.1).
- HR manage faculty qualification, hiring, and evaluation processes (see 3.C.3).
- Program accreditation standards (as appropriate), examples: Colorado Peace Officers Standards and Training Board, Committee on Accreditation of Educational Programs for the Emergency Medical Services Professions, and International Fire Service Accreditation Congress to ensure and enhance program quality.
- Annual full-time faculty evaluation plans includes dialogue on what went well, what was challenging, and professional development. Additionally, student course evaluations are discussed.

Oversight of Programs, Curriculum, Prerequisites, & Student Learning

- Curriculum committee oversees all program and course content through an approval process that has been developed to assure quality. All programs and all courses must be approved by the Curriculum Committee, including any prerequisites or corequisites (see 3.A.1).
- CCCNS guarantees the rigor of courses and outcomes for student learning through the CCNS's required learning outcomes for each course. Identical course rigor and learning outcomes apply to all course modalities and are listed in every course syllabus (see 3.A.1).
- CLOs provide additional rigor by adherence and assessment of these outcomes (see 3.B.1).
- Program review enables faculty in all modalities to review the rigor of courses by providing data on student performance across modalities (see 4.A.1).
- Advisory committees annually review program curriculum and outcomes to ensure that the program meets student needs and provides workplace skills appropriate to current market needs. Satisfaction with graduate performance, as well as job placement rates, provide indirect evidence of quality (see 3.A.1).

Additional Steps for Maintaining Rigor in Distance and Concurrent Credit Offerings

- The universal syllabus is reviewed by chairs/directors, and ensures rigor is consistent wherever and however, courses are delivered. Course sections offered through distance or concurrent credit modes have the same learning outcomes, topical outlines, and competencies used in traditional sections of the same course.
- Credential Alignment: All concurrent faculty are appropriately credentialed. All programs are in compliance with HLC Assumed Practice B.2 without using the five-year extension HLC provided.
- Instructional technology support for every modality and at every site, including concurrent, additional locations, and online campuses (see 3.C.4).
- Course Development and Revitalization: Learning environments (LE) designers support faculty in developing and refreshing academic courses (see 3.A.3).

Access to Learning Resources

Aims exercises and maintains authority over learning resources provided to students.

- Learning Commons: All students have physical and remote access to the college Learning Commons (see 3.D.2).
- Remote and F2F Tutoring: available for accounting, biology, math, reading, study skills, and writing. In-person tutoring is available at locations dependent upon tutor availability and subject matter based at locations (see 3.D.2).
- Specialized Learning Technologies are available at certain locations. Example: high-tech simulation mannequins in simulation rooms assist student learning and retention at health science sites (see 3.D.2).
- Learning resources staff are hired and trained to ensure that support is customized and relevant to students (see 3.C.7).
- Online Learning Specialist: a newly operationalized position provides support to students taking online courses. Support is provided both in-person and remotely.
- StudentLingo: an online student success workshop/platform that helps close skill gaps and improve retention.

Faculty Qualifications

- Regardless of modality or dual credit programming, all faculty within a specific discipline, both full and part-time, must meet the required qualifications. Aims meets Assumed Practice B2 (see 3.C.2).
- Continued training of faculty, both full and part-time, through the dean and department chair/director assures that faculty qualifications are maintained and strengthened (see 3.A.3, 3.C.3, & 3.C.5).
- Faculty observations and evaluations help to ensure appropriate classroom practices and rigor (see 3.A.3, and 3.C.4).
- Online Course Evaluations: New courses or revitalized courses that are to be offered using a new modality, or may move to a new modality in the future, are evaluated to ensure the course meets specific criteria.

Program, Course Student Learning and Rigor Across All Modalities & Dual Credit Offerings

- Program review process: includes data regarding course section success rates broken down by faculty member and modality. Program faculty use this information to ensure and improve academic quality regardless of instructor, method of delivery, or dual credit programming.
- Common & Program Learning Outcomes (CLO and PLO): analyzed within the program review process and used for improvements in student learning. Disaggregation of the data, modality analysis, and comparison of student achievement is used to ensure consistent achievement (including dual credit enrollment). Comparable course quality and rigor is monitored through appropriate assessments of student learning across sections in all modes of delivery, including distance and dual enrollment. Cross-mode assessments began in 2015-2016, and the process has expanded as part of the assessment program timeline.
- CCCNS details a topical list and expected competencies for each course (see 3.A.1). Maintaining consistent standards for all course content provides Aims a solid basis to ensure the quality of all offerings in all modalities and dual credit.
- Standardized Syllabus Elements: Rigor in course sections is also guaranteed through standardized syllabus elements and the review by program chair or dean of each syllabus for course content and quality (see 2.E.1).

4.A.5 Response

Maintaining Specialized Program Accreditations

Eleven of Aims' career and technical education programs hold specialized or programmatic accreditation. The college pursues specialized accreditation, when required by state or federal regulations, or when it benefits graduates of the program who will need to sit for licensure examinations, or when program accreditation serves as a voluntary mark of quality.

Program	Accrediting Body	Current Standing	Recent or Next Deliverable

Associate Degree Nursing Program	Colorado State Board of Nursing (SBON) & Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN)	Continued Full Approval	Self-study report due spring 2023.
Nurse Aide Program	Colorado State Board of Nursing (SBON)	Continued Full Approval	Next site visit: Spring 2024
Med Prep Nurse Aide Program - Career Academy	Colorado State Board of Nursing (SBON)	Continued Full Approval	Inspection was scheduled for Summer 2021. Postponed by SBON due to COVID. New date TBA.
EMS - Paramedic	Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP)	Accredited	Notice received from the CAAHEP on March 23, 2020 that the Paramedic Program has been re-accredited for another 5 years. During the five years, Aims does not have to provide any more progress reports.
Surgical Technology	CAAHEP	Accredited	2030: comprehensive evaluation of the program, including a site visit to the Greeley campus. ARC/STSA will continue to monitor the program's compliance through the Annual Report and Outcomes Tracking Tool.
Police (Peace Officers) Academy	Colorado Peace Officers Standards and Training Board	Continued Approval	Colorado POST Board review occurred spring 2022.

Fire Science	International Fire Service Accreditation Congress Degree Assembly	Accredited	Self-study submitted December 2020 - Onsite visit to the Windsor Campus occurred March 2021.
Aviation (Fixed Wing)	Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)	Approved under Part 141	Annual and bi-annual visits (at least once every 6 months) from the FAA. This can total an average of 30 or more inspection items over a 2-year period. Aims must maintain compliance with all inspection items to renew Aims' FAA collegiate flight school certificate.
Air Traffic Controller	FAA Air Traffic Collegiate Training Initiative (AT-CTI)	Approved	Compliance is accomplished through meeting performance standards and other requirements set forth in the AT-CTI Program Management Guide for continued participation in the program.
Early Childhood Program	National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)	Paused	Accreditation is voluntary. Aims anticipates to be accredited in Fall 2023.
Automotive Service	National Automotive Technicians Education Foundation (NATEF)	Certified	Site visit occurred in Spring 2022, waiting for results.

Aims' website provides a listing of all program accreditations, which includes program, accrediting

agency and contact info, current accreditation status, and program campus locations. All programs with specialized accreditation are in good standing with accreditors.

4.A.6 Response

Aims has established a set of graduate success Indicators and publishes an annual graduate success report on its website. Success indicators include:

- Degree Awards: Aims recognizes that graduate success cannot be determined solely based on the award of a degree, diploma, or certificate. While the award itself is an indication of student accomplishment, the measure only represents the successful completion of the established curriculum. The presentation of an award is a vital indicator though and can be one indication that the graduate is ready for advanced study and/or immediate entry into the workforce.
- Learning outcomes assessment process assesses graduate achievement on a broader scale, assuring the college is developing graduates who have the necessary skills for success. CLOs provide for a well-rounded graduate who can effectively communicate, problem solve, think critically, and display professionalism. CLO achievement also helps to ensure that students are adequately prepared for advanced study. Specific PLOs, designed for individual programs, assure that graduates are equipped with the technical skills necessary to meet the expectations of employers and customers (see 3.A.1, 3.A.3, & 4.B.1). .
- Graduate job placement monitors the success of graduates through the Perkins federally mandated VE-135 report required for all CTE programs. This report serves as the college's blueprint for creating and deepening high-wage, high-need work opportunities for graduates. Success in this area is operationalized and tracked. Additionally, in 2019 Aims extended the VE-135 report generally used for CTE graduates to all college graduates. Job placement levels are an indicator that graduates are successfully finding employment, and that stakeholders seek out Aims graduates as a vital resource to their workforce.
- The college tracks licensure pass rates and benchmarks them against peers, a national average, or targets set by program accreditors. For instance, the Associate Degree Nursing program tracks the NCLEX-RN pass rate for program graduates. Pass rates over the last three years have been 95%, 95%, and 88%, which exceeds the national benchmark of 85.67%. The Surgical Technician program boasts a pass rate higher than the 70% target set by ARC/STSA. The most recent nurse-aide/med-prep pass rate is 89%, tying for second highest in Colorado.
- IPEDS, VFA, and NCCBP are the three predominant channels of evidence produced each year on transfer rates. With data plans to track this specifically for Aims2UNC students, this information is forthcoming when the program is out of infancy.

Advisory Committees

- CTE programs are designed to build student skills so graduates can perform effectively on the job. It is critical for Aims to understand the needs of industry and the performance of its graduates. Aims surveys employers and advisory committees on their satisfaction with Aims graduates.
- To ensure PLOs meet the needs of students, transfer colleges, and industry, the college seeks guidance annually in the spring from advisory committees.

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4.B - Core Component 4.B

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

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

Argument

4.B.1 Response

Student Learning Assessment Processes & Learning Goal Achievement

Student learning is central to the Aims mission; therefore, the college includes student learning as one of its core institutional metrics, which are reviewed and revised during the strategic planning process. The minimum level of student achievement for all Common Learning Outcomes (CLO) is 70% of arriving or arrived in these five competency areas: written communication, oral communication, problem solving, professionalism, and critical thinking. The development of this criteria is outlined in CLO assessment reports.

Aims has established a campus assessment culture and an aligned assessment process as described below:

Common Learning Outcomes Assessment

Aims established the five CLOs through surveys, presentations, review of best practices, and open forums including students, faculty, staff and administration, and BOT (see process):

- **Written Communication:** Students should be able to demonstrate a high level of written communication skills as necessary for their future profession through the development and expression of ideas in writing. Students with strong written communication skills will include in their writing a clear main idea or theme, include appropriate content and context, organize their materials to suit the purpose of the document and use appropriate conventions.
- **Problem Solving:** Good problem solvers apply thinking skills to evaluate real-world examples in terms of course content and knowledge. Students with strong problem-solving skills will interpret the problem, develop a strategy to solve the problem, apply appropriate strategies and procedures, and arrive at a workable solution.
- **Critical Thinking:** Students who can think critically apply thinking skills and are able to evaluate real-world examples in terms of course content and knowledge. Examples of critical thinking include identifying and exploring issues, recognizing your audience and addressing them accordingly and, framing personal reference and acknowledging other perspectives.
- **Oral Communication:** Students should be able to demonstrate a high level of oral

communication skills as necessary for their future profession through prepared, purposeful presentations designed to increase knowledge, to foster understanding, or to promote change in the listeners' attitudes, values, beliefs or behavior. A good oral presentation includes a central message with supporting materials, is organized, clearly delivered and may involve interactions with the audience.

- **Professionalism:** Students who are professional strive for excellence in their performance of required roles in their future professions. Professionals demonstrate accountability and ethical behavior, maintain a professional attitude and conduct themselves in an appropriate and respectful manner.

See AY19, AY20, AY21 CLO reports.

In 2019, assessment leadership established the Curricular Assessment Committee (CAC) to provide collaborative leadership, support an institution-wide culture of assessment, and enhance and promote comprehensive learning as part of students' educational experience.

Established Practices & Improvements

Improvement of the assessment process has been an ongoing challenge over the past three years. To improve, the college is focusing on deepening and strengthening existing processes. A gap exists in the area of program-level assessment which came to a halt during the pandemic and continued into the fall 2021. Consequently, there is little data to evaluate regarding program improvements during this timeframe. In addition, the planning cycle was also disrupted. At the end of AY22, the Office of Assessment began working with deans and chairs/directors to jumpstart assessment efforts. Over the summer many departments will construct, review or revise assessment plans. Department will determine which classes and CLOs will be assessed over the next five-year period.

In 2021, although the assessment cycle saw disruption during the pandemic, the Office of Assessment leveraged the opportunity to create an assessment guidebook, capturing and establishing the framework and expectations for assessment at Aims.

Additionally, in spring 2021 IRA and CAC began evaluating survey data regarding the effectiveness of the current CLOs to determine if any changes should be made. Once revision recommendations are made, the college will begin an institution-wide feedback process. Next, a process will be created to determine which CLO will be evaluated annually. CLOs will be assessed using a common rubric across all program areas. During fall 2022, the rubric and assessment artifacts will be reviewed and adjusted as necessary.

General Education Launch AY23

General education (AA, AS, AAS, AGS) is in the mapping stage and will launch their assessment plan in academic year 2022-2023. The CAC is responsible for crafting the framework to assess general education programs.

Norming Sessions (fall 2021)

To ensure increased participation, Aims conducted norming sessions with Art, Music, Humanities, and Philosophy departments. These norming sessions led to the annual Assessment Norming Institute (ANI) training on calibrating and norming student artifacts.

Co-Curricular Learning Outcomes

In response to feedback from the 2016 portfolio, the SEIS division adopted the Council for Advancement of Standards (CAS) as the framework for department/functional area review. Every five years SEIS departments/functional areas undergo a self-assessment, utilizing the CAS individual self-assessment guides when possible. The review engages employees who work within, internal partners of the department or functional area, the lead coordinator or director, as well as the administrator.

An area of improvement identified was the inconsistent practice of assessing student learning in co-curricular programs. In 2020, the SEIS division adopted the CAS Learning and Development Outcomes framework to consider cross-functional co-curricular learning throughout the student experience. While several co-curriculars conducted both learning and operational assessments in the past, a comprehensive co-curricular student learning assessment process was needed. In AY23, Aims determined that a systematic approach was necessary to ensure that assessments were conducted across all co-curriculars and were used to improve student learning.

Aims adopted a definition of co-curricular and uses the definition to guide the determination of co-curriculars when reviewing all of its current student activities and supports. To maintain consistency in co-curricular assessment, the college developed the co-curricular assessment section of the assessment guidebook. Examples of co-curricular learning and operational assessment plans include: Career Services, Transfer Services, and Aims2UNC.

The co-curricular team identified 11 co-curricular functional areas that fit the definition. However, due to the pandemic, the original SEIS timeline and implementation plan for operational and learning assessment was paused. SEIS leadership is reviewing the previous recommendation to utilize the CAS framework for assessing student learning and developmental outcomes and will determine next steps in AY23.

4.B.2 Response

Aims focuses attention on assessment results and uses those results to inform change.

Common Learning Outcome Results

Aims has an established CLO assessment process where assessment data is collected and analyzed to monitor CLO attainment in coursework, programs, and to inform change. The assessment guide provides a systematic design for tracking the progress of student learning at regular intervals.

The process begins by reviewing past assessment results to determine which CLO will be assessed institutionally over the coming year. IRA and CAC work with administration each fall to determine the CLOs to be assessed. CLOs are assessed using a rubric across all program areas.

Faculty asses CLOs and collect results, which are tabulated in LiveText and reviewed by the assessment team. IRA and CAC analyze the data and develop a curricular assessment report, which includes improvement actions. The curricular assessment report is presented to the campus the following fall. IRA and CAC are responsible to ensure the actions are taken.

Relevancy is also assured through the Perkins federally mandated Alumni VE-135 report of student success. As part of the VE-135 report, Aims distributes an employer satisfaction survey to employers

of recent graduates. This survey aligns with the CLOs and asks employers to assess recent graduates' ability to demonstrate these competencies in the workplace.

The college effectively communicates the purpose, content and use of CLOs.

- CAC delivers a positive and consistent message about assessment of student learning college-wide. Members serve as assessment coaches, and support to faculty with the development, implementation, and analysis of assessments.
- The college communicates CLOs to students using a multimodality market plan, including posters, Student Weekly (e-newsletter), and syllabi.
- To ensure articulation of CLOs to external stakeholders results are presented at Board meetings.

4.B.3 Response

Aims makes student learning assessment an integral part of the education process, the institution demonstrates this through:

- Alignment of PLOs to CLOs
- Alignment of co-curricular outcomes to CLOs
- Development of systematic assessments that are embedded in the curriculum

Processes & Methodologies

Processes and methodologies for the assessment of learning are derived from direct assessment. This includes faculty and staff participating in the development of learning outcomes, mapping outcomes through the curriculum in addition to assessment, analysis, and implementing curricular and pedagogic changes based on results. In addition, the college engages in established standards such as benchmarking, random sampling of student artifacts, and norming sessions to determine the validity, reliability, and comparability of assessment rubrics.

Aims engages in assessment professional development:

- Aims Norming Institute (summer 2022)
- WEBSA Global Learning & Diversity Calibration & Norming (fall 2021)
- Assessment Norming - Critical Thinking (fall 2021)
- Chair Training - Program Assessment (spring 2021)
  - Introduction to Program Assessment, Missions, Program Learning Outcomes
  - Curriculum Mapping
  - Methods of Assessment
  - Data Analysis & Action Planning, Closing the Loop
- Co-Curricular Learning Outcome Assessment (AY21)
- Visualizing General Education at Aims (AY21)
- General Education Case Studies (fall 2020)
  - Case Study I and Case Study II
- Program Assessment Series - provided by assessment consultant Dr. Lyda Fontes McCartin, Ph.D. (summer 2020)
  - What is program assessment?

- ○ [Introduction to Program Learning Outcomes](#)
- ○ [Introduction to Curriculum Mapping](#)
- ○ [Assessment Methods](#)
- ○ [Data Collection and Analysis](#)

Additionally, the [assessment guidebook](#) aids in the continuous improvement process culminating with closing the loop for learning assessment. The guidebook provides direction to faculty regarding appropriate methodologies and strategies while still giving flexibility. The guidebook sets the expectation that direct assessment will be the primary source of assessment and multiple methods of assessment customarily yield the most actionable results.

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4.C - Core Component 4.C

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

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

Argument

4.C.1 Response

[Retention and completion rate collection and review](#) occurs at institutional, program, and student-group levels. Data is presented with comparisons for the past four years, allowing for trend analysis. Targets are set at each level to support continuous quality improvement and better serve students. IRA produces the data, which is reviewed by the [institutional data governance group](#).

Institutional Level

Two of Aims' five [core measures](#) directly relate to retention, persistence, and completion:

1. Fall-to-fall retention 3-year average (current 54.39%).
2. 3-year average graduation rate (current benchmark: 32.63%).

Current performance levels are tracked against the rolling benchmark, which is adjusted annually. Core measures guide the college's efforts and gauge progress. Reflection and adjustments to the core measures occur during the [strategic plan development process](#). In AY19, Aims began operating under [Colorado SB17-297](#) which [revised higher ed performance standards.](#)

Aims integrates these standards into the college's [strategic plan](#), tracking the goals and targets that support both the core measures and CDHE's institutional annual goal-setting metrics for retention, persistence, and completion outcome improvements. [The strategic plan has additional retention, persistence, and completion outcome targets](#).

Outcome results are used to inform change as part of the annual [strategic plan review process](#).

Aims has little flexibility in how the state-required data are defined or reported; however, Aims benefits by using them to benchmark retention, persistence, and completion rates against regional

and national peers and in evaluating long-term, longitudinal data.

The college participates in the NCCBP; an annual summary report ensures Aims is in alignment with internal goals and peer institutions. NCCBP data is incorporated into the environmental scan and is used in the strategic planning process. IPEDS reports provide the college with additional peer-to-peer comparison of retention and completion. Comparisons to other peer institutions also occur as part of the state VE-135 reporting for CTE programs, CDHE institutional annual goal setting, and other benchmarking reports.

Program Level

The college disaggregates many of the data at the program-level. These program-level retention and completion rates are shared with advisory committees and used for program improvement and are incorporated into the program review process.

Aims reports completion metrics as mandated through alignment with the VE-135 report. VE-135 provides the college with another opportunity to use program completion rates to guide improvement as well as a direct comparison metric to other state colleges. Five-year trend data is used as part of the reauthorization of CTE programs on a five-year rotating schedule. VE-135 data is made available to the public on both Aims' and the state's CTE website.

Student-Group Level

Various student groups are monitored for retention and completion rates in order to increase success rates of these groups. Examples include: TRIO SSS Classic/STEM, Aims2UNC, and the Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative Finish What You Started grant.

TRIO SSS metrics are analyzed annually to ensure the program is maintaining levels appropriate to grant requirements. As part of the grant application process, TRIO worked with IRA to determine the set of metrics that would represent the program over the five years of the grant.

4.C.2 Response

Collecting, Analyzing, Reporting Retention, Persistence, & Completion Data

IRA collects retention, persistence, and completion data and reports results internally and at the state and national levels. The institutional data governance group reviews external-facing reports, including state and federal reporting before submission. Results are reported in the strategic plan annual report, CDHE institutional annual goal-setting report, and core measures report. IRA staff present these findings to institutional leadership and communicate results to the campus stakeholders.

Program Retention & Completion Data

IRA reports program retention and completion data to program faculty. Data are analyzed within the program and included in the annual program review process. Additional data for CTE programs is provided through the VE-135 completion rate reports produced annually for the state.

Calculating With Set Standards

IRA follows set standards (IRA webpage & student data reports) in calculating retention data. Retention data includes comparisons for the last four years, allowing for trend analysis. IRA works with administrators to set targets for retention, persistence, and completion by selecting measures aligned with the strategic plan and CDHE's institutional annual goals. Targets are based on examinations of past trends and comparison to other institutions.

Ensuring Best Practices see 4.C.4

4.C.3 Response

Using Retention, Persistence, & Completion Data for Improvement

The retention, persistence, and completion report provides data and analysis with emphasis on student success. Aims recognizes that it cannot focus on all aspects of retention, persistence, and completion at the same time. However, there are specific student populations the college has focused on retaining. The strategic plan, state's institutional annual goal-setting process and VE-135 are the drivers of the current focus.

Specific Retention-Related Efforts

TRIO Student Support Services: TRIO SSS Classic grant serves 160 students annually and TRIO SSS STEM serves 120. TRIO has exceeded the federal standard (persistence) objective rate of 70% in each of the past three years:

AY19 | 81%
AY20 | 96%
AY21 | 91%

Aims2UNC serves students who are intending on transferring to the University of Northern Colorado (see 1.A.4).

- Retention Data Snapshot
- Comprehensive Success Metrics

Aims has implemented specific academic and non-academic supports to better support and retain students with disabilities. These efforts include increased academic coaching, additional assistive technology aids, and proactive measures regarding classroom accommodations. The retention and completion rates for students with a disability has been steadily increasing since AY17. Specifically, during the AY21, first-time students with disabilities were retained at 85%, compared to 68% of first-time students without a disclosed disability.

- Retention Data

Aims was awarded a Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative Finish What You Started grant in October 2021. The grant helps students who previously stopped out return to college and finish a degree. Support offerings include scholarships, success coaching, and career readiness skills. A total of 48 participants have been served through FYWS for the AY22 year.

Aims has implemented several scholarships to support student retention, persistence, and

completion.

- Funded by Aims
  - Aims Scholars: a scholarship for continuing students, who have earned at least 15 undergraduate level courses, GPA 3.2 or higher at Aims, with no need to apply, prorated based on enrollment status, up to $900 for 12 or more credits.(Ongoing)
  - Aims Persisting: a $500 one-time scholarship for in-district continuing students who were full-time (12 or more credits) and have a minimum 2.0 GPA. (spring 2022 only)
  - Aims Now: a $500 one-time scholarship for in-district first-time or new transfer students who were full-time (12 or more credits) and have a minimum 2.0 GPA. (spring 2022 only)
  - Aims Opportunity Scholarship: a $1000 scholarship for first-time or new transfer students (first year only, fall and spring). A minimum 3.0 high school or college GPA required. (Ongoing)
- CTE short-program scholarship supports students who don't qualify for federal financial aid (if a student is considered need-based the state covers part of the cost if not, Aims covers the whole amount), the amount varies depending on the program choice and fees. (Ongoing)

4.C.4 Response

IRA identifies best practices in student data collection and analysis through membership in professional organizations and participation in regional and national conferences, including the Association of Institutional Researchers (AIR). Best practices and emerging trends in data collection are evaluated for relevance to Aims through the institutional data governance group. The below frameworks are used to strategically and systemically collect and analyzes data:

- Institutional Assessment Committee
- Curricular Assessment Committee
- Institutional Data Governance group
- Institutional Research & Assessment Office
- Data Dictionary
- Data Standards
- Independent Frameworks: NCCBP and VFA

The college uses software to create data dashboards for administrators and their teams to access data in real-time which promotes data-driven decision-making and change implementation. The deployment of more than a dozen dashboards enhances the agility of the institution through timely data-based decisions. Software packages, such as Tableau, Watermark, LiveText, and Workday provide platforms to make data mining and analysis easier, faster, and more accurate.

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4.S - Criterion 4 - Summary

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

Summary

The impact of Covid-19 was felt throughout all levels of assessment at Aims. The college acknowledges gaps exist in program-level assessments which came to a halt during the pandemic and continued into the Fall of 2021. In addition, the pandemic also disrupted the Assessment Planning cycle. Consequently, there was little data to evaluate regarding program improvements during this time. To rectify this, the Office of Assessment is working with deans, chairs, and directors to jumpstart assessment efforts. Over the summer many department leaders will actively construct, review or revise their assessment plans. Department leaders will determine which classes and which Common Learning Outcomes will be assessed over the next five-year period. The next 5-year Assessment Plan Cycle starts in Fall 2022.

A success to highlight centers on work accomplished during the last two years by the Arts and Science faculty. Personnel resources shifted from department-level and course-level assessment professional development to program assessment. During the pandemic, the Curricular Assessment Committee (CAC) was formed to improve upon the General Education Program Assessment model. This is a good representation of momentum in the college's assessment culture.

Furthermore, under the division of Arts and Sciences, the Curricular Assessment Committee developed a general education definition and mission statement. This includes a general education assessment plan and course map that provides guidance on what courses need to be assessed at which program-level learning outcomes (PLOs) for program assessment to have the strongest picture of how learning occurs and is scaffolded in the General Education Program, and more specifically, the Associate of Arts (AA) and Sciences (AS) programs. Implementation will occur in fall 2022.

Additionally, Aims has a strong faculty qualifications process and all dual enrollment faculty are appropriately credentialed. Aims has brought all programs into compliance with HLC Assumed Practice B.2 without using the five-year extension HLC provided.

Sources

There are no sources.

5 - Institutional Effectiveness, Resources and Planning

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

5.A - Core Component 5.A

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

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

Argument

Response to 5.A.1

Aims' organizational structure continues to develop and adjust to best meet the needs of the college. The organizational chart was restructured in 2016, through an extensive process conducted as a result of feedback from a presidential listening tour. The president and Cabinet implemented a college-wide realignment focused on position functionality and student success. In 2016, 22 new staff positions were created and filled by new employees. The realignment enhanced leadership effectiveness, institutional communication, and cross-unit collaboration. Aims' organizational structure has also provided proper administrative resources to meet the mission and accomplish strategic plan goals.

Shared Governance & Collaborative Processes

Aims engages internal constituents through shared governance and systemic processes that include planning, policies, and procedures. Policy 74 defines shared governance and establishes the college's commitment to practice distributed leadership and democratic governance wherever and however practicable. In May 2020, the BOT adopted a procedure to guide the implementation of Policy 74. The procedure further states that standing and advisory committees that are organized, managed, and tracked through College Council are "recognized as official college avenues of participation." Other opportunities occur through the strategic and budget planning processes

Listening Tours

The president and Cabinet participate in listening tours periodically. Most recently the president held

a [brainstorming and listening session](#) to develop creative ideas, insights, and fresh perspectives regarding various senior leadership models.

Open/Online Forum Review Process

The college began a [five-year policy and procedure reformation process](#) (P/P) in 2017. The process includes reviewing every current [policy and procedure](#) as well as identifying and creating new policies and procedures. This process involves college-wide input and review which facilitates the representation of many perspectives.

Each P/P reformation or creation goes through the same college-wide [process](#). Once a P/P has been drafted, it enters a two-week college-wide feedback period. The current verbiage in addition to the proposed changes, any supporting documents, and the ensuing discussion is accessed through the employee portal and the feedback period is publicized in the Daily (employee e-newsletter). Employees are invited to offer feedback which is reviewed by College Council before voting on the reformation or creation.

Policies are forwarded to the BOT and have no less than one reading. During these readings, the department proposing the change presents and stand for questions from the Board. After final approval by the Board, the policy becomes effective immediately.

College Climate Survey & Engagement Survey

The [climate survey](#), led by the Climate Survey Working Group (CSWG) outlined in 1.C.2, made up of students, faculty, and staff, was administered in fall 2020 to address line 14 of the strategic plan. In response to the assessment, the college created [action items](#). All faculty and staff were invited to serve on [action groups](#) addressing specific action items. The CSWG identified the calendar year 2023 as a target timeframe to have at least one recommendation implemented from each action group.

The [Energage](#) employee engagement survey was administered for the first time in 2017 and repeated in 2018 and 2020. This survey is an opportunity for faculty and staff to share feedback with college administration.

Aims Faculty & Aims Staff Associations

[Aims Faculty Association (AFA)](#) and [Aims Staff Association (ASA)](#) were established to ensure "effective and inclusive decision-making and communication." Additionally, the [Learning Council](#) is integrated in shared governance processes. Through feedback avenues and collaborative review and assessment of operational and strategic initiatives and changes that impact Academic Affairs and faculty, Learning Council provides recommendations to Academic Affairs leadership, College Council, and Cabinet.

The [consultation team](#) is recognized by the Board as the negotiating unit for full-time faculty working conditions. This team is charged with establishing and maintaining a process for promotion of a cooperative relationship, through interest-based negotiations, in the matters related to specific conditions of employment for full-time faculty.

[CEI](#) develops and informs initiatives through leadership and partnerships across the college. CEI is made up of faculty, staff, administrators, and students, some of whom represent specific areas of the college (i.e. the CDI, FTLC, and HR).

BOT Engagement

The BOT serves as the policy-level leadership for the college, their focus and responsibility are directed by Policy 19 and Policy 12. See 2.C for full details of the BOT functions, organization, and processes.

BOT actions provide evidence that the Board engages in the college at the level indicated by institutional policy. In recent years, Board deliberations have included approval of new programs, academic policies, sabbatical requests, tuition rates, employee benefits package, capital improvements to campus facilities, awarding of emeritus status, faculty consultation agreement, salary proposal, and revision to college policy. Furthermore, a member of the BOT participates directly in the development of the college's strategic plan; Board members provide additional input into the plan during the development process through discussions with the president and responses to surveys or participation in focus groups. The BOT also approves the final strategic plan. Once the plan is completed, the BOT continues to participate in the plan's implementation and provides input through summary reports presented at BOT meetings, as well as through the annual budgeting process.

Employee Engagement

To ensure the Board considers the interests of internal and external constituents during decision making, the college follows Procedure 74-01 (see 3a-g), which includes a meeting of the Presidents a minimum of one time per semester. Furthermore, representatives from the SGA, AFA, and ASA present at each Board meeting to promote effective communication, education, and information about specific activities, projects, and initiatives.

The public also has the opportunity to address the board at all meetings (see 2.C.1).

All employees have the opportunity to comment on revisions to P/P. According to Policy 22 Policy & Procedure Adoption and procedures 22-01 Policy Adoption, Amendment and Repeal, and 22-02 Procedure Adoption, Amendment and Repeal, new or amended policies are approved by the Board in a two step process including a first reading and public announcement, discussion, and then action/approval. During the time between the introduction of the policy change (first reading) and the vote to finalize the change (second reading), all employees can share feedback through a college-wide feedback process. Similarly, changes to procedures are posted for employee review and go through a minimum of two readings at College Council before amendments are approved.

Collaboration & Communication

Strategic Plan & Budgeting Process: All stakeholder groups, including students and external stakeholders, are represented in the strategic plan development process with additional engagement through planning surveys and focus groups. During the strategic plan implementation and the annual budgeting process, employees across the college are directly involved through membership on teams and committees, as well as providing direct input into their specific area's budget development.

Advisory Committees see 1.B.3

Program Review Process see 4.A.1

Business Process Review (BPR) and Process Reimagination and Redesign (PRR) processes seek to understand the current way the college conducts business, and then reinvent the process to make it more efficient and effective in meeting the college's and its constituents' needs. These processes

directly engage internal and external stakeholders. As programs and departments determine internal process improvements should be considered, the BPR/PRR provides them with a consistent and intentional method to refine and improve existing processes.

A critical element to engagement is effective communication college-wide and externally through these methods.

5.A.2 Response

The college uses data to reach informed decisions in the best interest of the institution and constituencies through the creation of a culture of evidence. In 2016, Aims joined Alliance for Innovation and Transformation – AFIT (formerly CQIN – Continuous Quality Improvement Network); a group of 50 colleges and universities and their corporate learning partners. These groups serve as a higher education resource for innovation, continuous improvement, and institutional effectiveness. Through this experience, Aims has identified and started to create systemic processes for data use in decision-making. This has largely been a process of identifying gaps in data use, access, and application.

Training

The 2016 CQIN Summer Institute, Producing Future Success: Demonstrating Value through Results, provided administrators with best practices in institutional quality improvement. Upon return from the institute, the team implemented the following best practices:

- Revision of strategic planning process to incorporate portions of the United States Golf Association (USGA) planning model
- Increased focus on the customer as "subject matter experts" regarding Aims' value and image
- Evaluation of data processes, asking: Is data timely? Does it get to the right people? Do we use data or just present numbers?
- Aims faculty, staff, and administrators continue to attend AFIT conferences annually

The commitment to these best practices highlighted the need for a data dashboard which Aims implemented in 2018 (see 4.C.4).

Developments

Aims understands the critical component data play in the informed decision-making process throughout the college. This is why the college has developed the following:

- A robust Institutional Research and Assessment (IRA) Office, has the staffing and expertise to provide the college with the necessary leadership to provide data that is accurate, reliable, timely, and consistent.
- Benchmarking data, such as the National Community College Benchmarking Project (NCCB), the sate institutional annual goal setting and the VE-135 reports, provide comparisons to national and regional colleges.
- Software package implementation, such as Tableau, Watermark, LiveText, and Workday provides platforms to make data mining and analysis easier, faster, and more accurate.
- Trend and historical data allow the college the opportunity to determine where it is currently at, set targets for the future, and track progress toward those targets. For example, the soon to be implemented strategic enrollment management plan, and the college's weekly enrollment

report.

- In 2017, the SEIS division adopted the [Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS)](link) framework to develop outcomes and measures for assessing their cross-functional operations (see 4.B.1).
- In 2020-2021, the Institutional Assessment Committee developed a list of institutional-level assessments. This aligned assessment efforts to ensure that the strategic plan objectives and other endeavors could be tracked and documented. The project will scale up to include [operational assessments](link) in AY23.

Reports

- [Feasibility Studies](link) & [Program Review](link): The decision to start a new program or certificate is based on feasibility study data. The evidence shows several examples of decisions to both start new degrees and certificates and to forgo the creation of new degrees and certificates. An overview of feasibility study information is presented to the BOT twice annually. Program review data is also presented to the BOT and provides information gathered from departments that show how departments use the data for continuous improvement and action plans. The evidence shows an example of the history department where too many sections were being offered with fewer students; pedagogically it made sense to have fewer courses with more students. In the instance of the phlebotomy department, it was evident that due to waitlists, creating a summer cohort allowed more students access to the program and Aims to meet community and healthcare industry needs.
  - Aims' Flight Training Center: the decision to move the flight center was informed through a [feasibility study and peer review](link) of the study (see 5.C.2).
- [Standard Course Information Navigation](link): The college implemented a universal syllabus in 2019. After reviewing data and best practices, a natural next step was to begin discussions about implementing Standard Navigation in D2L course shells. Beginning in 2017, the Online Excellence Committee created sharable course shells for curriculum development and course revitalization. These were approved by the Learning Council. In 2019, there were early adopters of this practice. After a gap due to leadership changes, standard course information module communication began again in fall 2021 and was fully implemented in spring 2022. Continued work is ongoing with phase two being standard navigation being piloted fall 2022 and full implementation in fall 2023.
- [Website Analytics](link): In 2019, Aims began a website refresh and overhaul. In October 2021 the new website was launched and provides robust analytics that supports decision-making and allow the college to better focus marketing efforts to support meeting prospective students' educational needs.

Additionally, [the following reports](link) provide direct evidence of the use of data and analysis within the college's various processes.

5.A.3 Response

While academic administrators offer support and high-level oversight of academic matters, the president/CEO and academic administrators depend on faculty to carry out the day-to-day operation of instructional program. Academic departments are staffed with a chair/director who is responsible for recommending and observing faculty, directing program/curriculum development, evaluating and recommending textbooks, working with advisory committees, and assisting in scheduling faculty and

course sections. Faculty are responsible for oversight of program curriculum and course content, both through the Curriculum Committee (see 3.A.1) and representation on state committees, such as the SFCC and State Discipline Groups (see 3.A.1). State Discipline Groups monitor content, rigor, and student performance outcomes for each course.

Aims programs maintain authority over program-related curriculum. Advisory committees assist faculty in ensuring the quality of the program curriculum, and that program graduates are meeting industry needs. Advisory committees annually review program curriculum and outcomes to ensure that the program meets student needs and provides workplace skills appropriate to current market needs. Each advisory committee has the option to include a student representative, students provide course feedback through course surveys and engagement in SGA, in particular through the student vice-president of Academic Affairs position. This position represents students on academic-related committees and serves as the student voice. Additionally, the SGA President serves as the student representative to the BOT and College Council. The SGA President presents a standing report at each BOT meeting.

Faculty are involved in setting policy, procedure, and practice through the Learning Council (LC). The purpose of the LC is to provide a venue to vet issues and participate in shared governance directly through collaborative review and assessment of operational and strategic initiatives and changes that particularly impact Academic Affairs and faculty, and provide recommendations to Academic Affairs leadership, College Council, and Cabinet in alignment with Policy 74: Shared Governance.

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5.B - Core Component 5.B

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

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

Argument

5.B.1 Response

Aims provides instruction on its main campus in Greeley, Colorado and at eleven sites that meet the HLC's definition of additional locations, including locations in Fort Lupton, Loveland, Windsor, and the Aims Flight Training Center, located at the Northern Colorado Regional Airport in Loveland, Colorado, and several concurrent sites at area high schools. Aims offers instruction online, as authorized before the COVID-19 pandemic. The college offers courses during the daytime, evening and weekends.

Operations & Operational Staff Qualifications

All employees meet the minimum qualifications for the position at the time of hire. After an employee is hired, Aims provides ongoing training opportunities for continued employee development. Consistent faculty hiring practices, assuring that all faculty, regardless of location or modality, meet the required qualifications is required by Procedure 4-700 A (see 3.C.3).

AY22 Employee Count:

- Full-Time Faculty: 118
- Part-Time Faculty: 270
- Full-Time Staff: 309
- Part-Time Staff: 120

The college maintains current minimum qualifications for every college position (see 3.C.4). When recruiting and hiring, Aims considers only applicants who meet minimum qualifications. Aims strives to keep the college's benefits and compensation package competitive with peer institutions throughout Colorado by annually benchmarking against other institutions' pay rates (see 3.C.4).

Employee Satisfaction & Turnover

In recent years, Aims received external validation that its training and development efforts are having the intended, positive impact on employee engagement. In 2017, the Energage employee

engagement survey was administered for the first time and repeated in 2018 and 2020. Consistent with the highly favorable results from the survey, Aims was recognized by the Top Workplaces organization in 2018, 2019, and again in 2022.

The employee turnover rate since 2016 has averaged 9.7%. Historically, Aims' turnover rate has been lower than the national trends.

Professional Development & Training

Since the 2016 HLC submission, the CPD has continued to expand offerings for college-wide training and individual professional development. The college's financial commitment is clear as Aims has increased the employee annual allowance for individual professional training. In 2015, the annual allowance was $1,000 per employee and has increased to $2,000 as of 2020. Employees regularly access the available funds to support their ongoing development. In AY17, staff utilized a total of $71,870 for CPD-sponsored individual professional development. By AY20, this figure increased to $156,236. Similarly, CPD's total budget grew more than 138% from 2016 to 2020. Utilization numbers can be found here.

In 2018, CPD launched the BizLibrary LMS, making on-demand training available to employees. BizLibrary provides over 8,000 videos for employees to utilize independently or as department training. Utilization among Aims employees continues to increase, particularly as the COVID-19 social distancing practices and other impacts have changed how employees access training and development. The expansion of professional development offerings has enabled CPD to serve a more employees. There are three primary service areas of the CPD: professional development, work life wellness, and employee recognition.

Over the last five years, CPD has improved data collection and session evaluation. AY16 served as a baseline for collection of detailed enrollment information, which CPD used to analyze participation and satisfaction. This practice continues and helps CPD assess professional development interests and needs for future offerings. Class participants receive an electronic survey after each training.

Tuition Waiver and Reimbursement

Policy 4-1525 promotes professional and personal growth through cost-sharing/coverage of tuition expenses. Procedure 4-1525A details the availability of tuition waivers and/or reimbursements for the various categories of employees.

Resource Base and Infrastructure

To function effectively and support the college's mission, Aims has a solid resource base (see 5.B.4). Aims has maintained and strengthened this base to support educational offerings and students through a robust infrastructure.

Fiscal Resources

The college continues to benefit from being debt-free since 2013. Each year, the budget is developed to strategically address the current and projected economic issues, enrollment trends and their impact on revenues, state appropriations, and property tax revenues. An understating of the economic outlook for the next fiscal year helps to create reasonable budget scenarios that support the college in its planning and priority setting for the next fiscal year. For example, in November 2020, the budget work session for the Board included a four-year projection that showing a stable budget for the next

three fiscal years while also maintaining a commitment to funding the approved facility plan. Throughout the pandemic, the college has experienced no full-time employee layoffs or furloughs.

Campus Infrastructure

The college's four campuses, flight operations center, and Early College Academy include a total of 25 buildings, encompassing 720,000 assignable square feet across 330 acres. Aims is committed to the continued maintenance and improvement of the physical plant. Based on the most recent facilities condition assessment conducted in January 2020, the college has a Facility Condition Index of .09. This rating of good to very good is a strong indication of the commitment the college has to the maintenance of buildings and grounds.

Assisting the college in prioritizing and planning for future building and renovation projects, a Space Study Analysis was conducted in 2018. This report identified areas of improvement, including additional study and formal and informal gathering space for students and a significant shortfall in general meeting and assembly space for the college. Resulting notable projects include a 100,000 sq/ft Welcome Center completed in December 2021. Additionally, opened in January 2022, was the renovation of the College Center which has been transformed into a new Student Commons. This project increased gathering spaces for students, including an expansion of the CDI and SAIL departments. This project was paid for with reserve and operating budgets with no additional cost to taxpayers or students.

Information Technology Infrastructure

Information Technology Services (ITS), the college's central information technology organization, provides an advanced computing environment and technology support for students, faculty, and staff.

ITS supports student learning and the needs of faculty, students, and staff through a Help Desk that responds to any teaching, computing, or technology problems. ITS is a key partner in developing and supporting an active teaching and learning environment designed with a student-centered approach in mind. The Technology Readiness Advisory Committee (TRAC) collaborates with ITS to identify and address campus technology requirements.

Notable ITS Support:

- Operates 175 labs with over 997 computers. Student devices in carts available for instruction include 1,144 laptops and 601 tablets.
- Supports nearly 1,400 desktop and laptop machines for faculty and staff use.
- Provides devices for checkout including 1,082 laptop and mobile devices.
- Operates a robust network consisting of over 344 wireless access points.
- Supports over 2,540 unique wireless users per month and over 4,721 unique wireless devices per day.
- Provides support to the LMS, Desire2Learn's Brightspace used by over 468 instructors and 7,521 students.

IT Security

To ensure the security and continuity of information resources on campus, a new state-of-the-art data center was built on the Greeley Campus in 2017. Physical security was greatly improved by implementing limited badge access to select authorized users and requiring 2-factor authentication to

enter the data center. Digital security was improved by requiring all employees to use multi-factor authentication to access digital resources.

ITS has strategically moved many college services and operations to the cloud. The decision to move from Banner to Workday is a significant example of this strategy. Phase I of the Workday implementation included finance, human resources, and payroll and was completed in July 2020 after a remarkable 10-month implementation timeline. Student implementation started in August 2020, with full implementation scheduled for October 2023. Workday offers far more advanced security measures than those present in Banner. An additional example of cloud-based technology was the move from an analog phone system to the adoption of Avaya's cloud-based system. These changes allow the institution to be fully operational in the absence of access to a physical campus location. Lastly, the college holds robust insurance coverage as part of the cyber protection policy, and college-wide training occurs annually for all faculty and staff with additional ITS-led mock phishing attempts to highlight additional security and training needs.

Continuity of Operations

College continuity of operations is outlined in Policy 3-705A and SOP.100.Continuity of Operations. The Department of Campus Safety and Security (CSS) maintains and annually updates the college's emergency operations plan and ensures its availability to all stakeholders. Through many inclement weather closures, tornado watch and warning(s), and other threats, the college's preparedness, planning, and robust notification system allows quick and synchronized alerts which has led to all positive outcomes.

A single page summary of emergency procedures, the emergency action guide, is distributed to all employees. The college assesses potential disasters by seasonal quarter using a Hazards Vulnerability Assessment to examine risk in four areas: Natural, Technological, Human, and Terrorism. With the tool, CSS staff rates Aims' likelihood of incurring each type of emergency situation and also evaluates current plans, available resources, and how well college personnel are trained to deal with these events. Plans are outlined in the Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP). Additionally, the Threat and Violence Assessment Team (TVAT) reviews the assessments, which helps prioritize training and plan revisions according to threat ranking.

The college also conducts table top exercises at the Cabinet-level. In 2018, the college created 30 building safety coordinator positions to ensure that in the event of an emergency a designated person is available to support the CSS team in the event of an emergency.

The college maintains continuity of operations through systemic college-wide processes which have been proven to work well in light of the recent pandemic.

5.B.2 Response

Several key processes help ensure college's goals and long-term plans are realistic and aligned with available organizational resources, as well as potential future opportunities.

Strategic Plan

The strategic plan development process includes an initial review of all current institutional data, resources, and position. Once this information is available, college leadership considers both the

current and future position, defined resources, and potential potential shifts in the economy and community needs. This process helps the college develop long-term goals and targets that are realistic, attainable, and connected to the mission (see 1.A.1).

Budget Process

Aims' fiscal, human, technology, and facility resource allocation ensures student learning and related services are at the center of every institutional action and activity. Educational purpose and mission are achieved through the budget process which allows academic departments to request resources needed to meet both the operational needs of their academic program and the strategic goals identified in the strategic plan.

Environmental Scan and Economic Impact

Aims underwent an environmental scan (ES) in 2017. The information from the ES informed the work of the current strategic plan and facility plan cycle. The gathered data highlighted six key findings regarding external factors:

1. Growing population and changing demographics of Aims' service area
2. Affordability in post-secondary education
3. Workforce and/or CTE needs in Aims' service area
4. College readiness of students
5. Pathways to employment
6. Changes and/or opportunities in technology and operational improvement.

The strategic plan was designed to respond to these opportunities and challenges.

5.B.3 Response

Budgeting & Expenditure Review Process

Aims has an effective, well-developed process for developing budgets. The operating budget process begins with the Budget Office distributing budget guidelines and instructions to cost-center managers to determine the level of expenditure needed to meet operating and strategic plan goals for the next fiscal year. During the budget development process, departments align expenditures with each of the college's strategic plan strategies. This process provides widespread input from across the college in determining needed fiscal resources.

The college's budgeting and expenditure review process helps set annual goals and tactics/actions that are within the college's ability to accomplish and directly align with the strategic plan. The vice-president of Administrative Services (VPAS) and Budget Director monitor budget to actual revenues throughout the year and review impacts if there are changes in actual to budgeted revenue. Monthly college budget reports are available for all cost-center administrators. Cost-center administrators have real-time access to budget reports in Workday. Daily reports can be run with chosen time frames such as monthly, and year-to-date.

The college maintains sufficient operating and fund balance reserves to address any revenue shortfalls. Monthly updates are provided to the BOT by the VPAS highlighting any budget concerns or issues. The integrity of the college's internal controls has resulted in consistently clean

institutional audits containing no recommendations or findings for the past three years.

The Budget Office reviews and prepares annual budget documents for review by Cabinet. After Cabinet's approval, the VPAS presents a budget workshop for the Board with final budget approval at the Board's May meeting. The final budget is published and distributed to local and state entities.

In discussions with Cabinet and SGA, the VPAS conducts a work session with the board outlining draft recommendations for tuition for the next fiscal year. Based on input from the board, tuition is approved at a subsequent board meeting.

5.B.4 Response

Educational purposes are achieved through the college budget process (see 5.B.1 & 5.B.3) which allow academic departments to request and receive resources needed to meet both the operational needs of their academic program and strategic plan strategies. All allocations are discussed and vetted by academic program leadership, the appropriate academic dean, and CAO to ensure the needed resources for student success and successful operation of each program are available. An analysis of the previous years' allocations and forecast for future needs is used to determine the appropriate allocation. This has been an effective and efficient process to meet the objective of ensuring educational purposes are achieved.

In addition to the annual budget process, an academic special projects summit is held each year. During the summit, academic departments submit requests for needed equipment and instructional resources not contained in their departmental budgets. Requests are reviewed by academic leadership and prioritized. For the past five years, the college has had sufficient resources to fund all approved requests. During the budget development process departments are required to identify the proportion of personnel and operating budgets that align with each of the college's strategic plan strategies. The level of resources attributed to each strategic plan is presented in each year's published operating budget.

The college has invested over $76 million in academic space since 2014 to ensure academic programs have the classrooms, labs, and training space to support their programs. Currently under construction is a $19 million project to build a classroom/lab building and simulated city to support academic programs at the Windsor campus.

In support of the college's priority to its core functions of instruction, academic support, and student services, 70% of expenditures are allocated to these areas as illustrated below.

- Instruction - 42% of total expenditures ($31,164,855)
- Academic Support - 14% of expenditures ($10,348,958)
- Student Services - 14 % of expenditures ($10,015,570)

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5.C - Core Component 5.C

The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning and improvement.

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

Argument

5.C.1 Response

The budget allocation process is developed with a focus on sound fiscal practices including; projecting conservative enrollment estimates; assessing projected local economic outlook and providing the resources for college departments to achieve their operational and strategic goals for the fiscal year.

This process is designed to align resource needs to strategic plan strategies approved by the BOT:

- Strategy One: Empower Students to Succeed
- Strategy Two: Enhance Operational Performance
- Strategy Three: Enrich NOCO Economic Development

Aims shows appropriate allocation of allocates its resources in alignment with its mission and priorities in the following ways:

- Educational role and responsibility to serve the public aligns with mission see 1.B.1 & 1.B.2
- Hiring processes for faculty and staff align with the college's mission see 3.C.3, 3.C.7, & 5.B.1
- Budget process and review align with the strategic plan see 5.B.3 & 5.B.4.
- Necessary instructional and educational resources are provided through the academic special projects summit see 5.C.4

5.C.2 Response

Assessment of student learning and academic program review are detailed in 4.A.1 and 4.B.1. Aims

uses assessment and program review results to identify opportunities for improvement, that the college prioritizes and funds. The budget process supports student learning and academic program needs through several venues:

1. The budget process directly links to the strategic plan strategies (see 5.C.1). The strategic plan tactic status is reported college-wide and to the BOT annually, which informs the budgeting process.
2. Specific to academics, the annual budget process includes an. academic special projects summit (see 5.C.4).
3. Program viability and operational assessment are carried out through the framework of the Institutional Assessment Committee.
4. Program review and feasibility include action plans that provide evidence of resource needs. Through continuous improvement discussions, programs outline learner needs and link this data to budget requests. As a result of several program review and feasibility process results, significant investments have been made. For example, investments at the Fort Lupton campus expanded the welding lab and installation of the CDL program and training lot to allowed more capacity for instruction. Most recently, the Windsor campus project expansion includes increased space for the drone and aviation programs and a simulated city.
5. The employee supplemental service authorization (ESSA) allows faculty to support identified academic needs outside of their contract. Examples include course redesign, curriculum refresh, and modality designs.

5.C.3 Response

Aims involves everyone's perspectives - faculty, staff, administrators, students, community, and stakeholders in its planning processes. The strategic plan goals highlight and enable continuous improvement efforts. The strategic plan development process was truly an inclusive process of gathering feedback from employees, students, and the community (see 5.A.1 & 5.B). The strategic plan enables Aims to focus on key initiatives over five years and helps the college prioritize ways to build a stronger community.

Students participation in decision-making occurs at multiple levels. During strategic planning, the college's CCSSE and Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory results are reviewed to better understand the perspectives of students. Additionally, the SGA is organized as a mirror to Cabinet and position responsibilities include committee membership and providing input and recommendations on college policies, procedures, and budget that impact the student experience. The College's shared governance procedure specifically lists SGA throughout.

Examples of student input include:

- Committee Membership:
    - Technology Readiness & Advisory Committee
    - College Council
    - Council for Equity & Inclusion
- Tuition & Student Fees
    - Supported the AY23 tuition increase
    - Sunsetting Student Accident Insurance policy (due to low use) and reallocated students

fees to support a [Student Emergency Fund](#). The most common emergencies include job loss, car repair, housing/rent, medical bills, and childcare.
  - Recommended [an additional FTE to support Arty's Pantry](#) paid by student fees.
- Policy & Procedure
  - Participated in the development of the [expressive activity guide](#).

Policy & Procedure Reformation & Open/Online Forum Review Process

The college began a [five-year policy and procedure reformation process](#) (P/P) in 2017. The plan includes reviewing every [current policy and procedure](#) as well as identifying new policy and procedures the college needs to create. This process involves college-wide input and review which facilitates the representation of many perspectives (see 5.A.1).

Community Engagement

- The [Aims Community College Foundation](#) is a non-profit educational trust established in 1979 by visionary leaders who saw the value of preparing for the future growth of the college. The purpose of the Foundation is to endorse and support the mission of the college through the responsible and ethical solicitation, stewardship, and investment of funds. Foundation Board members must demonstrate an affinity for Aims, support of student success, the willingness to volunteer, and the ability to provide financial gifts. The Foundation revenues are given annually to the institution to offer financial support for scholarships, instructional and facilities needs, cultural activities, and special programs.
- [Advisory Committees](#) see 3.A.1.
- High School Programs see 1.A.4.
- Aims' [three satellite campuses](#) are each overseen by an [executive director](#). These campuses assure that the vast service area and expansive Weld county communities are represented and served.
- Each BOT packet includes the [president's meetings of note](#) which detail the President's engagement with the community and industry.
- [Public Comment](#) see 2.C.1
- The CWDI represents Aims on many community [Workforce Development Boards and sector partnerships](#) (see 1.A.4).

5.C.4 Response

Aims is one of two [local district colleges (LDC)](#) in Colorado which are separate from the Colorado Community College System. LDC's receive funding from three sources: tuition, state appropriations, and local revenue generated from mill levies assessed on property values within Aims' taxing district (see 1.B.1). The growth and the assessed valuation of property within the college's taxing district play a critical role. Six counties contribute to the assessed value of the taxing district, with the largest contribution coming from Weld County. For FY20, property tax revenue growth was derived primarily from oil and gas production in Weld County. Property tax revenue is a significant part of the revenue stream for the college and comprises approximately 70% of the general operating revenue. Tuition and state appropriations each comprise 12-15%. The unstable funding swings in oil and gas property tax revenues require careful monitoring by the college when planning for the future. The college has [prepared well financially](#) for economic swings in the oil and gas industry by maintaining adequate reserves to minimize potential impacts caused by economic fluctuations.

Each year, the budget is developed to strategically address the current and projected economic issues and enrollment trends and their impact on revenues, as well as state appropriation, and property tax revenues. An understating of the economic outlook for the next fiscal year helps to create reasonable budget scenarios that help the college in its planning and priority setting for the next fiscal year.

The economic outlook factors affecting the future of the college include the risk of changing student enrollment and the possibility of decreased funding from local property taxes and state appropriations. These factors are sensitive to the condition of the local and statewide economies. The conservative approach to managing resources has prepared the college well to meet the fiscal resource needs of the college during this economically challenging time. The November 2020 BOT budget work session included a four-year projection that showed the college maintaining a stable budget for the next three fiscal years while also maintaining its commitment to funding the approved facility plan. Throughout the pandemic, the college has experienced no employee layoffs or furloughs.

Finally, the college analyzes tuition rates annually and adjusts tuition based on funding mix and projected costs. The college's tuition rates are lower than all thirteen of the CCCS schools. The college has maintained the same tuition rates since FY12. In 2021, the college presented to the Board a strategy for tuition to be increased over a five-year period. The adoption of a 5-year strategy provides a predictable and equitable approach to ensuring tuition revenue is adequate to support future operations of the college.

The college continues to benefit from being debt-free since 2013.

5.C.5 Response

Aims remains agile in an ever-changing landscape. Factors such as fluctuation in oil and gas revenue, fast-paced technology changes, globalization, and dynamic industry needs require Aims to be adept at anticipating shifts and future casting (see 5.C.1 & 5.C.4).

Demographic Shifts

Aims' 2017 environmental scan (ES) and economic impact (EI) report highlight the college's external focus and acumen of agility. The information from the ES informed the work of the current strategic and facility plans. Three of the six key findings connect to the college's anticipation of evolving external factors:

> 1) Growing population and changing demographics of Aims' service area.

Aims continues to see significant shifts in community and college demographics, especially the increase in Latinx students, currently at 33%, and other minority groups, including refugees from Somalia and Burma. In response to this growth, Aims website' is available in Spanish and the college regularly creates Spanish-language marketing; the college's virtual tour is available in Spanish as well. Recently the college formed an action team with the commitment to the college's HSI identity. In 2018, the college also opened the CDI which includes a coordinator for Latinx engagement.

The college has focused Adult Education efforts to support community members who are seeking to learn English, or brushing up on academic skills to prepare for the college classroom.

Additionally, Aims has expanded continuing education, personal health and wellness enrichment and personal enrichment offerings to meet the needs of the retiree population.

> 2) Workforce and CTE needs in Aims' service area are impacted by northern Colorado's diverse economy. This includes employers in advanced manufacturing, energy, agriculture, health & wellness, and IT. These areas are encompassed in Aims' CTE programs.

> 3) Jobs are increasingly requiring moderate to advanced technological skills and this impacts not only future jobs, but also the way in which students prepare for jobs. One of the ways Aims meets this need is through simulation rooms, apparatus, and enrichments (see 3.D.2).

Technology Advancements & Globalization

Additionally, as described in 5.A., in 2016 the college joined Alliance for Innovation and Transformation – AFIT (formerly CQIN – Continuous Quality Improvement Network). Through this membership and attendance at annual conferences, college leadership and their direct reports actively learn above and engage in innovative thinking that translates to college-wide awareness of the need to embrace agility and innovation. Providentially, the college focused on agility through the all-college professional development opportunity, Conversation Day, in the semester prior to the pandemic. The keynote speaker and workshops focused on agility. Furthermore, during a college-wide table exercise, all employees shared their own best practices for staying agile in the face of change (as individuals, in departments, as an institution, etc.). Key themes and trends were collected in addition to what works well, and what Aims does well. These trends were collected on sticky notes and placed on the walls of the conference hall. Employees then explored what the college could do to better support growth in agility. College leadership collectively reviewed the responses.

The Economy & State Support

As one of two local district colleges (LDC) in Colorado which are separate from the CCCS, Aims understands that economic impact is of vital importance to the service-area communities/taxing districts. Furthermore, service-area community needs and industries that hire Aims' graduates influence the types of programs, certificates, and degrees Aims offers. Remaining agile and responsive to these environmental factors bolsters Aim' success and impacts growth plans.

The identification of these external factors inform future strategies and budgeting as Aims endeavors to continue to provide robust educational offerings to its service area.

5.C.6 Response

Aims supports continuous improvement and implementation of operations and plans through its commitment to the Learning College philosophy and strategic planning. The role of the Learning College is to contribute and create scenarios that facilitate learning through innovation, shared learning environments, and the formation of knowledge. This philosophy connects to employees and learning, as this belief extends to employee learners with the expectation that all will strive for continuous improvement with a growth mindset (see 3.B.1).

The strategic plan provides a continuous improvement framework to support the mission - to provide knowledge and skills to advance quality of life, economic vitality, and overall success of the diverse communities we serve. The strategic plan strategies shape this framework: empower students to

succeed, enhance operational performance and enrich northern Colorado's economic development.

Over the last five years, Aims committed to reviewing and improving current processes in support of continuous improvement through several Business Process Reviews (BPRs) and Process Reimagine & Redesign (PRR). The BPR's purpose is to broaden the understanding and influence of process improvement and is intended to impact all functional areas of the college. The PRR's purpose is specifically aimed at evaluating the college's current and future needs regarding opportunities for a more streamlined and efficient operating environment, developing plans to better leverage best practices, creating collaborative strategies across departments, and engaging the current staff in utilizing the technology resources which are readily available.

BPRs

- Hiring and onboarding process for student employees has reduced the time from application to hire for student employees.
- Employee onboarding and orientation redesign covers human resources and payroll, recruiting and onboarding, work study, part-time faculty and part-time staff long-term hiring.
- Resource management and procurement process streamlined purchasing processes of requisition to check and p-cards that were mostly manual, paper intensive, and required rechecking of work.
- Employee leave request and reporting created an automated workflow.
- Travel processes were streamlined and went paperless.
- PT job/employee off-boarding process developed an automated workflow.
- Digitized paper files to increase security, free storage space, and decentralize information retrieval.
- Implementation of an electronic process for Faculty Load and Compensation (FLAC)
- Academic course scheduling was simplified to include electronic workflows for data review, edits, and final approval.

PRR - Student Life Cycle

- High School Concurrent Enrollment
- Recruitment and Admissions
- Testing Center and Transitions Center
- Academic Scheduling and Curriculum Management
- Academic Advising and Student Planning
- Registration and Records

To foster a college-wide growth mentality, Aims encourages and expects all faculty and staff to participate in continuous improvement efforts through activities aligned with the Learning College philosophy and 2018-2023 strategic plan.

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5.S - Criterion 5 - Summary

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

Summary

Aims' organizational structure continues to develop and adjust to best meet the needs of the college. The organizational chart was restructured in 2017, through an extensive process conducted by the President to enhance leadership effectiveness, institutional communication, and cross-unit collaboration. Aims recently integrated a new ERP system and realized that the org chart does not interface with organizational chart software and causes issues such as truncated names and titles. Aims has contracted with a company called Collaborative to identify solutions to ERP integration challenges such as the Org chart interface issue. In the next six months, Collaborative will be providing recommendations to Aims so that the college can hopefully export a fully functional org chart.

The administrative structures and collaborative processes of Aims enable the college to provide effective leadership in service to its purpose, vision, and mission. As one of only two community colleges in Colorado operating outside the CCCS, Aims is funded primarily by a mill levy in Aims' taxing district of Weld County and portions of Adams, Broomfield, Larimer, Logan, and Morgan Counties. As a local-district college, rather than a member of the CCCS, Aims exercises oversight of its operations by way of a five-member Board of Trustees whose members are elected from within the taxing district. By comparison, the 13 members of the CCCS are governed by an 11-member board called the State Board for Community Colleges and Occupational Education (SBCCOE) – thereby limiting their local autonomy. Aims continues to be debt-free since 2013.

Sources

There are no sources.