

# Cerritos College's Decision-Making Process: A Guide to Planning and Budgeting



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## **Introduction: The Who, What, Why, When, and How of Decision-Making at Cerritos College**

The planning process at Cerritos College reflects a collaborative, college-wide effort involving the Executive Council, Planning and Budget Committee, and Faculty Senate. This document outlines the planning framework, including the structure, operational relationships, mechanisms, and agreements that support inclusive and transparent decision-making across the College. The “Guide to Planning and Budgeting” explains how decisions are made to best support and advance the College’s mission, detailing the Who, What, Why, When, and How of the decision-making process.

### **Who is involved in decision-making at Cerritos College?**

Decision-making at Cerritos College is a collaborative process that includes input from all stakeholders—students, employees, and members of the broader community. The “Overview of Planning and Sequences for Resource Allocation” section of this document outlines how input is collected from all constituencies. Beyond offering input, these groups help create and prioritize institutional goals and objectives, determine how resources are allocated to support them, and assess the College’s progress. These processes are further detailed in the “Budget Prioritization and Approvals” section.

### **What is the “decision-making process” at Cerritos College?**

The decision-making process is a collaborative approach to identifying the goals and objectives that best support the College’s mission. Also, it guides how we allocate key resources—such as time, funding, staffing, and effort—to achieve the College’s goals. These decisions are informed by institutional data, as outlined in the Overview of Planning and Sequences for Resource Allocation section of this document. As part of the process, we also assess our decisions and actions to determine whether we are successfully meeting our goals and advancing the mission of the College.

### **Why do we need a decision-making process at Cerritos College?**

Our decision-making process is fundamental to fulfilling the mission of the College. Input from all constituent groups is critical to developing, evaluating, and achieving our goals and objectives aligned to our mission. Following a clear and inclusive process also ensures that resources are distributed equitably across the institution.

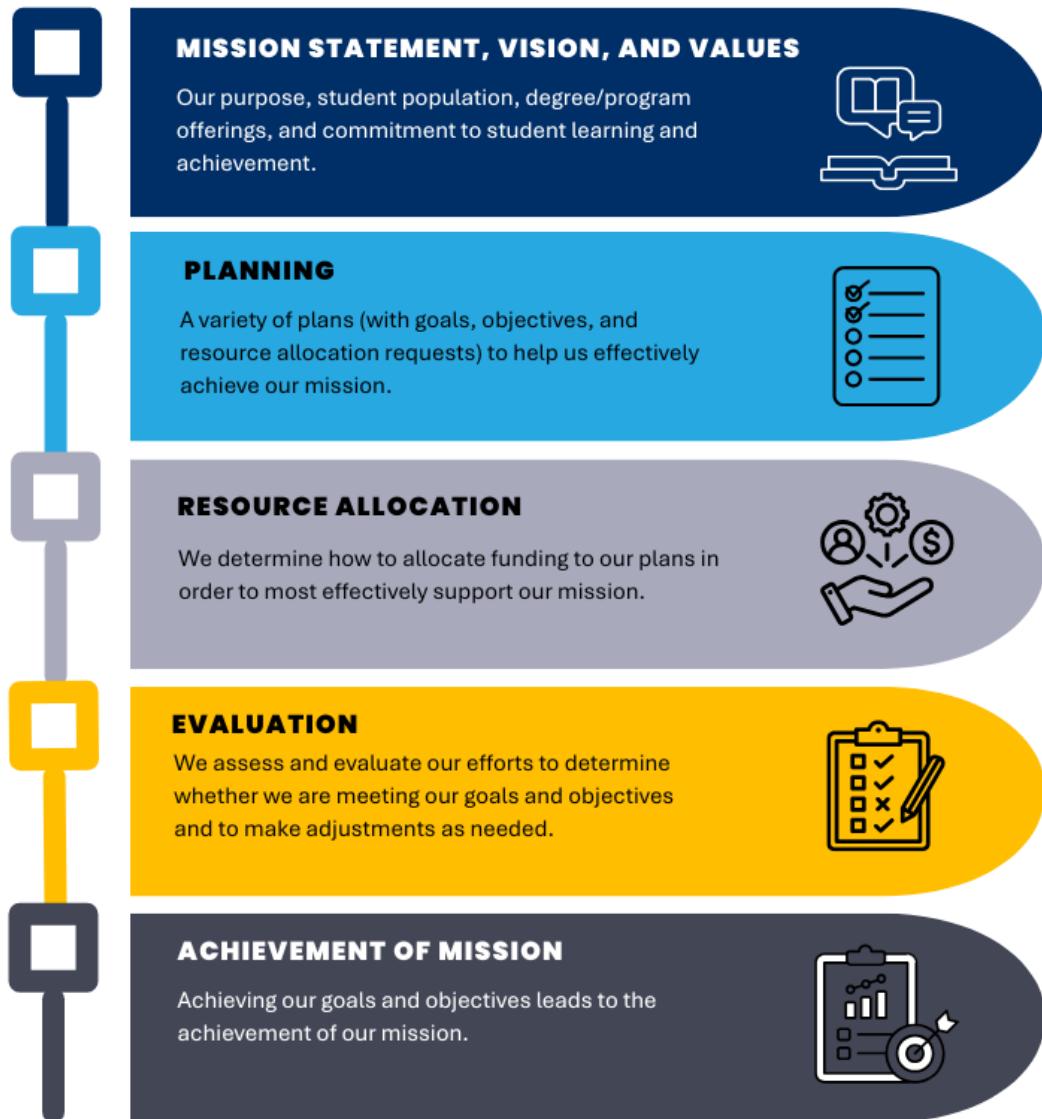
### **When does the decision-making process occur at Cerritos College?**

In simple terms, the decision-making process is a continuous cycle of planning, resource allocation, and evaluation. This cycle occurs annually, as well as within broader three and six-year planning cycles. A more detailed explanation of this planning cycle is in the “Overview of Planning and Sequences for Resource Allocation” section of this document.

### **How does decision-making happen at Cerritos College?**

One way to understand the decision-making process is by following the steps outlined in Figure 1 below, which also serve as a framework to this “Guide to Planning and Budgeting.” Each step relies on institutional data, stakeholder input, and ongoing evaluation. To ensure continuous improvement, Cerritos College remains committed to a culture of inclusiveness, evidence-based decision-making, student learning and assessment, and transparency.

**Figure 1. Steps to Planning and Budgeting to Achieve Cerritos College’s Mission**



## Timeline for Decision-Making Document Review

As a living document, the Planning and Budget Committee is responsible for overseeing, reviewing, and updating this guide as needed. This document will be fully reviewed every

two-years, in alignment with the Students First Framework (SFF)<sup>1</sup>, our 10-year Educational Master Plan. Additionally, annual updates may be made to clarify or refine processes.

## **Overview of Planning and Sequences for Resource Allocation**

Cerritos College has a long history of collaborative, strategic planning, and decision-making. The college planning process emphasizes the importance on institutional data, the adoption of evidence-based practices, and an evaluation of those practices, continually seeking to improve and enhance institutional effectiveness. Cerritos College's ten-year Students First Framework creates a clear roadmap, foundation, and vision that guides the college through its program development process and overall campus growth strategy. Specifically, the goals of the SFF help Cerritos College strengthen student achievement, plan for current and future needs, transform infrastructure, and prioritize resource allocation and staffing. The SFF serves as both a foundation and a guiding document that aligns the college's data-informed planning efforts, such as the Sustainability Plan, Facilities Master Plan, and IT Master plan to the needs of students and the broader community the college serves.

## **Students First Framework (SFF)**

The Executive Council oversees the development of the SFF. The SFF works in conjunction with and informs the development of the Sustainability Plan, Facilities Master Plan, IT Master plan, and other plans and processes aimed at meeting student needs through a long-term vision for planning instructional and student support services, facilities, and technology. The SFF is developed in alignment with accreditation standards, state and federal regulations, campus-wide forums, planning assumptions, and shared governance structure.

The Figure 2 below displays college terminology as described in the Students First Framework and how annual planning aligns with the college's mission and vision.

**Figure 2. Terminology**



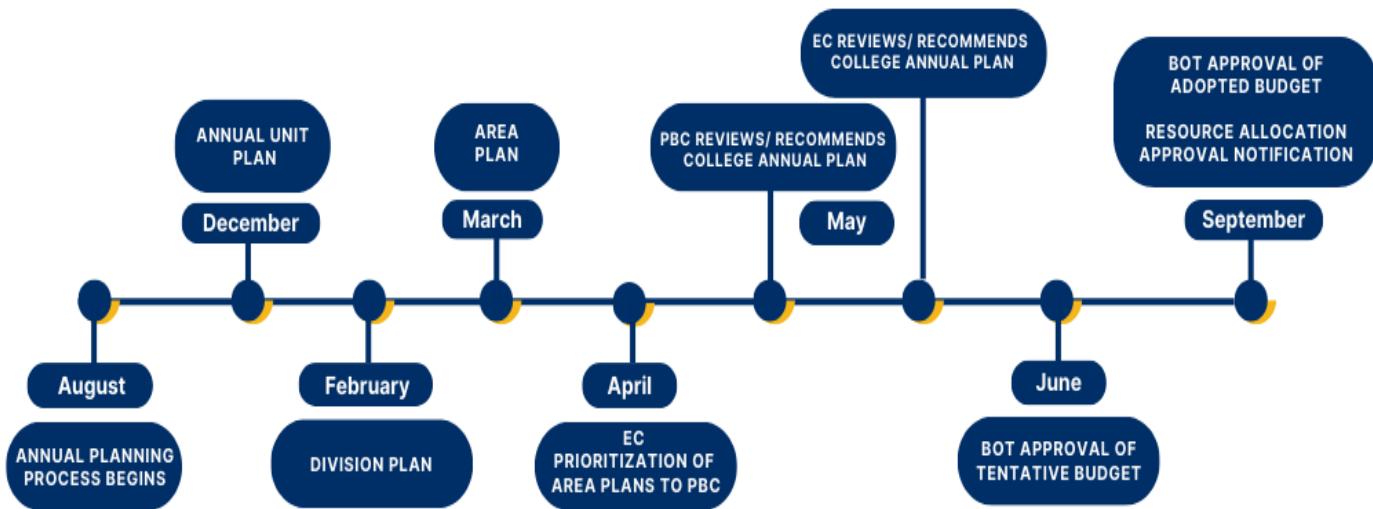
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<sup>1</sup> To view the Students First Framework, please visit the following website:  
<https://www.cerritos.edu/students-first-framework/default.htm>

## College Planning and Resource Allocation

Cerritos College's institutional planning is grounded in the college's mission, vision, and goals and is guided by a variety of college-wide processes. The Students First Framework outlines the college's goals, objectives, and strategies, establishing resource allocation priorities which inform the annual planning process (i.e., unit plans, division plans, and area plans). These integrated processes guide resource allocation to ensure student success and institutional effectiveness (see Figure 3).

**Figure 3. Timeline of Annual Unit Planning and Budget**



Each academic year, all areas participate in the annual unit planning process. Each member of the campus community is considered part of the unit with which they are affiliated or to which they report. Specifically, the primary purpose of the annual unit plans is for units to identify operational growth and improvement needs, then provide data-informed decisions about resources required to address these needs.

The annual unit plan focuses on a one-year timeframe and is tied directly to resource allocations. Annual resource requests include staffing (classified, management, and other), professional development, facilities, technology and software, and other category. These requests are reviewed annually and prioritized based on need and funding source(s).

The resource priorities identified during the annual planning process inform the annual budgeting process, where needs are articulated and prioritized to align with the institutional goals and objectives. Throughout this process, various plans, funding sources, and shared initiatives (e.g., Guided Pathways, Student Equity and Achievement Program (SEAP), etc.) can influence resource allocations.

In other words, the annual planning process is part of Cerritos College's broader planning cycle, where all plans align to the college's mission, vision, and Students First Framework (see Figure 3; see Appendix B for a timeline of all plans).

## **Internal Plans**

To support the completion of the Students First Framework, specific plans have been developed in focused areas. The appropriate committee and members of Executive Council are responsible for the development of the internal plans (e.g., Enrollment Management Plan, IT Master Plan, Facilities Master plan, Sustainability Plan, Technology Plan, and Equal Employment Opportunity Plan).

## **Program Review**

At the institution-level, the purpose of program review is to foster continuous program improvement and support long-term planning efforts. Program review is a peer-reviewed process in which programs, departments, or units assess and evaluate their quality and effectiveness. All campus departments and divisions conduct a comprehensive program review, every six years for instructional units and every three years for non-instructional (e.g., student services and administrative departments and divisions). The goal is to evaluate their role in advancing the college's mission and vision, identify strengths, pinpoint areas for improvement, and develop a plan of action to achieve desired outcomes.

The results of this process are integrated into the relevant Area Plans. The program review process contributes to campus-wide planning driven by data analysis, with a focus on disaggregated data, and aligns with the college's goals for informed decision-making. Additionally, program reviews inform the annual unit plan, which provides updates on goals established in the program review, assesses effectiveness, identifies areas for improvements, and justifies the allocation of financial resources.

## **Instructional Program Review**

Instructional Program Review is a faculty-driven, shared-governance, peer-reviewed, self-evaluation process aimed at improving all instructional programs. Each program is required to undergo a systematic evaluation every six years. The process includes a review of college curriculum and an analysis of student learning outcomes to ensure quality, currency, and relevancy. The current instructional program review process encourages program faculty to reflect on the previous review cycle, analyze disaggregated data for the current cycle; and develop program-level goals for the upcoming cycle. Institutional policies and related procedures are continuously evolving to ensure that the instructional program review process aligns with the standards and guidelines established by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC), California Education Code, as well as Title 5.

## **Student Services Program Review**

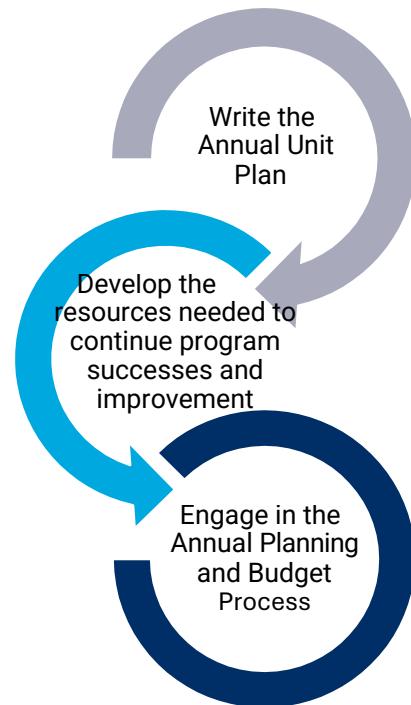
Student Services conducts a peer program review process every three years. Student Service areas utilize data to inform decision making and planning in parallel with other departments and divisions across the campus. Student Service areas undergo a peer-review and receive feedback on program strengths and weaknesses, highlighting areas for growth.

## **Administrative Services Program Review**

Administrative services—such as Business Services, Human Resources, Institutional Effectiveness, Research, Planning and Grants, Academic Affairs—undergo a peer-reviewed program review every three years. Administrative services utilize data to inform decision-making and planning in parallel with other departments and divisions across the campus to be equally considered in college-wide planning.

## **Annual Planning Process**

The purpose of the annual unit plan is to outline the short-term progress made in implementing the recommendations and action steps identified in program review. Specifically, the annual unit plans help programs to identify operational growth, and improvement needs and then provide a data-informed decision regarding the resources required to address those needs. As noted earlier, the annual unit plan focuses on a one-year timeframe and is directly tied to resource allocations (see the figure to the right). Each unit, division and area engage in a continuous cycle of planning, implementation, and evaluation. In the annual plan, units, divisions, and areas assess and report on progress toward meeting goals, with this evaluation feeding back into the program review process. The model demonstrated how the processes are integrated and transparent, and iterative.



## **Faculty Hiring Prioritization**

Faculty hiring prioritization is a key process aimed to strengthen our college, address community needs, and promote student success. This collaborative and multifaceted decision-making process utilizes data from the comprehensive program review, annual plan, legal mandates, accreditation, and student educational goals. Additionally, this process is grounded in collegial consultation between the administration and Faculty Senate.

The Faculty Hiring Prioritization (FHP) Committee helps identify and prioritize the hiring of new faculty in a fair and equitable way. Each year, the FHP Committee evaluates and ranks the faculty hiring requests; then, the ranked list is forwarded to the Executive

Council who reviews based on accreditation, California Education Code, and Faculty Obligation Number (FON) requirements. The positions approved are then incorporated into the College Annual Plan and budget for the next fiscal year.

## ***Budget Prioritization and Approvals***

The annual unit planning and budgeting process begins in August, with unit annual plans, and concludes in June with Board approval of the following fiscal year budget. Cerritos College's online planning platform is used to document and track the annual planning process, including goals, student learning outcomes (SLO) assessment, student success and equity data, resource needs.

Annual unit plans identify specific unit goals, and the resources needed to achieve them. Units align their goals with the Students First Framework and determine the resources necessary to accomplish and support successful implementation of their goals. Once the goal and resource requests worksheet is submitted, managers overseeing the respective unit plans meet with their departments to prioritize resource needs across all units within the division. Each unit plan is then submitted to the division manager, who further prioritizes and incorporates the funding requests into the division plan. Finally, the prioritized division requests are forwarded to the Area administrator, who meets with division managers to review and finalize the prioritized resources requests.

As with the unit plans, division plans then are rolled up to the area plan where the Vice President of each area reviews, prioritizes, and incorporates funding requests. Throughout this process, the Vice Presidents collaborates with division managers to evaluate and prioritize resources needed. Each Vice President then presents their prioritized budget plan to the Planning and Budget Committee (PBC).

The Planning and Budget Committee reviews the complied list of resource requests from all areas, evaluating them in relation to the college's goals and priorities as outlined in the Students First Framework. The Committee also reviews the College Annual Plan and makes funding recommendations based on proposed allocations. Prioritized requests, along with the Planning and Budget Committee comments, are forwarded to the Executive Council (EC) for final prioritization of college-wide resource needs.

The EC reviews the recommendations, makes final adjustments, and returns the proposed College Annual Plan to the PBC Committee for final review. Afterward, the final plan is submitted to the Board of Trustees (BOT) for approval in June (see Figure 3).

Once the college-wide priorities are approved, Vice-Presidents share the final decisions with their respective units, divisions, and the Planning and Budget Committee. This step ensures transparency and keeps the campus community informed about which resource requests were funded and which were not for the given year.

## **Integration of Institutional Student Learning Outcomes (ISLOs), Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs), Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs), Administrative Unit Outcomes (AUOs), and Service Area Outcomes (SAOs) Assessment**

Cerritos College has developed Institutional Student Learning Outcomes (ISLOs) to guide students by clearly communicating the expectations for successful completion of courses, certificates, and degrees. All learning outcome plans, and assessment results are synthesized and documented in program reviews, reported annually, and used to make improvements in programs and services.

Each department or division is responsible for the development and implementation of outcome assessments for their respective programs, courses, and services. According to the published Learning Outcomes Assessment Handbook<sup>2</sup>, instructional programs develop and assess program learning outcomes (PLOs) for all academic programs. PLOs are assessed in year 4 of the 6-year program review cycle and as part of this PLO cycle, departments create action plans that respond to PLO data from the PLO performance reports. Student learning outcomes (SLOs) for all course sections are assessed every semester, assessment results are reviewed every three years, and action plans to address disproportionate impact gaps or revise curriculum are developed.

Student services programs develop and assess Service Area Outcomes (SAOs), while administrative units develop and assess Administrative Unit Outcomes (AUOs). These outcomes, along with their assessment timelines, are established during the program review process. Each year, during the annual planning cycle, the identified SAOs and AUOs are assessed. All assessment results and resulting improvements are collectively evaluated, synthesized, and documented in the program review, and are used to guide enhancements to services.

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<sup>2</sup> To learn more, please visit Cerritos College's SLO Committee webpage: <https://www.cerritos.edu/slo/>

## Appendices

### **Appendix A: Cerritos College's Mission, Vision, Core Values, Educational Philosophy, and Students First Framework**

#### ***Mission***

Cerritos College provides its diverse student population with high-quality, comprehensive instructional programs and support services through clear, equity-minded pathways to their educational goals. In doing so, the college develops culturally competent students with the knowledge, skills, and values that prepare them to be productive members of their local and global communities.

#### ***Vision***

Cerritos College will provide innovative learning opportunities and support services that will close persistent educational achievement gaps.

#### ***Core Values***

**Student Success:** We support and promote our students' success by utilizing the Guided Pathways Pillars to increase accomplishment of their educational goals.

**Excellence:** We strive for excellence in teaching, learning, and serving our students, to support their academic, professional, and personal development.

**Comprehensive Curriculum:** We provide comprehensive curricular offerings to prepare our students to succeed not only in the present, but also in the future.

**Innovation and Creativity:** We support innovation and creativity to enhance our students' learning and to eliminate achievement gaps.

**Diversity:** We celebrate diversity in people, philosophies, cultures, beliefs, programs, and learning.

**Inclusiveness:** We promote inclusiveness in a collaborative decision-making process to ensure that all college constituencies have opportunities to participate.

**Integrity:** We foster integrity by creating a college community in which our students, our staff, our faculty, and our managers work together ethically and honestly.

**Respect and Trust:** We inclusively promote respect and trust in all people, including students, staff, faculty, managers, and members of our communities, so that we can work together toward our goals civilly and cooperatively.

**Partnerships:** We develop nurturing and supportive relationships with our educational, governmental, civic, business, industry, and non-profit partners to meet the needs of our communities

## ***Educational Philosophy***

Cerritos College embraces community, diversity, innovation, and active learning. We strive for high academic and ethical standards, as well as academic freedom; we believe in the worth and dignity of all our learners. In educating, we consider the learner's cognitive growth and emotional and physical well-being. The college prepares individuals for full participation in a complex democratic society as citizens and leaders, for the fulfillment of personal needs, and for the future. We believe that the purpose of education is to cultivate critical thinking skills and enhance the quality of life.

## ***Cerritos College's Students First Framework***

**Our Goal:** To graduate fifty percent of our students within five years or less by spring 2029.

### **Lever A. Equitable Access: Be a Student-Ready Institution**

Cerritos College will expand opportunities for our community to participate in higher education by ensuring every learner has equitable access to an educational pathway.

#### **Strategies**

- A.1. Expand our marketing and outreach to attract more prospective students and create more applicants.
- A.2. Strengthen our pipeline with the K-12 system and develop similar pipelines with additional groups of prospective students.
- A.3. Increase dual enrollment courses and programs to provide opportunities for higher education to more high school students in our community.
- A.4. Streamline the application process so that all steps are clear to our new students and all communication channels are easy for them to navigate.
- A.5. Refine our onboarding process so that our incoming students enroll in program applicable classes – including math and English in the first year – to enable them to complete in a timely manner.
- A.6. Maximize financial aid opportunities to help our students afford a higher education.

### **Lever B. Completion: More Students Complete in Less Time**

Cerritos College will increase timely student completion rates and reduce excess units upon completion, ensuring students' progress to complete program requirements and achieve their educational goals.

#### **Strategies**

- B.1. Align programs of study with the demands of the local economy, so our students are better able to secure high-income careers, leading to upward social and economic mobility.
- B.2. Reduce the time it takes for our students to complete their educational goals.
- B.3. Ensure our students enroll in courses that are applicable to their credit or non-credit programs of study, and eliminate taking excess classes.
- B.4. Expand support for our students in the gateway general education courses.
- B.5. Improve the processes that help our students succeed in their current courses and ensure they enroll in the subsequent term.
- B.6. Incentivize our students to complete momentum points specific to their credit or non-credit programs, from enrollment to completion.
- B.7. Align professional development for our faculty to increase our students' rates of success in their courses and completion of their programs of study.

#### Lever C. Career and Transfer Success: Increase Economic Mobility for Our Students and Community

Cerritos College will be innovative in developing career and transfer pathways. We will cultivate partnerships that enable life-changing career opportunities for our students and fuel the local workforce with talent that is prepared to meet the needs of the local economy.

##### Strategies

- C.1. Improve our processes, services, and curriculum to align with high-demand, high-paying career opportunities.
- C.2. Increase opportunities for our students to attain baccalaureate degrees, both at our college and at transfer institutions.
- C.3. Align our programs and services with those of four-year institutions to streamline transfer for our students.
- C.4. Partner with local employers to develop career pipelines that lead our students to paid internships and employment.
- C.5. Create networks that provide job opportunities and career resources for our students.
- C.6. Develop and implement training programs that meet the needs of companies in our community.

#### Lever D. Institutional Health: Foster Institutional Wellbeing

Cerritos College will commit to making the most effective use of our resources. We will aim for agile, caring practices that foster excellence throughout our operations. All decisions will be made in order to best serve our students. As a result, we will attract, develop, and retain engaged and qualified employees who embody our mission.

##### Strategies

- D.1. Develop systems and processes to monitor and ensure accountability for our institutional health.
- D.2. Invest in our employees to facilitate excellence at all levels of service to our students.
- D.3. Refine hiring practices to attract and retain faculty, staff, and administrators who reflect the diversity of our community and align with the mission of our college.
- D.4. Expand housing initiatives, programs, and services for our students.
- D.5. Increase innovative opportunities to generate additional revenue streams to strengthen the financial health of our institution.
- D.6. Develop the facilities and technology infrastructure to better support our students' journey from access, through completion, and to career attainment.

## Appendix B: Timeline of Internal and External Plans

