

# CLARK COLLEGE

## ACADEMIC PLAN    EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



April 2016

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Plan describes the path, within the guided pathway framework, to that destination for our educational programs.

## INTRODUCTION

For two and a half years, Clark College has been involved in the development of its 2015-2020 Strategic Plan. The process has involved the entire college community, engaging stakeholders, collecting feedback, and conducting research to determine how the college will best meet the needs of its community and its students in the years ahead.

The adoption of the Strategic Plan in the spring of 2015 is the end result of thoughtful, sustained reflection on who we are as an institution and the focus of our work. Simply put, the mission of our work shifted from preparing students to be college-ready to transforming the college to be student-ready. We recognize, for example, that our students are increasingly diverse (a 10% increase in students of color over the past eight years). Many are the first in their families to attend college (70% first generation). Two in five

(40%) identify as low-income, with household income below 150% of the Federal Poverty Level, and one in twenty self-identify as living with a disability. Among first-term students, four in five students identify with one or more systemically non-dominant groups, with almost half (46%) identifying with two or more groups.

Our increasingly diverse students also possess an urgent need for educational attainment. Within Clark College's service district (Clark, Skamania and Western Klickitat Counties), only one-third of adults 25 years or older have an associate's degree or higher. That figure compares to just 28% of workers with postsecondary education nationally in 1973. At the same time, it is projected that 65% of the jobs in the workforce will require some type of post-secondary higher education by 2020 (American Association of Community Colleges, 2014).

At the same time, academic transfer students who seek to pursue their studies at 4-year institutions fall frequently short of their goals. Nationally, 80% of community college students declare an intention to pursue a bachelor's degree, yet only 25% of these students successfully transfer (Community College Resource Center, 2015). Moreover, students' goal to transfer is often driven by their interests in careers, leading directly into the workforce.

The needs that the college must meet, then, are set to increase dramatically in the next five years. Clark will attempt to meet such a challenge at a time of unprecedented reform in higher education. In the past twenty years, colleges and universities have been subjected to increased scrutiny. Graduation and retention rates, student debt, demonstrable evidence of attained knowledge and skills – these and related measures are the focal points as calls for accountability mount from both consumers and government regulators.

In short, Clark – like other community colleges – is being asked to provide more, for more, and to do so with better efficiency. In light of these related social, economic, and regulatory pressures, it becomes clear that the mission, core themes, objectives, and values of the new Strategic Plan represent not a culmination of the college's work, but merely a new beginning. The challenges before us are clear. Thanks to the Strategic Plan, so are the principles that will guide our path ahead. Just one question remains: "How do we move forward?"

This is where the Academic Plan comes in. If the Strategic Plan answers the question "*What* will Clark look like as an institution in five years?", the Academic Plan answers "*How* will we transform ourselves in order to make Vision 2020 a reality?" In other words, the Strategic Plan gives us a destination, but the Academic Plan describes the path to reach it.

The Plan itself consists of six Goals:

1. Establish well-defined pathways for all degree and certificate programs,
2. Align program offerings with regional workforce and community needs,
3. Improve student preparedness,
4. Develop physical and virtual spaces that engage and inspire all learners,
5. Integrate active learning strategies, and
6. Infuse the study of power, privilege, and inequity throughout the curriculum.

While these goals are not placed in order of priority, it should be noted that the college's achievement of Goals 2-6 will support the work of guiding our students successfully through well-defined pathways. Regardless of their circumstance, every degree- and certificate-seeking student who enrolls at Clark declares their pursuit of an educational goal. Our contract with these students is to ensure that, collectively, we have done everything possible to make this educational attainment a reality.

Further, each goal is associated with one or more Intended Results. The broad and inclusive vision articulated by the Strategic Plan finds a deliberate and specific expression through each of these objectives.

The Academic Plan remains closely linked to the Strategic Plan, in many cases borrowing the exact wording. The same input that created the Strategic Plan – combined with the results of the college's Environmental Scan, Workforce Gap Analysis, and Academic Planning forums – provided the Academic Planning Team with the material necessary to assemble this blueprint for action. Put simply, this is *everyone's* Academic Plan. The combined contributions of the college community shaped it, just as the community's combined energy and effort will make it a reality.

Ultimately, the collective effort of the college-wide conversations that produced Clark's Strategic and Academic Plans provide us now with the only means to achieve that vision. In isolation, it's been shown that even the most dynamic initiatives and impactful practices soon wither and fade. Through sustained collaborative effort, however, community colleges are

transforming their practices – and the lives of their students – for the better. Joint ownership, constant review, and continuous improvement will be required to make the Academic Plan a reality. Its success will allow the college to fulfill our commitment to our students and enhance their learning in the years ahead.

*“The first, as well as the most important thing I’ll be taking away from this class is the first time in my adult life that I feel as though I have some sort of direction as far as any career path. With all of the things I’ve learned about myself, skills, interests, and values, I finally have somewhere to start.”*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

While Clark College's 2015-2020 Strategic Plan describes an institutional vision and a shared destination for our collective work, the Academic Plan describes the path to guiding individuals to achieve their educational and professional goals, in service to the community. The Academic Plan interprets the college mission literally, adopting guided pathways as the framework for our educational programs.

A "program" refers to any sequence of study that culminates in a degree and certificate. In some cases, programs are organized entirely within particular departments, such as the Certificate of Proficiency in Automotive Technology. In many others, however, a program represents an aggregate of student learning, one to which many departments contribute. An example of this is the Associate of Arts degree, which requires students to demonstrate their learning across a host of different disciplines.

Organizationally, instruction at Clark is divided into units, divisions, and departments. In terms of its impact on student lives, however, the college's instructional efforts are best understood, and most effectively pursued, as a collective, collaborative endeavor. In establishing programs as a base unit of our institutional effectiveness, we acknowledge the shared enterprise of our work as educators.

The Academic Plan, then, is most often expressed in relation to program-level learning. The Plan itself consists of six goals, with 13 intended results. Collectively, these goals and results articulate a set of college-wide priorities in the delivery of instructional programs within the framework of guided pathways. Clark's progress in attaining each result will be tracked via the Program Improvement Process as well as annual assessment of mission fulfillment, with annual updates circulated to the college community. Throughout the plan, partnerships are identified to assist in the attainment of each intended result.

Those goals and results are as follows:

### **Goal 1: Establish well-defined pathways for all degree and certificate programs.**

**INTENDED RESULT:** All degree and certificate programs have identified entry pathways, such as from pre-college coursework – including transitional studies, K-12, credit for prior learning, corrections, and transfer from other institutions of higher education.

**INTENDED RESULT:** All degrees and certificates are arranged into a partially- or fullyguided pathway.

These pathways are defined as follows:

- Fully-guided pathway – Students are admitted to the program as a cohort and proceed through the same sequence of courses until program completion.

- Partially-guided pathway – Students enter program and complete the same sequence of courses with a limited number of elective courses allowed in combination with required courses.

INTENDED RESULT: All degrees and certificates have identified pathway destinations upon successful completion of the program, such as employment and articulation agreements with transfer institutions.

Whether internal or external, transfer or employment, all programs will articulate pathway destinations as the ultimate outcome of the student learning they provide.

## **Goal 2: Align program offerings with regional workforce and community needs.**

INTENDED RESULT: Create and maintain a viable mix of programs, including emerging programs.

A viable mix of programs consists of:

- What the community needs as determined by labor market analysis, job and gainful employment potential, transfer potential, and competition analysis (considering whether other programs are offered locally).
- What the college can afford as determined by calculating direct program costs, such as equipment and faculty and space. This requires a balance of incurring emerging program costs and cutting the equivalent costs of programs.

To determine and create such a mix, the Instructional Planning Team (IPT) will take a leadership role in instructional planning. This planning involves conducting an annual analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of programs informed by workforce information (qualitative and quantitative), student success, educational competitors, funding trends, and existing program viability data.

Once the data has been gathered, IPT will convene a subgroup(s) to further assess the potential emerging programs and develop recommendations regarding whether to offer them. Part of the subcommittee's recommendation to IPT will be based on staying at an established break-even point for educational program costs. A viable program mix that includes emerging programs will be based on a combination of both community need and program cost.

INTENDED RESULT: Improve existing programs.

The Program Improvement Process (PIP) will be revised as a system of checks and balances in the implementation of the academic plan. These revisions will ensure the following:



- Faculty is well-represented.
- Programs will be reviewed over a three-year period based on student enrollment, student learning, student outcomes such as employment or transfer related information, labor market outlook, guided pathways including sequenced courses, identification of entry pathways and pathway destinations, utilization of active learning strategies, partnerships within the community, and degree-seeking students' ability to analyze systems of power, privilege, and inequity.

**INTENDED RESULT:** All programs implement at least one action to improve student learning based on the results of outcomes assessment.

To achieve this intended result, each degree and certificate must:

- Maintain assessable program learning outcomes,
- Complete the assessment cycle for each of its program learning outcomes,
- Map assignments and courses to program learning outcomes, and
- Base curricular improvements on assessment results.

The Outcomes Assessment Committee, in partnership with PIP, will ensure, assist and support this work.

### **Goal 3: Improve student preparedness.**

**INTENDED RESULT:** Increase the proportion of students prepared to succeed in college-level work by engaging in the following evidence-based practices:

- Evaluate and improve placement procedures.
- Expand I-BEST.
- Expand enrollment in College 101.
- Increase the number of students entering college-level math courses and decrease the time needed to attain preparedness for college-level math.
- Assess and improve technology preparedness.
- Expand and Redesign College in the High School and Tech Prep offerings.

### **Goal 4: Develop physical and virtual spaces that engage and inspire all learners.**

**INTENDED RESULT:** Create and sustain physical and virtual learning spaces that accommodate, facilitate, and inspire individual and group learning.

This intended result links to the Social Equity Plan in identifying characteristics and best practices of universal design for common physical spaces, physical classroom design, virtual spaces, and virtual class design.

**INTENDED RESULT:** Offer at least one transfer program and at least one career and technical program that can be completed in eLearning modalities.

This intended result calls for two degrees to be fully offered in eLearning: AA-DTA and AAT NTEC.

### **Goal 5: Integrate active learning strategies.**

**INTENDED RESULT:** All programs ensure that those courses that support student mastery of program-level learning outcomes integrate one or more active learning strategies.

This intended result defines active learning strategies as experiential learning, collaborative learning, interdisciplinary approaches, project-based learning, and problem-based learning. The Program Improvement Process will assess through faculty self-report that the teaching and learning in courses that support program outcomes use active learning strategies.

**INTENDED RESULT:** Offer at least one competency-based education degree or certificate.

Competency Based Education (CBE) is an outcomes-based approach that defines the competencies that a student should master by the end of a course or program and awards credit based on the students' demonstration of the learning outcomes. This approach differs from traditional models of higher education because it is not tied to a required amount of contact hours or student seat time. Automotive Technology will be the first competency-based program that Clark will consider offering.

**INTENDED RESULT:** Establish a college-wide theme to promote integrative and active learning.

This intended result calls for the college to establish a common theme for the whole college. The theme is expected to be the same for the duration of the academic plan. Activities will need to be supported, such as a common book/read, dedicated website with materials, and a planning team of the Teaching and Learning Advisory Committee.

### **Goal 6: Infuse the study of power, privilege, and inequity throughout the curriculum.**

**INTENDED RESULT:** All Clark College degree programs prepare students to analyze systems of power, privilege, and inequity.



This intended result calls for the creation of a temporary (two year) faculty liaison to work with program faculty to revise their curricula as needed. Assessment of this result will be embedded into the Program Improvement Process review criteria.

