



Clark College Site Visit Briefing Document

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Introduction

This document serves as a comprehensive guide to prepare our entire campus community for the upcoming accreditation site visit by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU). Accreditation is a vital process that affirms Clark College's commitment to educational quality, student success, and institutional effectiveness.

The purpose of this briefing is to ensure that all faculty, staff, and students are well-informed about the accreditation process, understand their crucial role in its success, and feel confident in representing Clark College. We will cover key aspects of the visit, including what the evaluation team will be looking for, what to expect during interviews, and essential etiquette and logistics.

Your engagement and understanding are paramount to a successful visit. By working together, we can effectively demonstrate Clark College's dedication to its mission and continuous improvement.

Frequently Asked Questions¹

General Accreditation Questions

1. What is NWCCU accreditation? Why is it important?

The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) is a Washington State nonprofit corporation, recognized as a 501(c)(3) organization by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). The Commission is recognized by the United States Department of Education (USDE) as an accreditor of higher education institutions throughout the United States.

The primary purpose of NWCCU accreditation is to assure the public that an NWCCU-accredited institution has been rigorously evaluated and that it meets or exceeds the criteria required to maintain accreditation. In addition, NWCCU promotes a culture of data and evidence-informed continuous institutional improvement, validates institutional integrity, and provides opportunities for feedback that improves the accreditation process.

2. Has Clark undergone accreditation before?

Yes, Clark College has a long history of accreditation, dating back to 1948. Since then, Clark has been re-accredited by NWCCU every seven years following a comprehensive evaluation and campus visit. The last comprehensive review was in 2018.

3. When and what types of reports does Clark College submit to NWCCU?

- Yearly – Annual Report
 - Enrollment
 - Financial
 - Peer Institutions
- Any time during the cycle - [substantive change](#) communication of one of three types
 - Portal Update – Program maintenance
 - Minor Changes - Minimal impact on the resources and capacity of the institution such adding programs that are aligned with existing offerings,

¹ The information provided in this FAQ is derived from - Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities. (2024, September) NWCCU Handbook of Accreditation Liaison Officers. Retrieved from <https://nwccu.app.box.com/s/961n3wfgm546fqf0rvw01zc6bsmsii2s>

- terminating programs, or changes in method of instructional delivery
 - Major Changes – Significant impact on the resources and capacity of the institution such as adding a program at a new degree level, adding a branch campus or additional location, etc.
 - Year 3: Mid-Cycle Evaluation
 - Year 6: Policies, Regulations, and Financial Review (PRFR)
 - Year 7: Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness (EIE) – often considered the comprehensive evaluation of the institution
 - As needed – Ad Hoc, Special, or other reports requested by the Commission for specific purposes. (NWCCU, 2025, p.28)²
4. What is the Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness report as part of the accreditation process? What does this involve?

The Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness (EIE) includes responses to Standard One regarding the mission, institutional effectiveness, student learning, student achievement, and any responses to the Year-Six PRFR.

Additional information about the EIE may be accessed from the [NWCCU](#) website.

5. What is the Policy, Regulations, and Financial Review (PRFR)?

The Policy, Regulations, and Financial Review (PRFR) focuses on Standard Two and is submitted in Year Six of the accreditation cycle. The PRFR addresses the areas listed below:

- Governance
- Academic Freedom
- Policies and Procedures
- Institutional Integrity
- Financial Resources
- Human Resources
- Student Support Resources
- Library and Information Resources
- Physical and Technology Infrastructure

Additional information about the PRFR may be accessed from the [NWCCU](#) website.

Site Visit

6. What is the purpose of the site visit?

The site visit allows a team of peer evaluators to verify the information provided in our EIE self-study report, gather additional evidence, interview faculty, staff, students, and administrators, and assess our compliance with the accreditation standards.

7. How long will the site visit last? When is our next site visit?

An evaluation team from NWCCU is scheduled to visit Clark College from October 20-22, 2025.

8. Who are the site visit team members?

The site visit team consists of five experienced educators and administrators from other accredited institutions, selected by NWCCU. They are peers who understand the challenges and strengths of higher education institutions. For our upcoming visit, there will be one chair, four peer reviewers, and our NWCCU Senior Vice President.

9. What will the site visit team be looking for?

They will look for consistency between our written reports and our actual practices.

10. Where is the schedule for the site visit?

Please check the [Accreditation webpage](#).

11. How can I prepare for the site visit?

The best way to prepare for the visit is to read the PRFR and EIE reports, located on the [Accreditation Report webpage](#). This document also includes a list of questions that may be asked during the visit. If you have any specific questions, feel free to contact Cecelia Martin, cgmartin@clark.edu.

Your Role in the Site Visit

12. What is my role in the accreditation site visit?

Every member of the Clark College community plays a role! Your primary role is to be knowledgeable about your work, how it connects to the college's mission, and how it contributes to student learning and success. Be prepared to speak honestly and openly about your experiences and the college's strengths and areas for improvement.

13. Will I be interviewed by the site visit team?

It's possible. The team conducts interviews with a wide range of individuals, including faculty, staff, students, and administrators. You might be part of a group interview or a one-on-one discussion. Here is a link to the [site visit schedule](#) (The review team is finalizing). Please note: this schedule is tentative and may be subject to change depending on the

All EIE visits include three open forums with a broad cross section of stakeholders, which provide an opportunity for faculty, staff, and student perspectives to be shared. Forums provide an opportunity for members of key institutional constituencies, particularly those who may not be as involved in other scheduled meetings, to provide feedback on the institution. For the feedback from the participants to have the greatest value for the visit, the peer evaluation team should structure the forum questions to gather information that pertains to NWCCU Eligibility Requirements, Standards for Accreditation, Policies, and any outstanding Recommendations.

Guidelines for participation:

- Faculty forums are intended for faculty (both full-time and part-time). Individuals who serve as supervisors for faculty (e.g., typically deans, vice presidents, provosts) should not attend.
- Staff forums are intended for employees who are not faculty and not in upper leadership positions with supervisory authority over a number of other attending staff.

- Student forums are intended for currently enrolled students at the institution. Individuals who belong to more than one group should only attend the forum that represents their primary designation.

14. What kind of questions might be asked?

Questions will likely focus on your role, how your work supports student learning and the college's mission, how you use data for improvement, and how you participate in college processes. Refer to the next section in this document.

15. What should I do if I am asked a question?

Be yourself, be honest, and be confident in your work. Speak from your own experience. If you don't know an answer, it's okay to say so and offer to find the information or direct the reviewer to someone who might know.

Logistics and Etiquette

16. What should I do if I see a site visit team member on campus?

Be polite and professional. Offer a friendly greeting. If they approach you with a question, answer honestly and to the best of your ability.

17. Should I offer them documents or materials?

The team will have access to all necessary documents. Unless specifically asked, you do not need to proactively offer them materials. If they ask for something you have readily available, you may offer it, but don't feel obligated to produce extensive documentation on the spot.

18. What if I have a concern I want to share with the team?

The site visit is an opportunity for open and honest dialogue. If you have concerns, you should feel comfortable sharing them respectfully. The team is there to get a full picture of the institution, including both strengths and areas for improvement.

After the Site Visit

19. What are the potential actions that NWCCU may take?

Access the link to [NWCCU Actions here](#).

20. What happens after the site visit?

After an accreditation site visit, the process unfolds in several key stages:

a. Draft Peer Evaluation Report and Submission Timeline

After the accreditation site visit, the chair sends a draft report to the institution's CEO and Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO) within two weeks. The institution has seven days to review this draft and suggest corrections for factual errors or request redactions of proprietary information. This initial review is solely for correcting facts and is not the stage for disputing the team's analyses or conclusions. The chair then makes the appropriate factual corrections before finalizing the report.

b. Team Report Submission

The chair finalizes their report, incorporating factual corrections and redactions, and submits it along with a confidential recommendation (including proposed accreditation status and any recommendations) to NWCCU. These recommendations are not final.

c. Institutional Review and Response

Approximately eight weeks after the visit, NWCCU sends the final team report to the institution's CEO. The institution is then invited to submit a written response or comments on the report within 10 days of receipt and no later than 14 days before the Commission meeting. This response becomes part of the official record for the Commission's deliberation.

d. Commission Meeting

The NWCCU Board of Commissioners reviews the institution's self-evaluation, the peer-evaluation report, and the team's confidential recommendation. The CEO and other institutional representatives are expected to attend this meeting.

During this meeting, the Commission determines the institution's accreditation status, finalizes any recommendations, and sets timelines for addressing them.

e. Official Letter of Action

Within 30 days of the Commission Meeting, NWCCU issues an official Letter of Action to the institution's CEO and ALO, detailing the Commission's decisions and any required subsequent actions. NWCCU encourages widespread and complete distribution of this letter and the team report within the campus community.

This letter is posted on Clark College's accreditation website.

General Considerations for the Site Visit

To ensure a successful accreditation visit, please adhere to the following principles:

- **Highlight Accomplishments (80/20 Rule):** Focus 80% of your responses on what Clark College has *achieved* and *completed*, dedicating the remaining 20% to strategic future plans and initiatives.
- **Align with College Recommendations:** Strategically direct all answers back to the College's existing recommendations. This demonstrates progress in key areas identified for improvement.
- **Demonstrate Mission Fulfillment:** Clearly articulate how your work contributes to Clark College's mission. Emphasize that meeting accreditation standards directly reflects our commitment to and achievement of our mission, underpinned by effective shared governance.
- **Be Data-Driven and Intentional:** Consistently integrate data into your responses. Explain how data informs your planning, actions, assessment, and reflections, showcasing that all our efforts are intentional and evidence-based.
- **Adopt a Proactive Stance:** Shift the narrative from a defensive posture regarding any past warnings to an "proactive" one. Proudly showcase the meaningful work Clark College is undertaking in support of accreditation, highlighting our strengths and best practices.
- **Embrace Storytelling with Simplicity:** Present your answers as clear narratives that convey the essence of Clark College's work to an external audience. Provide complexity and nuance only when specifically requested.
- **"Trip Over Our Evidence":** Structure your conversations to consistently highlight supporting evidence and data, even if not explicitly prompted. Ensure

evaluators encounter our achievements and data-informed processes at every turn.

Community Agreements³

Please be mindful of the college's community agreements as you participate in the meetings and forums.

Share your Story

- This is a learning space.
- Speak for yourself, and not for someone else; Not at the expense of other's humanity.

Make Space, Take Space

- If you find yourself talking more than listening, encourage others to engage.
- If you don't normally engage in discussion, we encourage you to push yourself to share your thoughts.

Stay Engaged

- Work will be there for you after the training.
- While you are in this space, we expect that you are actively listening, participating (whatever that looks like to you) and open to learning.

Be Mindful of Content Warnings, and Apply as Necessary

- America's historical and modern societies are rooted in violence and white supremacy.
- We ask that you apply and use content warnings as needed in examples you share with site visitors.
- Refrain from language that minimizes the experiences of systemically non-dominant individuals and communities.

Discomfort is Welcome

- Refrain from resorting to defensiveness – practice leaning in to and reflecting on the discomfort.

³ Adapted from resources developed by the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Site Visit Preparation Questions

Visit Dates: October 20 – 22, 2025

As part of preparing for the site visit, review the reports.

- [Policies, Regulations, and Financial Review](#)
- [Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness](#)

Check the [Accreditation](#) website frequently for updates.

Student, Support Staff, and Faculty Meetings - General Questions

1. What is the College's mission?

To cultivate an inclusive, equitable, and vibrant community, Clark College educates, empowers, and elevates individuals to achieve their personal and professional goals.

2. How do you, or does your role, support the Clark College mission?

3. What is the College's strategic planning cycle?

Clark College is on a 5-year strategic planning cycle.

4. How do you know if the College is fulfilling its mission?

Mission fulfillment is annually assessed via 19 Key Performance Indicators. For additional information related to this assessment, please review the materials on the [Mission Fulfillment website](#).

5. What is the assessment process?

This [document](#) provides a quick overview of assessment at Clark College.

6. How does Clark integrate the allocation of resources with its assessment processes?

For all budget requests, the person submitting the request is expected to provide a reason/rationale that includes evidence. The Budget Committee is also charged with ensuring that the proposal is data-driven.

7. What are the College's student achievement indicators?

Currently, Clark College is focusing on:

- *Retention*
- *Completion*
- *Transfer*
- *Completion of Math and English in year 1*

For additional information related to student achievement at Clark College, please review the [Student Achievement webpage](#).

8. What is the College doing to improve student achievement?

Clark College is actively engaged in multiple projects and initiatives aimed at improving student achievement, with a strong focus on racial equity and inclusivity. Key efforts include:

- *Guided Pathways: Supporting curriculum development in Math and English, funding a retention manager and student success coaches, and expanding the use Open Educational Resources in Math, English, and STEM.*
- *Historically Underserved Students of Color Initiatives: Providing culturally relevant support services and spaces, conducting outreach events, promoting trauma-informed and culturally responsive teaching practices, implementing universal design for learning, and organizing celebratory events.*
- *Cultivating Belonging: Continuing to champion the "Caring Campus" model to enhance students' sense of belonging.*

Other Questions

Here are some examples of specific questions that may be asked during the meetings with the site visit team.

1. What review processes are in place for admission and graduation policies to ensure they remain appropriate and effective?

2. Can you provide specific examples of how assessment data has led to demonstrable improvements in student support services?
3. Please give evidence of a continuous process of assessing effectiveness in student support services to improve student achievement.
4. How do you know you are meeting student needs?
5. How does the college support faculty and staff in helping students be successful?
6. What activities/support does your department offer to support student success?
7. What student support services are available on campus that students use the most?
8. What student support service is most underutilized and why?
9. How do students learn about support services?
10. How do you know students understand requirements related to their program of study?
11. How do you communicate transfer policies and information to students?
12. How do you know that your orientation and onboarding are effective?

Faculty Forum Questions

The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) has provided potential questions that site reviewers may ask during the faculty forum. This meeting is scheduled for October 20, 2025, from 2:00 p.m. to 2:50 p.m. in PUB 258A/B/C.

1. What is working well at Clark College?
2. What makes you proud to work at Clark College?
3. Tell us about the faculty's roles and responsibilities in student learning outcomes assessment.
4. Tell us about the faculty's roles and responsibilities in academic program review?
5. How do faculty contribute to departmental, academic/instructional, and institutional planning and the review of progress on plans?
6. How do faculty use data to inform changes to programs, curricula, or instructional techniques?
7. How do faculty participate in shared governance at the institution? Are roles and participatory opportunities clear regarding input or decision making?
8. Is academic freedom upheld at the institution?

Staff Forum Questions

The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) has provided potential questions that site reviewers may ask during the staff forum. This meeting is scheduled for October 20, 2025, from 11:15 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. in the Student Center.

1. What is working well at Clark College? What makes you proud to work at Clark College?
2. Tell us about staff's role in reviewing the effectiveness of your department/service area/unit?
3. How do staff members contribute to departmental and institutional planning and the review of progress on plans?
4. How do staff participate in shared governance at the institution? Are roles and participatory opportunities clear regarding input or decision making?
5. How is your professional development supported at the institution?
6. How effective is the staff evaluation process for supporting your growth and improvement at the institution?
7. If you could recommend changes for improvement at the institution, what would they be?

Student Forum Questions

The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) has provided potential questions that site reviewers may ask during the student forum. This meeting is scheduled for October 21, 2025, 10:00 – 10:50 a.m. in the Student Center

1. What brought you to Clark College? What other schools did you consider and why did you choose this one?
2. Where do you get your information about course selection and your progress to your goal?
3. Do you feel like the information you receive is timely and accurate?
4. Do you know where to go for help with:
 - a. Academic support (tutoring, etc.)
 - b. Career exploration or planning?
 - c. Personal counseling?
5. What resources at the institution are most important for your progress and your success
6. If you have concerns about a faculty, student, or staff member, do you know how to address those? Do you know the institution's processes for complaints or grievances?
7. If you could make recommendations to college leadership that would make the institution better, what would you recommend?