

Commission on Colleges and Universities
Northwest Association of Schools and of Colleges and Universities

**A Regular Interim Report
Clark College
Vancouver, Washington**

October 28-29, 2003

Prepared by

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A Confidential Report Prepared for the Commission on Colleges and Universities that
Represents the Views of the Evaluator

Institutional Accreditation and Evaluation Visit Overview

Granted initial accreditation in 1948, Clark College's fifth full scale review was conducted in October of 1998. The College's accreditation status was reaffirmed by the Northwest Association Commission on Colleges and Universities in December of that year with a request to submit a Focused Interim Report and to host a Focused Interim visit in the fall of 2000. This report and visit included review of three (General Recommendations 1, 3, and 4) of the seven general recommendations made in the 1998 Full Scale Evaluation Committee Report. The review was conducted by Dr. Robert Bennett of Miles Community College. Dr. Bennett found progress on these three recommendations to be satisfactory with commendation. Consequently, the College's accreditation was reaffirmed in December 2000 by the Commission. This evaluator, Dr. Jacqueline McCrady, representing the Commission, visited Clark College on October 28-29, 2003. The purpose of the two day visit was to review the College's progress on all seven of the general recommendations as well as monitor the College's current compliance with the Commission's Eligibility Requirements, Standards and Policies during the course of a Regular Interim visit. The evaluator was also asked to review any changes that have occurred to the College's Distance Education program since information on this educational area was updated through filing of supplemental materials to the Commission staff in 1999.

To prepare for the visit, Clark developed and submitted a Regular Interim report based on the recommended outline contained in the Commission's Handbook for Regular Interim Evaluations. The report was complete, thorough and clear. Each general recommendations contained in the 1998 evaluation were addressed in some detail, and institutional changes were clearly and concisely described. Clark administrators, faculty, staff and students who were interviewed, demonstrated a knowledge of both the issues raised by the 1998 evaluation report and familiarity with the current process and report. The report, the exhibits provided to support the report and the College community as a whole were very helpful to the evaluator in preparation for and during the visit.

The visit began at 8 am October 28th with Candy Bennett, Executive Dean of Planning and Advancement who provided an orientation to the evaluator's work space and reviewed the exhibits area. The evaluator then met with President Wayne Branch and members of his executive Cabinet. Following this introductory meeting, a short time was spent by the evaluator reviewing exhibits in preparation for the subsequent fact finding meetings with various members of the college staff:

Recommendation Five and Standard Five: Mr. Sheehan, Director of Computing Services, Dr. Ingraham-Swets, Director of Library and Media Services, Dr. Thornburg, Dean, Social Sciences and Humanities, Ms Seiffert, Registrar;

Recommendation Six and Standards Seven and Eight: Mr. Halme, Interim Vice President of Administrative Services, Mr. Duback, Director of Business Services;

Recommendation Seven and Standards Three and Nine: Dr. Nisson, Vice President, Student Development, Ms Groth, Director, College and Community Relations, Ms Seiffert, Registrar, Ms Golder, Executive Director of Human Resources;

Recommendation Three and Four and Standards Two and Four: Dr. Evans, Interim Vice President of Instruction, Dr. Thornburg, Dean of Social Sciences and Humanities, Dr. Carey, Faculty, Ms Johnson, Interim Dean of Business and Technology;

Recommendation One and Standard One: President Branch and Ms Candy Bennett, Executive Dean of Planning and Advancement;

Recommendation Two and Standard Six: President Branch, Dr. Carey, Faculty, Ms. Serrano, Faculty, Ms Wheeler, WPEA President Unit B, Ms Murphy, Student, ASCC President.

Time was also set aside for open meetings with both faculty members and students, and a meeting with the Board of Trustees Chair, Ms Addison Jacobs. The visit concluded with an exit meeting with President Branch.

Data collection methodologies were fact finding and open meetings and exhibit review to confirm the evaluator's collection of facts through a careful reading of the College's Regular Interim Report. Where necessary, the evaluator's request for additional documentation were met by the staff with graciousness and efficiency. The evaluator also had the opportunity to review the College web site ahead of the visit.

Part A: General Recommendations

Recommendation 1

Strategic planning must be institutionalized. The evaluation committee observed considerable planning in progress, but these efforts need to be integrated into an ongoing institutional plan which identifies priorities and which will move the institution forward in a systematic manner in areas such as budget, faculty and staff hiring, information technology, and distance learning. (Standards 1.A., 1.B)

In 1999 guided by the Carver Model of Policy Governance, the College Board of Trustees adopted a set of College Result Policies. These broad based goal statements describe how the College will serve the community. In the same year, an all campus work session developed a set of College goals that support the Result Policies. In the Fall of 2000 college faculty and staff developed an inventory of strategic initiatives that implement the Goals and Result Policies. From these initiatives individual areas in the College develop yearly action plans indicating what initiatives, goals and policies they will work on and the need or not for new funding to accomplish their action plans. At the end of the academic year action plans are reviewed and actions accomplished are tied to Key Progress Indicators that have been developed to measure institutional effectiveness. This information is then reported to the College, the Board, and to the community through formal reports. The College is now entering the fourth year of this planning process and the fifth and final year of this planning cycle. The intention is to evaluate how the first cycle of planning went, revise as necessary and enter the second five year cycle Fall 2004. As the 2000 Focused Visit evaluator noted, "The administration and Board of Trustees have accepted the challenge of institutionalizing their plan and have given serious attention to the development of materials and strategies to ensure that the strategic planning being done by the College is being integrated into all aspects of the institution." Evidence indicates that this process of institutional planning is ongoing, understood by the staff and reasonably well integrated into the resource allocation process. However, it is important that Clark complete its present planning cycle and evaluate its effectiveness before moving into the next planning cycle.

While the College's progress on this Recommendation is commendable, it is recommended that Clark College finish the present planning cycle, evaluate and revise their process folding in the ideas and strategies of its new President, and move to the second five year planning cycle. (1.A and B)

Recommendation 2

The institution must recognize the strength that will be realized from a stronger focus on shared governance. Specifically, the college should clarify the roles of faculty in the formulation of institutional policy and should make the decision-making process regarding budget, capital equipment and staffing allocations clear and visible to the campus community. Further, it should ensure adequate participation of faculty and staff in decision-making processes. (Standards 4.A.2, 6.0)

In the five years since the Commission's full scale evaluation, Clark College has experienced two changes in administration at the president level. A reorganization of the instructional administration and support areas occurred shortly after the 1998 visit which created four new dean level positions. Once filled, three of the four positions became vacant in 2002-03. The changing roles and personnel in institutional policy and decision making especially in instruction have made achieving a process of shared governance difficult. Evidence indicates that the current organizational structure and changing personnel have resulted in a lack of clarity about roles, responsibilities, and authority levels among staff, and caused some tension at the College. While some staff were pleased with the new level of participation in College committees such as the reorganized Curriculum Committee, the Instructional Planning Team, and the new College Council, others indicated they felt the new structure had, by adding an additional layer of administration, created communication barriers. Most staff reported a

tentative but hopeful sense of possibility for the future. All staff interviewed were pleased with the appointment of Clark's new President and looking forward to a more cooperative and stable atmosphere at the College.

It is recommended that the College community with the leadership of its new President continue to work towards an agreed upon definition of shared governance for Clark College and continue to work together cooperatively to remove communication barriers. Specifically, roles within the organizational structure and responsibility and authority for policy and decision making must be clarified. (4.A.2, 6.0)

Recommendation 3

In light of the institution's mission, current enrollment, and anticipated growth, a plan should be created for addressing the need for full-time faculty and staff. The College should review faculty workloads. This is particularly a problem where full-time faculty versus adjunct ratios are high, or where no full-time faculty exist in degree programs. Particular attention must be paid to the Paralegal Program which was cited in 1989 and 1994 accreditation site reports. (Standard 4.A)

In response to Recommendation 3, the College did a Full Time/Part time Faculty Study in 2000 to identify areas of high adjunct faculty use. With this data, decisions on new hires have been targeted in high use areas where ever possible. Data indicates 12 new full time positions have been added at Clark since 1998. Never the less, use of adjunct faculty remains high at the College, and this situation will not be resolved until current economic and over enrollment situations are likewise resolved. It is recommended that the College continue to monitor its use of adjunct faculty as funding and enrollment levels change.

Faculty workloads are defined by the faculty collective bargaining agreement and have been reviewed as part of the Interest-Based Bargaining process. An agreement on faculty workload was adopted through this process in June 2003.

The College administration and faculty are to be commended for their work towards agreeable solutions to the faculty workload issue.

In response to the Commission's recommendation concerning oversight and supervision of the Paralegal Program, a full time instructor has been hired beginning Fall 2003.

Recommendation 4

The evaluation team recommends that a consistent system to be developed to conduct, report and monitor evaluation of adjunct faculty to ensure teaching effectiveness. This should be done in a way to be consistent with Policy 4.1 on Faculty Evaluation. (Standard 4.A.5, Policy 4.1)

Following the 1998 accreditation visit the College took action to address the issue of faculty evaluation processes for all faculty to include probationary, post-tenure, temporary adjuncts, counselors and librarians. A ten person Faculty Evaluation Task force was appointed to develop an updated faculty job description and evaluation instruments. The Task force came to agreement on the multiple purposes of a good faculty evaluation system. Based on this work a revised system of evaluation that includes part time faculty was instituted in 2000. Evidence indicates that as a system of evaluation, it is working well and Commission Policy 4.1 is being met. All areas of the system are covered in the November 2000 Clark College/Association of Higher Education Agreement which covers both full time and adjunct faculty.

The College and its faculty are to be commended in their thorough and serious approach to meeting Recommendation 4, and reviewing, revising and implementing an improved faculty evaluation

system. (4.A.5, Policy 4.1)

Recommendation 5

The visiting team recognizes the tremendous impact of computers and information technologies in all areas of the College. During the site visit, however, team members noted many expressions of concern related to technical support, upgrades, connectivity, student computer labs, and distance education. The committee recommends issues related to information technology (I.T.) be addressed, building on the self-study and the planning work of the I.T. Task Force. (Standard 5)

Since the 1998 visit, the College has addressed issues related to information technology through the adoption of the Clark College Strategic Plan for Information Technology, completed in late 1998. The Strategic Plan identified adequate funding for information technology as a strategic goal. An Information Technology Operational Plan was completed in July 2000 by the IT Task force and the College has made good progress in implementing the actions proposed in the plan. In implementing the plan the College has created two new management level positions to give the area leadership, plus upgraded a number of technical support positions, and provided a trainer position to facilitate staff and faculty acquisition of appropriate skills. The College has upgraded its equipment and network components and centralized its purchasing of hardware and software to realize financial savings and standardization. Student Development areas have added many technical improvements, computer labs have been added and improved, and staff and administrative systems have been updated. Significant resources have been devoted to staff training and development. Evidence of staff and student report indicates a high level of user satisfaction.

The College is to be commended on its efforts in the area of Information Technology. Considerable energy and resource has been concentrated on this area in the last five years to bring it to a high level of efficiency and effectiveness. Evidence of staff and student report indicate a high level of user satisfaction in this area.

Recommendation 6

The College does not prepare a minimum three-year projection of income and expenditures for operations as required by Standard 7.A.2. Even though vagaries of state funding may make projections less accurate than desired, the forecast, if tied to the strategic plan of the institution, will be useful in determining any gap between mission and funding. (Standard 7.A.2)

Review of the College's budget planning documents indicates that this recommendation has been cared for.

Recommendation 7

The College should carefully evaluate and revise the catalog for accuracy, consistency, and readability to ensure institutional integrity through out the institution and community. The catalog represents the primary implied contract between the College and the student. It is imperative that it be clear regarding admissions and academic policies and degree and program requirements, including length of time required to obtain a degree or certificate of completion, as well as all Commission required policies. (Standards 9.A.3, 3.B.4, Policy 3.1)

Review of the College's catalog for the last two year cycles indicates that this recommendation has been met.

Part B: Eligibility Requirements, Standards, and Policies in Reference to Institutional Change

Standard One - Institutional Mission and Goals, Planning and Effectiveness

The College adopted a new mission in 1998, in response to the College Board adopted a set of Results Policies. From this the College adopted a set of goals. This has set the frame work for the 5 year cycle of planning at Clark College. For specific information about the planning process and it's institutionalization, see Part A, Recommendation 1.

Standard Two - Educational Program and Its Effectiveness

Cooperative Arrangements:

AA Degree in Business with direct transfer to WSU(Washington State University)-Vancouver Transfer to EWU (Eastern Washington University) for students with AAS degrees from Clark in specific subject areas such as Dental Hygiene with EWU courses delivered at the Clark campus via video

AS Degree at Clark to benefit students transferring to WSU-Vancouver in Business
Clark College's Business and Industry Training Program Joining together with WSU-Vancouver's Continuing Education Department for a cooperative program of business, industry and community educational programs

Emphasis on Clarks' Tech Prep program with local high schools which is continuing in growth with over 300 local high students benefiting from this program

Clark College is to be commended on its active pursuit of cooperative arrangements with other educational entities which benefit its future or present students.

Program Changes:

Seven new or revised AAS programs
Six new Certificate of Proficiency Programs
Eight programs discontinued or in active

Educational Assessment:

The College has identified six abilities that form the basis for institutional learning goals. Courses and programs teach to and encourage students to practice and improve these skills. Course and program outcomes are in place and evaluated for both program and general education (six abilities) outcomes. Midlevel and end of program outcome assessments are in place and implemented. Evidence indicates outcome results are being used for program and course improvement, Clark College currently meets the requirements of Commission Policy 2.2.

Distance Education:

There have been no significant changes in Clark's Distance Education program since 1999, the last information filing the College made on this program.

Standard Three - Students

Student Services:

Since 1998 the Student Development area at Clark have under gone a complete study of its needs and organizational structure. As a result a new organizational structure has been developed. Due to budget reductions the new structure has been only partially implemented. Evidence indicates that in some areas work loads and service would benefit from full implementation of of the new structure. A

number of physical remodels and technological improvements have improved services to students. Evidence though student interview, indicates, however, that there are inconsistencies in the quality of customer service among the various units. It is recommended that a program for review and evaluation of indirect instructional services to students be developed and implemented at Clark College. Such a program of evaluation and improvement should include all areas that provide non-direct instructional service to Clark students.

See Part A, Recommendation 7 for additional information on College publications for students and the public.

Standard Four - Faculty

Reorganization and Administration:

College reorganization implemented in 2000 changed the organizational structure within instruction from 56 departments divided into 10 divisions each with a Division Chair reporting to a Vice President of Instruction to a new structure of 19 subject clusters of programs each with a Division Chair, reporting to 4 Deans of Instruction who in turn report to a Vice President of Instruction. Evidence indicates that the new structure and changes in personnel have caused problems in communications as well as ambiguity in interpretations of College policies affecting faculty. For further information on these issues, see Part A, Recommendation 2.

Faculty Characteristics and Benefits:

Twelve additional full time faculty positions have added since 1998 in areas where planning indicated the greatest need. Currently the gender balance of the faculty is nearly equal and protected groups are represented in the faculty ranks. The faculty contract was negotiated in 2000 providing a new salary schedule. Since 1997 the minimum salary for professors has increased between 18 and 24%. Clark remains close to the average salary for Washington State Technical and Community Colleges. Adjunct Faculty salaries have received significant attention in the Washington State Legislature and the College has received a number of allocations to improve adjunct salaries. In addition, Clark College has established an affiliate rate to recognize adjunct faculty who have accumulated the equivalent of three years of service with the institution.

For information on Faculty Evaluation, see Part A, Recommendation 4.

Standard Five - Library and Information Resources

Library Resources:

Evidence indicates that Clark College Library continues to provide excellent service to students and faculty. Both groups reported a high level of satisfaction with both library resources and services. Statistics indicate library usage has grown significantly since 1998 while funding resources and staffing has remained essentially flat. Additional resources have been made available through the College Foundation which have funded additional resources and infrastructure. A significant change was the migration from its outdated library system to a new system which will enable it to implement software and become a member of Orbis Cascade Alliance Consortium. Membership in this resource sharing consortium of 26 academic libraries will greatly benefit Clark students and faculty. It is recommended that the College monitor its budget allocations and student enrollment growth in light of library needs.

Information Resources:

For information on this area, see Part A, Recommendation 5.

Resources: Standard Six - Governance and Administration

For information on Governance and Administration, see Part A, Recommendation 2.

Standard Seven - Finance

The College's budget has grown by approximately 9 million dollars in the last five years, and the College's rapidly growing enrollment has also improved its funding picture. Unfortunately increased enrollment above the state mandated levels is enrollment not reimbursed as part of the state's funding formula. While the College uses tuition it collects on over enrollments to offset direct instructional costs, indirect costs in student, library and administrative services are generally not cared for. Over time this can have an increasingly negative effect on the quality of service in these areas. It also has the tendency to create a higher use of adjunct faculty in the instructional areas. While the state of Washington has experienced the economic downturn experienced through out the country, higher education has experienced relatively limited budget reductions. Given this fact as well as its enrollment growths, its responsible fiscal management, and the excellent support of its Foundation, the College appears to be in good financial condition. For further information on Standard 7, see Part A, Recommendation 6.

Standard Eight - Physical Facilities

The College's physical plant is in excellent condition, well maintained and adequate to program needs. Numerous changes have been made since 1998. Additionally, the College does an exemplary job of facility planning for the future. Its Ten Year Plan for Facilities has allowed the institution to be in an excellent position to receive state funds for new building construction. Also the College Foundation has been instrumental in aiding the College in acquiring land needed for expansion.

The College is to be commended on its excellent care of its present facilities and its facility planning for the future which has greatly enhanced its ability to meet current and future facility needs. The College Foundation is to be commended for its support of these and other College needs.

Standard Nine - Institutional Integrity

Clark College adheres to high ethical standards in its representations to its constituencies, in its teaching and service, and in its treatment of students and staff. It has clear statements and policies relating to conflict of interest and academic freedom. During the last two years, the Administrative Policies and Procedures Manual has been updated and posted on the College intranet site. In addition, the three employee bargaining agreements have also been posted on this site. Numerous changes relating to labor relations have taken place including the agreement between the administration and faculty to use interest based bargaining.

The College keeps its publications and its web site up-to-date and accurate. It has developed an College Intranet to improve campus communications and information sharing. For further information, see Part A, recommendations 2 and 7.

Commendations

The College and its faculty are to be commended in their thorough and serious approach to meeting Recommendation 4, and reviewing, revising and implementing an improved faculty evaluation system.

The College is to be commended on its efforts in the area of Information Technology. Considerable energy and resource has been concentrated on this area in the last five years to bring it to a high level of efficiency and effectiveness. Evidence of staff and student report indicate a high level of user satisfaction in this area.

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Recommendations

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