

Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities

A Focused Interim Report

Clark College

Vancouver, Washington

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Prepared by

Gregory Benson, PhD
Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs
College of Eastern Utah

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

Introduction

Clark College hosted a comprehensive evaluation visit in fall 2008. The comprehensive evaluation committee extended five commendations to the College for its teaching and learning center, professional development and renewal activities, library and information resources and services, existing facilities and facilities planning, and support by the Clark College Foundation. Five recommendations were made related to institutional planning and evaluation, program review and assessment, security of student records, academic and other educational program advisement, and internal system of governance.

The College's accreditation was reaffirmed in January 2009 on the basis of the fall 2008 comprehensive evaluation. In reaffirming accreditation, the Commission requested a spring 2009 progress report to address Recommendation 3 - student records (said progress report was accepted in July 2009). Furthermore, the Commission requested a spring 2010 focused interim visit and report to address Recommendation 1 - planning, Recommendation 2 - assessment, Recommendation 4 - advisement, and Recommendation 5 - governance. In requesting the spring 2010 focused interim visit and report, the Commission noted that Recommendations 1, 4, and 5 were substantially in compliance with criteria for accreditation, but in need of improvement; Recommendation 2 was identified as an area that did not meet Commission criteria for accreditation, with the College directed to take action within a two-year period as prescribed by U.S. Department of Education Regulation 34 CFR 602.20 and Commission Policy A-18.

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Quality and Usability of Institution's Report and Support Materials

Clark College provided a 39-page focused interim report, accompanied by 18 appendices, and a copy of the 08-10 catalog for review prior to the site visit. More than 20 exhibit items, as well as intranet and internet access, were available on the day of the visit, and on-site requests for a few additional documents were promptly accommodated. The report and support materials were thorough and well-written, and provided clear and complete information regarding the recommendations under review.

Methods Used to Verify Contents of Institution's Report

The contents of the focused interim report were verified through four interview sessions related to each of the recommendations under review and three interview sessions with representatives of faculty, staff, and student organizations. The extensive set of appendices that accompanied the focused interim report was reviewed. Several exhibits were also examined:

- Recommendation 1—Strategic Planning Task Force Notebook, Executive Cabinet Operational Plans, Sample Board Report
- Recommendation 2—Annual Assessment of Department/Discipline Data, Departmental Notebooks
- Recommendation 4—Clark College Advising Plan Draft
- Recommendation 5—Shared Governance Subcommittee Report to the Clark College Council

Individuals Interviewed During Visit

Initial & Exit Meetings

- Ted Broussard..... Dean - Student Success & Retention
Interim Associate Vice President - Student Affairs
- Rassoul Dastmozd. Vice President - Instruction
- Shanda Diehl..... Associate Vice President - Planning & Effectiveness
- Robert Knight. President
- Alex Montoya..... Dean - Enrollment Services
Interim Associate Vice President - Student Affairs
- Bob Williamson..... Vice President - Administrative Services

Recommendation 1

- Shanda Diehl..... Associate Vice President - Planning & Effectiveness
- Miles Jackson. Dean - Social Sciences & Fine Arts
- Robert Knight. President
- Alex Montoya..... Dean - Enrollment Services
Interim Associate Vice President - Student Affairs
- Sabra Sand. Accounting Supervisor

Recommendation 2

- Rassoul Dastmozd. Vice President - Instruction
- Miles Jackson. Dean - Social Sciences & Fine Arts
- Ray Korpi..... Dean - Developmental Education, English, Communications & Humanities
- Ann Snyder. Professor - Women's Studies
- Brenda Walstead. Professor - Dental Hygiene

Recommendation 4

- Ted Broussard..... Interim Associate Vice President - Student Affairs
- Paul Casillas..... Professor/Chair - Mathematics
- Ray Korpi..... Dean - Developmental Education, English, Communications & Humanities
- Andrew Long..... Director - Advising
- Kim Marshel. Registrar

Recommendation 5

- Jack Burkman. Vice Chair - Board of Trustees
- Addison Jacobs. Chair - Board of Trustees
- Robert Knight. President
- Susan Maxwell. Research Analyst
- Joe Pitkin. Professor - English
- Marcia Roi. Professor - Addiction Counseling Education
- Bob Williamson. Vice President - Administrative Services

Associated Students of Clark College

- Tyler Adamson. Activities Programming Board
- Ashley Schahfer. President
- Gregor Theis. Activities Programming Board

Clark College Association for Higher Education

- Izad Khormae. Professor - Engineering
- Julian Nelson. Professor - German
- Marcia Roi. Professor - Addiction Counseling Education
- Kimberly Sullivan. Professor - English
- Susan Torres. Adjunct Instructor - English as a Second Language
- Steve Walsh. Professor - Accounting
- Jim Wilkins-Luton. Professor - Developmental Education

Washington Public Employees Association

- Billie Garner. Staff - Maintenance Mechanic
- Sam Osaki. Staff - Assessment Program Assistant
- Jean Roniger. Staff - Maintenance Mechanic
- Gayla Shanahan. Staff - Nursery & Landscape Specialist
- David Sims. Staff - Information Technology Specialist
- David Stephan. Staff - Instructional Classroom Technician

Criteria-Based Analysis and Evaluation

Recommendation 1

The committee recommends that the college continue to develop and implement a systematic, transparent institutional planning and evaluation system. Essential conditions, elements, and uses of this system:

- *Clearly define the planning and evaluation processes.*
- *The planning and evaluation processes are ongoing.*
- *The planning process is participatory involving appropriate constituencies such as faculty, administrators, staff, students, and other interested parties.*
- *Results of the planning and evaluation processes influence resource allocation decisions and are used to improve programs and services.*
- *Necessary resources are provided for an effective planning and evaluation system to function.*
- *Institutional research is integrated with and supportive of institutional evaluation and planning.*
- *The college uses information from its planning and evaluation processes to communicate evidence of institutional effectiveness to the public (Standard 1: 1.B.1, 1.B.3, 1.B.4, 1.B.6, 1.B.7, 1.B.9)*

Over an 18-month span in 2008-09, Clark College engaged in an extensive strategic planning effort, led by a task force comprised of representatives of the Board of Trustees, foundation board, administration, faculty, staff, and students. Information about the College, community, and Washington community and technical college system was reviewed, with opportunities for review and feedback afforded via roundtable discussions, a Board of Trustees work session, a College Council meeting, the College's intranet site, and direct communication with task force members. The 2009-14 Strategic Plan was approved by the Board of Trustees in June 2009 for implementation on July 1, 2009.

The four major components of the strategic plan are vision, mission, strategic directions, and five-year college goals. A key companion to the strategic plan is an annual continuous improvement process comprised of four elements: plan, do, assess, and improve. The vision, mission, five strategic directions, and corresponding five-year goals found in the strategic plan constitute the "plan" component. Operational plans developed at the unit level are tied to five-year goals and represent the "do" aspect; operational plans focus on measurable objectives

and desired outcomes, with assessment results used to develop strategies for the following year. The “assess” phase consists of a college scorecard, with numerous indicators and benchmarks selected to gauge progress on the five-year college goals of the strategic plan. The “improve” stage is accomplished by evaluating scorecard results to identify areas for improvement to be addressed through development of a set of one-year institutional goals.

Clark College is to be complimented for its progress in addressing Recommendation 1 from the fall 2008 comprehensive evaluation. A new five-year strategic plan was adopted in 2009. Operational plans, tied to five-year college goals, have been developed and implemented by members of the Executive Cabinet, with eventual development and implementation projected across 42 college units. A scorecard (indicators and benchmarks) is used to assess the College’s progress in accomplishing its five-year goals, and scorecard results have been used to identify areas for improvements and develop six institutional goals for 2010-11 related to college climate, shared governance, diversity, student achievement, advising, and environment sustainability. Recent planning and evaluation efforts have resulted in allocation of funds to support improvements in student advising. A new associate vice president of planning and effectiveness arrived at the College soon after the fall 2008 comprehensive evaluation and has played a key role in advancing institutional research, strategic planning, and institutional effectiveness. Finally, evidence of institutional effectiveness is being regularly reported through postings on the college web site, presentations at trustees meetings, and other addresses, publications, and reports. (Standard 1.B)

Recommendation 2

The committee found evidence that some programs, but not all, conduct regular and systematic program reviews and assessments. Therefore, the committee recommends that:

- *the institution’s processes for assessing its educational programs be clearly defined, encompass all of its offerings, including General Education and programs offered through e-learning, be conducted on a regular basis and be integrated into the overall planning and evaluation plan. (Standard 2.B.1, Policy 2.2 and Policy 2.6)*
- *through regular and systematic assessment, the institution demonstrates that all students who complete their programs have achieved the stated outcomes of these programs. (Standard 2.B.2 and Policy 2.2)*

Program review and assessment at Clark College are overseen by the Instructional Planning Team (IPT), a body comprised of the vice president of instruction, instructional deans, registrar,

two faculty members from each unit, one adjunct faculty member, up to two students, and the president of the Clark College Association for Higher Education. As part of an instructional plan recommended by the IPT and adopted by the vice president of instruction in 2008, the annual assessment of academic department data (student success, enrollments, certificates and degrees, employment, full- and part-time faculty percentages, student/faculty ratios, full-time equivalent students, cost per FTES, trends in cost per FTES) has been formalized and implemented. Results of this annual assessment are reviewed by the Program Check Screening Committee to identify satisfactory areas, as well as areas needing improvement. Upon the recommendation of the Program Check Screening Committee and acceptance by the vice president, a Program Action Team is formed to develop an action plan to address an area needing improvement. This approach to academic program review has proven to be effective for the College, with many action plans and results documented in the focused interim report.

After the 2008 comprehensive evaluation, the College determined that program learning outcomes should be linked to degrees and certificates, rather than departments/disciplines. A set of 10 learning outcomes tied to the Associate of Arts (AA) degree was subsequently developed in 2009 and adopted in early 2010. Assessment rubrics associated with each of the AA degree learning outcomes are in development, and it has been recommended that electronic portfolios be used to gather student assignments from courses relating to the various learning outcomes so that faculty might review authentic student work for assessment purposes. Having established AA degree learning outcomes, the Instructional Planning Team has recently charged its various career-technical programs to develop learning outcomes and assessment plans.

A six-year plan for achieving a full academic assessment program is outlined on pages 20-21 of the College's focused interim report. While the six-year plan is deliberate and thorough, it is a matter of some concern that, to date, Clark College has not identified learning outcomes for all of its degrees and certificates, nor has it moved beyond the concept stage in conducting regular and systematic assessment for the purposes of documenting student achievement of degree and certificate learning outcomes (Standard 2.B.2 and Policy 2.2). It would seem prudent, and manageable, for the College to accelerate its efforts so that educational assessment is fully developed and implemented in under the projected six years.

Recommendation 4

The committee recommends that the college make necessary adjustments in the advising and counseling area in order to assure that a systematic program of academic and other educational program advisement is in place that adequately informs and prepares faculty and other personnel responsible for the advising function. The college should assure that:

- *Advisors help students make appropriate decisions concerning academic choices and career paths.*
- *Specific advisor responsibilities are defined, published, and made available to students.*
(3.D.10)

Advising at Clark College has been advanced in many significant, tangible ways since the fall 2008 comprehensive evaluation. A new director of advising was hired in 2009, and a comprehensive advising plan has been developed by a 15-member task force comprised of faculty and staff representing many areas. Key improvements in advising, some of which have already been implemented, include reorganization of the advising department, educational plan worksheets, degree and certificate worksheets, AdvisorTrac web-based software, streamlined advising and registration process, academic early warning, and the aforementioned advising plan. Advising is provided by both faculty and professional advisors, and the reorganization of the advising department has provisions that facilitate communication between faculty and professional advisors. With the advising plan having been developed and in various stages of implementation, an advising steering committee has been proposed that will solicit input, review progress, and suggest improvements. Student satisfaction is being closely monitored, and recent survey results have been positive; representatives of the Associated Students of Clark College who were interviewed during the focused interim visit offered anecdotal accounts of advising at the College that were positive, as well.

In all, the focused interim report and interviews conducted during the site visit present clear evidence that advising concerns from the 2008 comprehensive evaluation have been systematically and thoroughly addressed. A coherent plan has been developed based on broad input, many improvements have already been implemented, roles of faculty and professional advisors have been defined, student satisfaction has improved, and the College has committed additional financial resources to support advising. (Standard 3.D.10)

Recommendation 5

The committee recommends that the college assess the effectiveness of its internal system of governance to facilitate the successful accomplishment of its mission and goals. Elements to be addressed by the resulting system of governance are:

- *Administrators, faculty, staff, and students understand and fulfill their respective roles in the governance system.*
- *The system of governance ensures that the authority, responsibilities, and relationships among and between the administrators, faculty, staff, and students are clearly described in policy documents.*
- *The system of governance makes provision for the consideration of faculty, student, and staff views and judgments in those matters in which these constituents have a direct and reasonable interest.*
- *The role of faculty in institutional governance, planning, budgeting and policy development is made clear and public. (Standard 6.A.1, 6.A.2, 6.A.3, 6D)*

Clark College has worked aggressively to clarify and advance shared governance since the 2008 comprehensive evaluation. Highlights include review of past climate surveys and the 2008 self-study; discussion of shared governance by the Board of Trustees, College Council (representative advisory group), Executive Cabinet, and Penguin Roundtable (quarterly event); and establishment of a College Council subcommittee to study and recommend improvements in the College's governance structure. A draft report by the shared governance subcommittee was posted on the college intranet in late April 2010 for the purpose of soliciting feedback from college constituents, with discussion by the College Council and final recommendations to the president slated for May 2010.

A revised policy and procedure development and approval process was adopted by the College in 2009. The revised process includes more stakeholder involvement than was previously the case, and there is also an intent to achieve better alignment of policies and procedures with collective bargaining agreements and current practices. Originators may submit drafts to the College's administrative services office, which coordinates the development and approval process. There is review and feedback from the Executive Cabinet and College Council, as well as the collective bargaining units, if deemed necessary. Final policy drafts from originators are considered by the Executive Cabinet, and newly-approved policies are announced and posted via college email and the web.

An interview session was conducted with representatives of the Clark College Association for Higher Education (CCAHE) during the site visit. During that session, CCAHE representatives presented a printed report that detailed several concerns related to program deletions and unit modifications, employee evaluation processes, communication from administration regarding use of the college email and newsletter, the sabbatical application process, and consultation with the CCAHE regarding committee appointments. While it will be important for the CCAHE and College to continue to review and address these matters, the items presented in the CCAHE report were largely beyond the scope of the focused interim visit; accordingly, the faculty and leadership of the College are encouraged to look to the collective bargaining agreement and relevant college policies for direction and mechanisms that will facilitate internal resolution of the aforementioned concerns.

Efforts to define and create better understanding of shared governance and to involve constituents in decision making are moving forward in a positive fashion (Standard 6.A). Interviews conducted during the site visit pointed to a strong level of commitment and engagement on the part of the president, president's executive cabinet, and trustees to advance shared governance and improve lines of communication. Discussions with various employees and students conveyed a prevailing sentiment that there are opportunities and structures in place for those affected by decisions to be involved and have meaningful input. In terms of faculty and shared governance, it will be incumbent on the CCAHE and college leaders to communicate collegially and openly if optimum levels of effectiveness and understanding are to be achieved (Standard 6.D).

Concluding Statement

Clark College has expended considerable effort and made laudable progress in addressing the recommendations from the 2008 comprehensive evaluation. A new strategic plan is in place and being implemented, assessment of academic department data is being conducted, there have been significant improvements in advising, and shared governance is being defined and advanced. A critical area in need of improvement is the identification of learning outcomes and outcomes assessment.

Commendation

1. The College is commended for its diligence and progress in addressing Recommendations 1, 2, 4, and 5 from the 2008 comprehensive evaluation. Highlights include the development and ongoing implementation of the 2009-14 Strategic Plan, annual assessment of academic department data to gauge program effectiveness, improved advising and registration procedures, development of a comprehensive advising plan, establishment of an ad hoc committee to review and make recommendations regarding shared governance, revision of the process for developing and approving policies and procedures, and a renewed commitment to continuous improvement and soliciting input and providing feedback relative to decision making.

Recommendation

1. While a time line is in place and work has begun, it is recommended the College identify and publish the expected learning outcomes for each of its degree and certificate programs. Furthermore, it is recommended the College demonstrate, through regular and systematic assessment, that students who complete their programs, no matter where or how they are offered, have achieved these outcomes. (Standard 2.B.2 and Policy 2.2)