## **How patterns of power, privilege, and inequity influence student learning and success at Clark College**

## **I. Our service district has the need and opportunity to increase educational attainment**

Our economic environment is changing, here at Clark College and nationally. Nationally, by 2020, 65% of all jobs will require postsecondary education and training[[1]](#footnote-1). This is up from 28% in 1973. Within Clark College’s service district (Clark, Skamania and Western Klickitat Counties), only one-third (26.9% - 36.3%) of adults 25 years or older have an associate’s degree or higher (see Table 1). Therefore, to meet the demand of the college’s community and industry partners, there is a need to increase educational attainment in the service district.

**Table 1. Educational Attainment in Service District (for adults age 25 years or older)**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Clark** **County** | **Skamania County** | **Klickitat** **(Western Klickitat in service district)** | **Washington** **State** |
| **Percent high school graduate or higher** | 91.0% | 90.5% | 87.6% | 90.0% |
| **Percent associate’s degree or higher** | 36.3% | 29.9% | 26.9% | 41.1% |
| **Percent bachelor’s degree or higher** | 26.0% | 22.5% | 18.9% | 31.6% |

**II. Clark has increasing populations of students from historically disadvantaged groups**

Clark has an increasing population of students from historically disadvantaged groups. Among first-term students, 4 in 5 identify with one or more historically disadvantaged groups identified below, with almost half (46%) identifying with two or more groups (see Table 2 for new student demographics):

* **Students of Color**. The percent of students of color has increased from 21% to 31% within the past eight academic years (Fall 2006 to Fall 2014).
* **First Generation Students**. Over 70% of Clark’s students are First Generation. First Generation refers to students who are the first in their families to go to college. These students can experience challenges during their academic career, including financial barriers, lack of knowledge about college systems, and lower rates of academic preparedness[[2]](#footnote-2).
* **Low-Income Students**. Two in five students (40%) at Clark College identify as low-income, with household income below 150% of the Federal Poverty Level.
* **Students with a Disability**. 1 in 20 students at Clark College self-identify as living with a disability. Students with disabilities may need accommodations in order to ensure that traditional methods, programs and services are accessible, which are currently facilitated through the Clark College Disability Support Services Office.

Please note that the historically disadvantaged groups identified above only include those groups for which Clark College has accurate, longitudinal data to monitor student academic experience. Clark College is working to collect additional historically disadvantaged group statuses, including but not limited to: veteran status, sexual orientation, and gender identity.

**Table 2. First-Term, Degree-Seeking Students Starting Fall 2013 by Historically Disadvantaged Groups** *Excluding Running Start Students*

**Figure 1. Total Number of Historically Disadvantaged Groups, Among First-Term, Degree-Seeking Students Starting Fall 2013** *Excluding Running Start Students*

## **III. Students from historically disadvantaged groups have lower rates of academic preparedness, as measured by the COMPASS Placement Exam**

**Figure 2. Percent of First-Term, Degree-Seeking Students Starting Fall 2013 Who Placed into Pre-College Coursework, by Number of Historically Disadvantaged Groups** *Excluding Running Start Students*

**Placement into remediation coursework can result in**[[3]](#footnote-3)**:**

* Lower matriculation rates into college
* Extended length of pathway to degree completion, which results in increased costs for students (e.g. tuition, fees, and foregone wages).
* Utilization of Financial Aid benefits for developmental courses, which do not count towards degree, may impact ability to pay for college (due to Financial Aid regulation, limiting funding to 150% of the time to complete a degree).

## **IV. Students from historically disadvantaged groups have lower rates of first-quarter success and completion**

Evidence, both nationally and at Clark College, shows that students who successfully complete their first quarter courses are more likely to be retained to the next quarter and complete a degree or certificate.

However, students from historically disadvantaged groups are less likely to successfully complete their first quarter courses. In particular, low income students and students of color have lower rates of first quarter success, as evidenced by placement on Academic Concerns (see Figure 4). Additionally, students from one or more historically disadvantaged groups have increasingly lower rates of first quarter success.

**Figure 3. First Quarter Success (Placement on Academic Concern) by Historically Disadvantaged Groups. Among First-Term, Degree-Seeking Students Starting Fall 2013.** *Excluding Running Start students.*

## **V. Students from historically disadvantaged groups have lower rates of completion**

To meet the demand of Clark College’s community and industry partners, there is a need to increase educational attainment in the college’s service district. However, currently, students of color and students with disabilities have lower three-year completion rates at Clark College than the average completion rate, at 10.5% and 5.5%, respectively (see Figure 4). Determining ways to support all students at Clark College, particularly among historically disadvantaged groups, would provide students’ with increased economic opportunities and help increase educational attainment in our community.

**Figure 4. Completion of Degree or Certificate within Three Years by Historically Disadvantaged Groups. Among First-Term, Degree-Seeking Students Starting Fall 2011.** *Excluding Running Start students.*

1. A Decade Behind. Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, 2012. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ishitani, T.T. (2003). A Longitudinal approach to assessing attrition behavior among first-generation students: time-varying effects of pre-college characteristics. Research in Higher Education, 44(4), 433-449. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Community College Research Center (2010). Developmental Education in Community Colleges, Teachers College, Columbia University. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)