



The Clark Journal

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EDITORIAL STAFF

Editor/Contributor

Erica Schwenneker

Contributor

Barbara Kerr

Graphic Design

Pat McDonald

Photography

Ian Beckett

THE PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

It's springtime at Clark College. Our beautiful cherry trees are blossoming. Our student body leadership is making plans for their annual "spring thing" event.

It's amazing how quickly this year has flown by. It seems like we just met for opening day and now we're deep in the planning process for our 2007 commencement.

At the same time, we're looking to the future. Our administrators, faculty and staff are working hard to make our 2008 accreditation the most successful in our history. We are committed to using the process to help us celebrate the things that we are doing well and finding opportunities to continuously improve the ways in which we serve our students and our community.

As part of that process, we're asking an important question. What does it mean to be a learning-centered college? Gail Liberman of our Teaching and Learning Center is planning a number of activities to help us discuss that question and what it means for our students. You can read more about it in this issue of *The Clark Journal* and I invite you to take part in the discussions.

I know that time flies by quickly for John White, who, in this issue, writes about his first six months as a Clark College trustee. Trustee White is extremely respected in our community, and his insights and expertise have already been invaluable in talking about how we operate and in developing our plans for the future.

These days, I keep asking myself another important question. Where do we want to be as a college on October 1, 2008, as we celebrate our 75th anniversary and launch our diamond jubilee year?

I suspect that the next 18 months are going to fly by as quickly as the past year. I'm looking forward to working with all of you to answer that question and make our 75th anniversary a great celebration for our students, our faculty and staff and our community. 🌿

Robert K. Knight, Interim President

FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES



The older I get, the more the adage, “Time flies,” resonates for me. It’s been six months since I became a Clark College trustee and, as a newbie, I’ve been like a kid in a candy store. While my seven years as a member of the board of the college foundation certainly gave me a good background in the focus and business of the college, it was hard to grasp the scope of the place until I became part of its governance.

Some aspects of the college have particularly impressed me. The first thing that struck me is the quality of students at the college. These are bright, focused, and engaged people of all ages who come to Clark to improve either their own skill set or the direction of their lives. Watching them participate in college issues and events is inspiring.

Second is the stellar quality of instruction at the college. As a trustee, I have to review recommendations for faculty tenure. Student evaluations are part of this review. Across the board, students get value out of the time they invest at Clark because their instructors not only believe in what they are doing, but actually enjoy it. Simply put, our instructors care.

Supporting both our students and faculty is a key function of the administration of the college. It hasn’t been easy during the rocky times of the past, but kudos to Bob Knight, interim president, and his staff. They are moving forward quickly as they build an infrastructure that will allow Clark to continue to grow along with the community.

I’ve also been making it a point to ask community members about their impressions of Clark College. I run in a circle of mostly business-oriented people who don’t shy away from the truth. When I ask their sense of where Clark is headed, I find out that we have a lot of cheerleaders in the community – and they’re not shy about expressing themselves. Clark’s stellar reputation even extends beyond the local community. As I was being introduced around a recent statewide meeting of community college trustees and administrators, I was overwhelmed by the number of people who said “you’re lucky to be part of such a class institution,” and “you guys have so much going for you.”


Finally, the strategic direction that is being set for the college is exciting. In a world where advanced skills are going to be a prerequisite for staying competitive in a global economy, Clark is investing (often with the help of the Foundation) in technologies that will enable us to train a highly competitive work force. I’m looking forward to the rest of my term and being a small part of a great community-based effort. Time may fly, but I’m enjoying every minute of it. 🌿

John D. White



Dream Big

ON BECOMING A LEARNING-CENTERED COLLEGE

 DURING SPRING QUARTER 2007, THE TEACHING AND LEARNING CENTER AT CLARK COLLEGE WILL INITIATE A COLLEGE-WIDE DISCUSSION FOCUSING ON THE QUESTION: “HOW WILL WE DEFINE ‘LEARNING CENTERED’ AT CLARK COLLEGE?”

The question itself presumes that Clark has, in fact, already made the decision to be a learning-centered institution – and on some levels, it has. The first of the college’s six mission imperatives establishes a focus on learning as the foundation for decision making as follows:

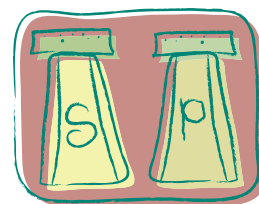
The college will focus on learning as the foundation for decision making with respect to planning, technology, location, instructional methods and successful outcomes. Learners will receive a high-quality, innovative education and services that foster student success in achievement of their stated goals. Members of all employee groups will be provided with opportunities for professional development.

There are also efforts taking place each day toward this imperative, including the implementation of smart classroom technology, providing employee development and training opportunities, documenting assessment of student learning outcomes, and offering a spring break service learning project.

However, systemic changes within the college’s operations have yet to be realized. Making the transition from guiding principle

to organizing force is part of the goal of the learning-centered college discussions. “Historically, colleges have set up their structure based on the concept that learning is something that is handed over to people,” said Gail Liberman, director of the Teaching and Learning Center at Clark. “Everything from policies to calendars to the instructional method reinforced this. Scientists are discovering the complex neuro-development of the brain and the effects of experiences on learning. Clark’s mission imperative, focus on learning, compels us to reexamine the college policies, procedures and practices to allow for the development of exciting, enriching learning experiences requested by departments or programs.”

Creating a learning-centered institution is not something that takes place just in the classroom; rather, it occurs at all points of student contact. “Becoming more learning centered applies to the full college system, including instruction,” said Liberman. “It is not just the classes but the overall educational experience as well. A student’s interaction with Clark on all levels impacts his or her learning – and provides opportunities to develop skills – that they will take with them beyond Clark.” It is for this reason that employees of all types – including staff, administrators and faculty – are being sought out to participate in the discussion.



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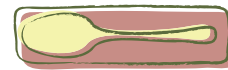
To inform the discussion, the Teaching and Learning Center has distributed a summary article entitled, “From Teaching to Learning: A New Paradigm for Undergraduate Education,” for individuals to read as part of the college-wide discussion. Liberman is quick to point out, however, that the article does not contain the answers for Clark College; rather, it is designed to help people think about learning centered in the abstract and promote reflection on how their own areas can impact learning. By reading the article in advance, it is Liberman’s goal that the discussion sessions can then be used for generating ideas and gathering information. “The ultimate goal of the discussion is to inform the creation of a college structure whereby members from all areas of the college can participate in the creation of policies and practices that encourage being or becoming learning centered,” said Liberman.

Through the use of the conversation café model – in which small groups of individuals discuss a specific question – Liberman hopes the discussion sessions will provide information to begin a process of transformation at Clark College. “It is our goal to collect information for aggregation which would be evaluated by interested faculty and staff who will then make recommendations. These recommendations will then be presented to Executive Cabinet,” explained Liberman. It would be the first steps in what she considers to be a four- to five-year process. “Change will not only be about the steps, but also the order in which they are undertaken,” she said.

Liberman is quick to point out, however, that there are many things happening at Clark already that fit within the idea of being a learning-centered institution. “There are lots of people doing creative things already – but in our current structure, they are being done independently rather than in a cohesive college-wide way. The synergy that would be created by bringing

those ideas together could help combat the feeling of isolation – the feeling of not knowing what is happening beyond one’s department – that is widespread at Clark.”

Identifying those activities that already contribute to a learning-centered environment is one of the reasons Liberman is encouraging participation from all areas of the college. Another reason is that there is no single source for the answer to the question, “How will we define ‘learning centered’ at Clark College?” “How should Clark look?” asked Liberman. “We have the answer to that question within the college community today. We don’t need to go outside to ask someone else – we have the expertise here in our faculty, staff and administrators. We have bright, hardworking, dedicated people who have spent their lives promoting learning.” Through opportunities such as the upcoming discussion sessions, Clark College will be able to access and use the existing knowledge base within to create a learning centered college environment on all levels. 🌱



PREPARATION FOR 2008 ACCREDITATION VISIT MOVES FROM FUTURE TO PRESENT TENSE

AS THE 2006-2007 ACADEMIC YEAR BEGAN, SO TOO DID TALK OF CLARK COLLEGE'S UPCOMING ACCREDITATION VISIT BY THE NORTHWEST COMMISSION ON COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES (NWCCU). IN THE SHORT MONTHS SINCE FALL'S OPENING DAY SESSIONS, TALK OF THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS HAS SHIFTED FROM TASKS THAT "WILL BEGIN" TO TASKS THAT ARE "IN PROGRESS" – ALL IN KEEPING THE COLLEGE MOVING TOWARD THE OCTOBER 2008 VISIT BY EVALUATORS.

An explanation of the accreditation process, entitled "Accreditation 101: The Next Step," appeared in the October 2006 issue of *The Clark Journal*. In this issue we update the activities of the accreditation steering and standards committees over the past six months and look at the next steps of the process.

Co-chairs Tim Cook, division chair for behavioral sciences and counseling lead, and Charlene Montierth, professor of geology, and Executive Dean of Planning and Advancement Candy Bennett, are leading Clark's accreditation work. Together with the standard committee chairs, they form the accreditation steering committee – a group that has been meeting on a near-monthly basis to provide leadership and oversight of the self-study process. (See sidebar, Accreditation Standards Co-Chairs, for the individuals leading each of the nine accreditation standards.) "Members of the accreditation steering committee have provided outstanding leadership this year," said Bennett. "They have guided committee members through the process of collecting a broad range of documentation. Their commitment to the success of our re-accreditation is commendable."

For each standard there is a committee comprised of faculty, staff and administrators whose task is to gather information that documents whether or not the college complies with each element of the standard. "In selecting individuals for each of the standard committees, we started by identifying individuals who had the appropriate background for the standard," said Cook. "We

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ACCREDITATION STANDARDS CO-CHAIRS

Standard One: Institutional Mission and Goals, Planning and Effectiveness

Sandra Woodward and Veronica Brock

Standard Two: Educational Program and Effectiveness

Nancy Johnson and Patti Serrano

Standard Three: Students

Tami Jacobs and Maxine Mitchell

Standard Four: Faculty

Mark Bolke and Kathy Bobula

Standard Five: Library and Information Resources

Joan Carey and Dave Daugherty

Standard Six: Governance and Administration

Miles Jackson and Joy Horning

Standard Seven: Finance

Karen Wynkoop and Alex Montoya

Standard Eight: Physical Resources

Jim Green and Jennifer Grove

Standard Nine: Institutional Integrity

Marylynne Diggs and Willy Cushwa



PREPARATION FOR 2008 ACCREDITATION VISIT MOVES FROM FUTURE TO PRESENT TENSE *(continued)*

also attempted to select people who are widely respected on campus and who also could get the job done.” Montierth adds that, in forming each committee, a representation of all employee groups at the college was sought: “When the committees were put together, we tried to have representation from all areas of the college on each – so the committees generally have faculty, classified staff and administrators as members. That was intentional to provide a cross-section of the college. And while many of the standards are co-chaired by faculty members, in some cases there are administrators heading up a standard because of their expertise.”

Each of the nine standard committees met within weeks of its members receiving notification of their selection. The first task for each group was to understand the elements that comprise its standard; the second, to determine what information was needed to document how Clark College addresses each of those elements.

In considering the information needs for their standards, several of the committees determined that a survey was needed to gather missing data that would help complete the picture of how Clark goes about fulfilling its mission. To meet this need, two versions of an accreditation survey – one for students, one for employees – are under development and will be distributed electronically during the week of April 23.

Standard committees are currently gathering data; some have begun drafting the report of their findings for initial review. It is important to realize, as was pointed out during a recent accreditation steering committee meeting, that data may be unevenly distributed among the standards based on the availability of evidence for a particular standard – and any absence of necessary data will be identified in each standard’s report. The standards committees will provide a summary of commendations in areas in which Clark is strong, and recommendations for those areas in which Clark needs improving. “Our goal is still to not be preparing a report for external evaluators,” said Montierth. “Rather, we are looking for ways to improve Clark College – and that, in essence, is when it becomes a useful process.”

With input from members of the steering committee, the accreditation timeline has been revised to reflect a longer period of time for data gathering. The current timeline is as follows:

November – June 2007	Data gathering by standards committees
September 2007	Accreditation workdays during opening week
October 15, 2007	First drafts submitted by standards committees
January 2008	First edited draft of self study available for review by college
January – February 2008	Revisions to first draft and additional data gathering
March 2, 2008	Revisions to editor
April 7, 2008	Second draft of self study available for review by college
April 14 – 18, 2008	College forums to present conclusions
May 5, 2008	Final editing of self study
May 21, 2008	Self study to Board of Trustees
June 2008	Self study to printer
September 2008	Self study mailed to Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities

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PREPARATION FOR 2008 ACCREDITATION VISIT MOVES FROM FUTURE TO PRESENT TENSE *(continued)*

While the committees are gathering, evaluating and reporting on the data for each of the nine standards, the entire college community will be involved in the process during the coming year. “Currently the standard committees are gathering data and are beginning initial drafts of their reports,” said Cook. “During Fall Orientation we plan to set aside time for the committees to write as well as report out to the college for initial feedback. Our tasks for next year will keep us all very busy as we work to complete the self study by May 2008. We truly need the support of the entire college to be successful.”



LEARNING AND LEADING: CLARK FACULTY AND ADMINISTRATORS ATTEND ACCREDITATION WORKSHOP

In February, several Clark College faculty members and administrators who are involved in the leadership of the accreditation process attended the self study workshop conducted by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU). Interim President Robert Knight, Vice President of Instruction Rassoul Dastmozd, Executive Dean of Planning and Advancement Candy Bennett, Accreditation Co-Chairs Tim Cook and Charlene Montierth, and Standard Co-Chairs Nancy Johnson and Miles Jackson attended the workshop, which reinforced that accreditation is an evidence-based process, and that synthesis of the data collected is important to creating an overall picture of how all areas of the college are interconnected.

In his report to the steering committee following the workshop, Interim President Bob Knight noted that the self study needs to be an open and honest self-evaluation of the college; that through the self study the college will be able to identify challenges and create improved processes; and that the process is data driven and needs to include cross-departmental evaluation. Knight concluded by commending the committee for being on task and encouraged it to continue the pace set forth for the accreditation process.

