

## **Clark State Community College Recommendations from the Five Strategic Conversations**

### **Background**

In late 2010, the members of the Board of Trustees of Clark State Community College and President Rafinski agreed to devote five board meetings during 2011 to a deeper exploration of topics of importance to Clark State. The intention was to broaden the perspective of the board about community needs and expectations, the environment in which Clark State operates, and community college best practices. We also provided increased time for the board to discuss these critical topics. We called these special board meetings “Strategic Conversations.” Non-board members were invited to participate in the conversations to provide a broader perspective about the topic under discussion.

The five topics we addressed are:

- Workforce Development
- Access and Affordability
- Student Success
- Community leadership
- Operations

Although we addressed each topic individually, we also recognized that they are all interrelated. For example:

- Access without student success wastes resources.
- No learning can occur without the presence of appropriate infrastructure and sufficient operational capacity.
- We operate within four unique communities and must be aware of each community’s needs and strengths as we develop our educational programs and recruitment strategies.

We did not address the educational content of a Clark State education – the programs, degrees, certificates, or benchmarks of educational quality. This may represent an opportunity for a future conversation.

This report provides recommendations for actions and for additional research and exploration needed. The recommendations represent the perspective of Mel Marsh who served as the overall facilitator for the strategic conversations. The recommendations address responsibilities of Clark State faculty and staff and those of the Trustees.

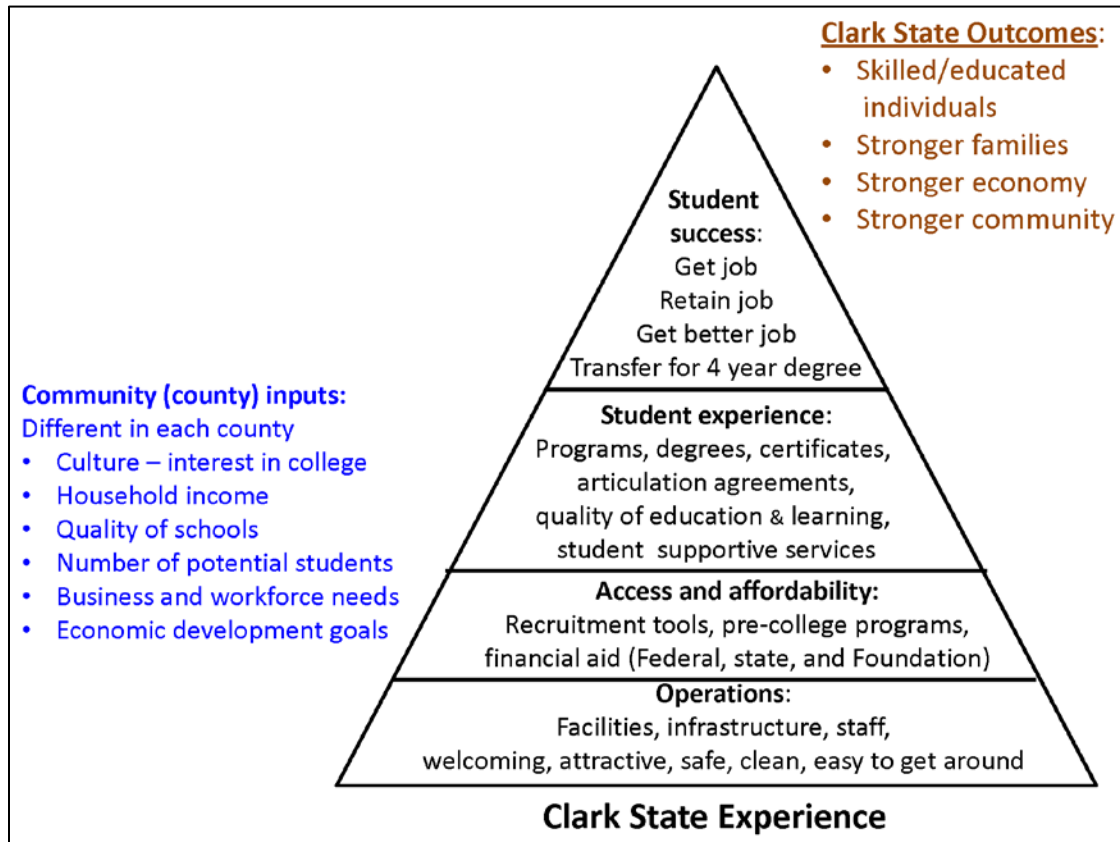
### **General Recommendations**

1. All board members should review the minutes from the strategic conversations. The minutes provide a wealth of suggestions, ideas, and details that are valuable when read all together.
2. Clark State should revisit the ends and subends to clarify those that are confusing and to provide additional focus where appropriate. As noted in several of the conversations, Clark State cannot be all things to all people. The ends and subends should identify the most important focus areas and outcomes for Clark State.
3. Board meetings should increase focus on outcomes. Today significant attention is on inputs (such as number of students). In order to confirm the impact that Clark State is having, we should also discuss such areas as:
  - a. College success data including retention rates, state defined success points, and % of students who fail classes.
  - b. Student outcomes such as number who achieve a certificate, transfer to a four year institution, graduate from Clark State, and/or are successfully placed in jobs.
  - c. Impact on the workforce such as employers who are able to hire staff with the right knowledge, work skills, and soft skills.
  - d. Community impact such as the number of formerly unemployed or underemployed who are paying taxes and otherwise contributing to the community.

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- e. Note that all of these measures help Clark State tell the story of why someone should attend or support Clark State.

A model to think about the work of Clark State is:



### Workforce Development Related Recommendations

Our desired outcomes for the workforce conversation were:

- To arrive at a clear understanding of the ways in which CSCC is serving business and industry now and how we may need to do it in the future -- immediate, short-term, long-term.
- To arrive at a clear understanding how CSCC can be the strategic education partner in accomplishing local, region, and state economic development goals in our service area.

### Workforce Development Recommendations:

1. Gain a deeper understanding of workforce needs in each of the four counties. What businesses/industries are hiring? What skills are needed? This provides information on what programs/majors, certificates, degrees, and classes are most valuable for our communities.
  - a. Strengthen the employer advisory councils in all counties. Actively use them to provide guidance to Clark State.
  - b. Strengthen relationships with specific large or representative employers.
  - c. Connect with Economic Development organizations, one stop employment centers, WIA boards, and employment agencies and companies in the four counties.
  - d. Specific recommendations from economic development specialists:
    - i. “Keep the employers you serve feeling like VIPs.”
    - ii. “Institutionalize a model to understand employer needs.”
2. Develop programs tailored to the workforce and economic development needs of our service area.

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3. Follow up with employers to understand the strengths and weaknesses of our alumni in order to continuously improve our programs. Are we actually meeting employer needs?
4. Increase opportunities for students and faculty to get real world experiences.
  - a. Co-ops and internships for credit and pay.
  - b. Opportunities for faculty to participate in internships.
  - c. Opportunities for students to participate in research with faculty.
5. Make transfer easier and more successful.
  - a. Increase the number of articulation agreements with four year institutions.
    - i. Not only with individual institutions, but also for specific majors (Sinclair already has numerous major-specific agreements in place).
    - ii. Priority for what agreements to secure should be based on what degrees are most beneficial for employers in the counties served by Clark State.

Note that during subsequent planning meetings for the strategic conversations, we identified recommendations 1-3 as high priority for board attention in early 2012.

### **Access and Affordability Recommendations**

Our desired outcomes for the access and affordability conversation were:

- To explore critical questions related to access and affordability.
  - Are we reaching all parts of the service district consistently and effectively?
  - What roles should Clark State play in initiatives that raise awareness in our communities about the value, need, and benefits of an educated community? (program examples include Gear Up, Promise Neighborhood, P-16)
  - What criteria would we use to judge whether our tuition/fees are affordable and meet the needs of the students we serve AND the institution?
  - How well do our students understand and access all sources of financial support available to them? (Pell grants, scholarships, loans, special programs) Do we have sufficient scholarship funds?
  - What are some strategies to help reduce the cost of attending college?
  - How do we make the College/campus more inviting/engaging?
  - How do we ensure that students are able to attend the needed classes when needed?
  - What resources do our staff need to help them be more effective in successfully getting students into the college?
- To begin identifying possible improvements for the future.

### **Recruitment Recommendations**

1. Clark State has three major types of potential students. Additionally, there are variations in the different communities. Each of these three audiences should be reached in different ways:
  - a. Traditional students who know they want to go to college
    - i. Work with High School advisors.
    - ii. Promote one or more of the options to gain college credit during High School.
      1. We noted that success in a county requires someone working in the county to promote the programs (ex: Logan County).
    - iii. Help the potential students understand the value of Clark State. Provide a clear and compelling message of why to choose Clark State.
  - b. Traditional students who do not believe they can or should go to college
    - i. Clark State needs programs that help these individuals consider college such as Project Jericho, GEAR UP, Tech Prep, and Champion City Scholars. Ideally these programs would start in junior high to gain maximum benefit.
    - ii. Find ways to get students on campus during high school to enable them to become comfortable.

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- c. Non-traditional students who want to improve their career options
  - i. Help them understand clear career benefits.
  - ii. Clark State needs good partnerships with employers and WorkPlus to refer individuals to Clark State.
2. Focus our marketing on student accomplishments and success.
  - a. Can we develop a “matriculation to employment” message? When we know what industries need employees, we can steer students to the programs where they have the best opportunity to secure a good job.
  - b. Can we develop a “matriculation to transfer” message? When we understand the requirements of the majors and institutions where our students are transferring, we can advise them of the most efficient and effective curriculum to successfully transfer.
3. Enrollment numbers provide one indicator of success. However, the board should regularly receive information on market share to identify the market penetration in each county.
  - a. For example, although the growth in enrollment at the Greene Center has been large and fast, Sinclair still has significantly more of the Greene County market share than Clark State has.
4. In so far as possible, Clark State should track why a potential student chooses to attend a different institution. Information about why someone has chosen Clark State is important, and information on why they decided against Clark State is also important.

### Affordability and Financial Aid Recommendations

1. Monitor ongoing financial aid resources (Pell Grants, state aid, Clark State scholarships, and loans). 2010-2011 totals in these categories are:
  - a. \$11.15 M in Pell Grants to 3860 students
  - b. \$174 K in Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant to 381 students
  - c. \$117 K in Work Study payments to 46 students
  - d. \$17.2 M in federal loans
  - e. \$ 21 K in Tech Prep scholarships
  - f. \$76.7 K in Trustee Scholarships
  - g. \$145 K in Foundation scholarships
2. Increase resources available for Foundation Scholarships.
3. Increase information on financial aid to parents of high school students. Help them understand college is affordable.
4. Provide easier tools for students to understand financial aid options and responsibilities (ex: online loan calculator).
5. Monitor total cost of attending.
  - a. Continue monitoring tuition compared to other colleges; ensure tuition does not grow too much.
  - b. Find ways to reduce the costs of books: e-books, longer time to use a book, etc.
6. Work faster to weed out students only interested in receiving financial aid.

### Student Success

Our desired outcomes for the student success conversation were:

- To endorse the community college completion agenda.
- To understand what is student success and barriers to success that our students experience.
- To identify possible improvements for the future.

The *Student Success Monitoring Report* identified several important best practices for student success in the areas of “Committed Leadership” and “Data-Driven Decision Making.” The report noted that “Colleges that are making progress:”

- a. “Are led by a board that is committed to improving student learning, equity, and success”

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- b. “Have leaders who make an explicit policy commitment to close achievement gaps in student outcomes”
- c. “Foster a climate in which courageous conversations are held about student learning, equity, and success”
- d. “Develop strategic communications plans and inform stakeholders about data, plans, progress and concerns”
- e. “Are serious about using evidence to identify a limited number of priorities, goals, and intervention strategies”
- f. “Conduct thorough reviews of current programs for under-prepared students to determine student success rates”

### Student Success and Under-Prepared Students Recommendations

Clark State has a larger number of under-prepared students than the average of Community Colleges throughout Ohio. Helping under-prepared students to complete the preparatory instruction and stay at Clark State until graduating, achieving a certificate, or being prepared for employment in some other way must be a priority.

1. Clark State should consider a revision to student placement testing and to developmental education. The current system does not appear to contribute to student success. From the *Student Success Monitoring Report*:
  - “It appears that the COMPASS Test Placement is not always a strong predictor of student success.”
  - “The enrollment in CPE courses generates significant credit hours each term and the success rate in these offerings is only slightly above 50% while in non-CPE courses the success rates are above 70%.”

The monitoring report identified the need to explore the following topics:

- “Do success rates vary by instructor?”
  - “Is the placement into CPE as a result of the COMPASS scores a good predictor of success in subsequent courses?”
  - “Are there different methodologies that would enable student to advance faster through the courses in CPE? Perhaps different approaches should be utilized with each of these populations.”
2. As resources permit, Clark State should work with the feeder school districts to help them understand the level of competence required for a student to succeed at Clark State.
    - a. One of the high school administrators who participated in a strategic conversation noted that his students do pass the Ohio Graduation Test, but they are not ready to succeed at Clark State. He asked for advice on what is required for students to succeed at Clark State.
    - b. The “Complete College America” portion of the *Student Success Monitoring Report* recommended:
      - i. “End the college admissions mystery by aligning requirements for entry-level college courses with requirements for high school diplomas.”
      - ii. “Administer college-ready anchor assessments in high school.”

### Additional Student Success Recommendations

1. Continue conversations, programs, and experiments described by Dr. Devier that are focused on increasing student success. (See presentation [Board Student Success August 2011.ppt](#))
2. Consider how to deliver student services remotely to address the needs of students off the main campus or attending primarily at night.
  - a. Students at Greene Center – do we need support services on campus?
  - b. Students who primarily complete online classes

### **Community Leadership**

Our desired outcomes for the community leadership conversation were:

- To reach consensus on the overall community leadership priorities of Clark State in the four counties we serve.
- To enhance communication between the College Board of Trustees and the Foundation Board of Directors.

### **Recommendations:**

1. Increase focus on fundraising in Greene, Champaign, and Logan counties, with a priority of Greene County as the first to pursue.
  - a. Add Foundation members from Greene County
  - b. Clark State Trustees should assist Foundation board members by making connections with individuals in Greene, Champaign, and Logan counties.
2. Gain a much better understanding of the unique needs and strengths of each community. (This supports the recommendations under workforce to understand employer needs and under student success to understand educational preparedness.)
  - a. Strengthen relationships with employers and members of the business community.
  - b. Strengthen relationships with school districts.
3. Determine best model to support each county and fulfill Clark State's county responsibilities.
  - a. Develop recruitment models for Greene, Champaign, and Logan counties.
  - b. Develop delivery models that are efficient and effective in the surrounding counties (online, local, with partners).
    - i. Note that Jamestown is about as far from the Greene Center as Mechanicsburg is from the Clark State main campus, so the Greene Center is not the complete answer to Greene County needs.
  - c. Scale back and focus – what must we do to further our mission? What is the best use of our resources to further our mission in each county?

### **Operations**

Our desired outcomes for the operations conversation were:

- Understand the critical financial drivers of the institution
- Identify priorities for future attention.
- Identify priorities for future capital needs addressing new facilities and renovations.
  - Match projected growth and programs with physical plant/facilities

During the planning of this strategic conversation, the planning team identified the following topics for future discussion with the board:

- Overall risk management (including campus safety)
- Student growth targets (Is 7500 right number? What do we have to do to achieve this growth?)
- What are the appropriate subends for the Operations End statement?
- Reviewing current board policy and board governance policy
- HR needs

### **Recommendations:**

1. Explore the expected new programs that will drive continued student growth. (This supports the recommendation in Workforce Development of understanding business needs so our students are prepared for the jobs in our communities.)

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- a. What facilities will be needed to support these programs and the number of students
2. What are the long term plans for sustainability for the PAC and HBC?
  - a. Pricing and marketing
  - b. How to provide sufficient funding to continue maintenance and upgrades in order to ensure both remain high quality, up to date facilities.
3. Monitor state and federal discussions and decisions about the funding streams that support our students and community colleges.
  - a. This supports the recommendation in Access and Affordability to monitor the funding streams that contribute to the affordability of Clark State.
4. Evaluate what is needed for the long term Campus Master Plan.