



L&C Earns Maximum Accreditation from Higher Learning Commission

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Following a comprehensive self-study process and a site visit from the Higher Learning Commission's six-member reaccreditation team in March, Lewis and Clark Community College has earned the maximum 10-year accreditation, with no follow up action required.

The Institutional Actions Council (IAC) also approved the initiation of distance learning (online) up to 20 percent of the college's total degree programs.

"Lewis and Clark Community College is an impressive institution which has the structures, practices, financial resources, employees, and culture in place to effectively serve its students and the community," the HLC accreditation team, comprised of academic leaders from community colleges from across the country, wrote in its final report.

"We are very happy with the outcome of this accreditation site visit. Our campus community worked hard for over two years as we prepared for this site visit from our regional accrediting association. Our students and the communities we serve should view this as a higher education seal of academic and institutional excellence," said Vice President of Academic Affairs Linda Chapman.

The team studied Lewis and Clark and its policies and processes in regard to the college's mission; ethical and responsible conduct; teaching and learning quality, resources, support, evaluation and improvement, and planning and institutional effectiveness.

In particular, the college was recognized for its ability to thrive in a negative economic environment.

"Although state aid has steadily decreased as a proportion of the Lewis and Clark operating budget, the college has been able to continue to provide an outstanding

learning environment with enviable infrastructure while maintaining sufficient reserves,” the report reads. “State aid currently accounts for 21 percent of revenues, compared to 36 percent 10 years ago. Through prudent planning and strategic allocation of limited resources, L&C has managed to grow enrollment, expand programs and maintain reserves while keeping tuition affordable (\$114 per credit hour) as well as minimizing increases in local property taxes.”

Overall, Lewis and Clark was found to “operate with integrity to ensure the fulfillment of its mission through structures and processes that involve faculty, staff, administration and the Board of Trustees.”

“The Board is extremely proud of the results of the latest accreditation and cannot commend the administration, faculty and staff enough for the work they do each day at Lewis and Clark,” Board Chairman Robert Watson said. “Their efforts, once again, will not go unrecognized as we have achieved maximum accreditation for the third consecutive time. This marks three decades of recognized success from the Higher Learning Commission.”

The team specifically cited Lewis and Clark’s many provisions for people with disabilities, and commented generally on the college’s efforts to promote diversity and cultural awareness among its constituents.

“The institution has developed a diversity plan with five specific goals. Currently, the institution’s minority enrollment is at 11 percent, which is higher than the surrounding counties’ minority population,” according to the report.

The team also cited strengths in Lewis and Clark’s allowance for academic freedom; assessment of student learning, adult education programs that bridge students into college level courses; contextualized course instruction; dual credit opportunities in district high schools and much more.

One section of the report focused on qualified faculty and administrative recruitment, support and development practices.

The college was commended for student support and engagement efforts, including but not limited to New Student Orientation, the My L&C Portal, Veterans Services, TRiO and the Student Success Center. Disability Services’ Supported College Transition and College for Life programs were noted for supporting academic and personal growth in students and people in the community with developmental disabilities.

“Lewis and Clark should be commended for their commitment to learning accessibility. Their collaboration with dual enrollment, articulation and co-location is a best practice

that serves students in all stages of learning,” the report reads, noting significant improvements since the college’s last accreditation site visit in 2003.

“We work tirelessly to be an entrepreneurial institution, to develop ideas and initiatives that allow students of all backgrounds to achieve success,” President Dale Chapman said. “Receiving recognition with such great praise for our unique programs, diverse offerings, and qualified faculty and staff are further affirmations of the quality strategic plan we have in place guiding us as an institution and our students into in-demand careers of the 21st Century.”

From a stable and informed Board of Trustees, comprised of well-known, active members of local communities, to department managers who serve as coaches guiding their employees to work in collaborative teams, the academic atmosphere on campus is one of fairness when it comes to institutional effectiveness, according to the report.

“L&C examines institutional effectiveness with regard to student success, employee satisfaction, quality (programs, services, operations, outputs), and efficiency,” the team wrote.

“It’s the collaborative efforts of administration, faculty and staff working together for the good of our students that has resulted in this newest maximum accreditation,” said President of the L&C Faculty Association Mike Lemons. “Receiving accolades for our qualified faculty as well as our strong leadership shows the true team effort that goes into making this institution so highly regarded, not just by our students, but by our peers and this accrediting agency.”

The college’s next reaccreditation process is set for 2022-2023.