

REPORT OF THE WSCUC VISITING TEAM

SEEKING ACCREDITATION VISIT 2

For Initial Accreditation

To Oak Valley College
October 13-15, 2021

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The team evaluated the institution under the WSCUC Standards of Accreditation and prepared this report containing its collective judgment for consideration and action by the institution and by the WASC Senior College and University Commission. The formal action concerning the institution's status is taken by the Commission and is described in a letter from the Commission to the institution. Once an institution achieves either Candidacy or initial accreditation, the team report and Commission Action Letter associated with the review that resulted in the granting of either Candidacy or initial accreditation and the team reports and Commission Action Letters of any subsequent reviews will be made available to the public by publication on the WSCUC website.

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SECTION I – OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT

A. Description of the Institution and Visit

Oak Valley College (OVC) is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) liberal arts institution that seeks to provide an affordable and loan-free education at its campus in Rialto, California. OVC offers a single degree program, a Bachelor of Arts in Business. The organization's curriculum is infused with a Christian worldview and prepares graduates with applied skills to pursue careers in business, the nonprofit sector, or ministry.

A distinguishing feature of the OVC curriculum is the LaunchPad capstone experience. As part of this requirement, students create a business plan designed to launch a real-world product or service. In addition, from the first course, all students in a cohort take their classes together, generating strong personal connections and interwoven support.

Incorporated in 2008, the institution received approval to operate from the Bureau of Private Postsecondary Education (BPPE) in March 2016. In September 2016, OVC secured a facility at Centerpoint Church in Colton, CA, and began recruiting students. In April 2020, the institution moved to a new facility in Rialto, CA located on the campus of Sunrise Church.

On March 12, 2018, the Eligibility Review Committee (ERC) panel of the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) evaluated the application for Eligibility submitted by OVC and granted eligibility. The first Seeking Accreditation Visit was conducted in October 2019, and the resulting Commission action required the institution to focus on the following areas:

- Student Learning Outcomes, Assessment, and Program Review (CFR 1.2)

- External review of learning assessments methodologies and clearly defined standards (CFR 2.1, 2.4, and 2.5)
- Best-practices and professional development for institutional research and assessment (CFR 2.6 and 2.10)
- Development of a multi-year faculty staffing plan (CFR 3.1 and 3.3)
- Strategic planning and financial goal setting (CFR 3.4)
- Institution-wide shared governance (CFR 3.2, 3.7, and 3.10)
- Formalizing Board of Trustees practices (CFR 3.9)
- Refine and adopt institutional quality assurance processes (CFR 4.3 and 4.4)

As of Fall 2021, the institution has three in-person cohorts, one per year, with a total enrollment of approximately 45 students. The published 4-year graduation rate for OVC is 52%, which falls among its local peers' average graduation rates of 50%: 53% for UC Riverside, 52% for Azusa Pacific University, 41% at California Baptist University, and 12% at Cal State San Bernardino. From 2019 to 2020, the published Annual Report on the website cites a 89% retention rate year-over-year for the entire program

Currently, the College employees four full-time staff, inclusive of the President, and several part-time/contract staff. The institution's faculty are employed on adjunct basis.

The team conducted the SAV2 during October 13-15, 2021, via Zoom. Before the site visit, the team reviewed the Seeking Accreditation Visit Institutional Report (SAV2) and the associated attachments that the College prepared. The team conducted a Pre-Visit Team Conference Call and requested additional information about organizational structures, diversity

planning, the relationship between OVC and Sunrise Church, shared governance procedures, and Board of Trustees (BOT) self-assessment and development.

During the visit, the team interviewed members of the Board of Trustees, OVC's Advisory Committee, the President, the Academic Dean, the Vice-President of Advancement, the Vice-President of Enrollment, faculty, staff, and students, as well as the Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO).

Institutional leadership, faculty and staff were well prepared, provided transparent communication and information, and were responsive to team requests. In addition, it should be noted that the schedule was well organized based on the agenda crafted between the team and OVC. The team appreciated the professionalism and hospitality of all members of the institutional community.

B. The Institution's Seeking Accreditation Visit Report:

As part of OVC's Seeking Accreditation Visit Two report, the institution focused on the recommendations from the Commission's February 26, 2020, Action Letter and directly addressed each recommendation. The team found that the SAV2 report followed the WSCUC guidelines and template. The report was comprehensive, with evidence links and appendices that enabled the team to prepare for the visit. In addition, the team found that the report reflected the institution's culture of transparency, honesty, and sincere determination to both live up to the organization's mission and ensure compliance with the WSCUC standards.

SECTION II. EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL COMPLIANCE WITH WSCUC'S STANDARDS AND IDENTIFIED CFRs FROM PRIOR SEEKING ACCREDITATION VISITS

Standard 1: Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives

During the SAV1, the visiting team agreed that OVC demonstrated evidence of compliance with Standard One at a level sufficient for Candidacy. However, to demonstrate compliance at a level sufficient for Initial Accreditation, additional focus was needed on CFR 1.2, specifically related to strengthening and propagating institutional recognition and knowledge of student learning outcomes, assessment, and program review.

Student Learning Outcomes, Assessment, and Program Review (CFR 1.2)

- 1. Strengthen and propagate throughout the institution knowledge and recognition of student learning outcomes, outcome assessment, and the program review framework so that the attainment of educational objectives can be demonstrated. (CFR 1.2)*

OVC publishes the program learning outcomes for their Bachelor of Arts in Business degree within the Catalog and on the institutional website. The program learning outcomes include the following topical areas: 1. Business Practices, 2. Written Communication, 3. Quantitative Literacy, 4. Biblical Literacy and Christian Worldviews, 5. Oral Communication, Critical Thinking, 7. Creative Problem Solving, 8. Lifelong Learning, and 9. Information Literacy. In addition, course learning outcomes are noted on each class syllabus, and General Education (PLOs) are outlined on OVC's website.

After the SAV1, OVC embarked on a program review in 2020. As part of that review, the academic team revised the PLOs and established rubrics, using the AACU Values Rubric as a

base for their final assessment tool. Faculty then assigned PLOs to specific courses and documented these within the program's curriculum map which is published on the institution's website. In addition, each course syllabus notes learning outcomes that are aligned with the PLOs, and signature assignments are used to assess levels of learning obtainment.

In terms of analysis and additional support for enculturating formal learning outcomes and assessment, the team found multiple ways this is being fulfilled. The institutional report included an analysis of PLO performance in comparison to course grades, and high positive correlations were noted. In July 2020, faculty in-service training focused on assessment best practices, including rubrics and grading criteria. In addition, the Dean meets with faculty regularly to review and provide feedback on the incorporation of the PLOs into the courses and signature assignments. Finally, OVC collects informal data and feedback from their alumni association and regularly engages with other WSCUC-accredited institutions regarding best practices.

From the visit interviews with the faculty and Dean, the College has made significant progress in institutionalizing the understanding of program and course learning outcomes and the benefits and best practices concerning outcomes assessment and program review. A key aspect of implementing formal learning outcomes has been having faculty directly involved in redeveloping the PLOs and connecting them to their courses. However, outcomes benchmarks are still being created as part of their process of maturing the culture of assessment.

Having a simple, one-degree, cohort-based model allows OVC to implement PLOs and SLOs more nimbly across the curriculum while clearly articulating changes and impacting the institution's academic culture.

Additional Standard 1 CFRs to Consider:

Related to CFR 1.7, the institution must have sound business practices and regularly evaluate performance. During the SAV2 visit, students and faculty were asked about where they can go for different services. While there was nearly unanimous agreement that students felt supported from various resources, there was confusion about who were on point people for many of the services and questions/concerns. OVC is asked to demonstrate progress in the standardization of procedures and processes related to student support services. The institution should improve communication regarding the appropriate contacts related to specific policies and requests.

In addition, many of the staff are recent hires (less than a year). Staff who oversee student services, financial aid, operations, and other senior officials, should be more versed in the best practices of their fields. Many were unable to note the completion of any external training and could not articulate compliance requirements for their work. While Senior Leadership noted that they have external resources for legal and human resource capacity, staff appear to have no similar resources to support their functional areas.

Overall, the team finds that OVC demonstrated evidence of compliance with Standard 1 at a level sufficient for Initial Accreditation, recognizing that only the WSCUC Commission can make a final determination.

Standard 2: Achieving Educational Objective through Core Functions

During the SAV1, the visiting team agreed that OVC demonstrated evidence of compliance with Standard Two at a level sufficient for Candidacy. However, several CFRs, including 2.1, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, and 2.10, required additional attention and development to demonstrate compliance at a level sufficient for Initial Accreditation.

External Review of Learning Assessments Methodologies and Clearly Defined Standards (CFR 2.1, 2.4, and 2.5)

- 2. Undertake a thorough review of external sources (for example, core competencies rubrics and senior projects from aspirational institutions) and clearly define standards for the quality of student work that are appropriately rigorous for the degree. (CFR 2.1, 2.4 and 2.5)*

Since SAV 1, OVC has examined syllabi, student work, and assessment methodologies from peer and aspirational institutions. The College's assessment tools are based on VALUE rubrics from the American Association of Colleges and Universities. By developing formal learning outcomes and implementing rubrics as part of signature assessments, OVC's academic leaders show evidence that their program of study can be evaluated for appropriately rigor.

Faculty embedded these learning outcomes and rubrics within signature assessments in all courses and now houses the resulting data in Populi. Additionally, OVC's shared examples of student work across multiple courses demonstrated opportunities to practice, generalize, and apply what they have learned, particularly through their 'Launch Pad' project.

Additionally, the institution has replaced its former multiple-choice final degree examination with a comprehensive business administration assessment overseen by Peregrine

Global Services. OVC demonstrated across its report and multiple artifacts, that the College has developed systems to increase the chances its program will challenge students to meet high-performance standards.

Best-Practices and Professional Development for Institutional Research and Assessment (CFR 2.6 and 2.10)

- 3. Build the capacity to implement best practices in institutional research and outcome assessment among faculty and staff. Include professional development in methods and practices that are specific to higher education and foster ongoing discussions among faculty on assessment methodology and results. (CFR 2.6 and 2.10)*

Regarding faculty development, specific to learning outcomes and assessment, OVC leaders have provided numerous trainings for faculty. Assessment standards were revised and communicated to all faculty in 2020 and 2021. OVC's report described and shared evidence of significant faculty involvement in the development and use of the student learning outcomes across courses, with a specific example of how written communication was used as a through-line. Furthermore, new learning outcomes began to be implemented in 2021. Faculty are using syllabi templates and a new signature assessment process to ensure the link between major course assignments and program and student learning outcomes is articulated. Faculty and administrators review the results of the assessments and include their findings in the institutional research data and reports. While the College's student population is still too small to reflect meaningful data trends, their commitment to institutional research and outcome assessment is a promising beginning that should be sustained as OVC's academic program continues to grow. It

should be noted that annually the College budgets \$5,000 for external development opportunities for its faculty.

Overall, the team finds that OVC demonstrated evidence of compliance with Standard two at a level sufficient for Initial Accreditation, recognizing that only the WSCUC Commission can make a final determination.

Standard 3: Developing and Applying Resources and Organizational Structures to Ensure Quality and Sustainability

During SAV 1, the visiting team agreed that OVC demonstrated evidence of compliance with Standard 3 at a level sufficient for Candidacy. However, several CFRs, including 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.7, 3.9, and 3.10, required additional attention and development to demonstrate compliance at a level sufficient for Initial Accreditation.

Development of a Multi-year Faculty Staffing Plan (CFR 3.1 and 3.3)

4. *Develop a multi-year faculty staffing plan with the goal of increasing diversity that includes qualifications, well-articulated hiring processes and practices. Allocate funds for robust faculty development and include the enhancement of cultural competency. (CFR 3.1 and 3.3)*

The College's institutional report outlined the creation of multi-year faculty, staffing, and development plans. The College has allocated increased funding for faculty professional and cultural competencies training. The visiting team found strong evidence of improvement in the overall diversity and qualifications of faculty and staff. Although there has been some administrative turnover, the recent hires showed great enthusiasm for learning. OVC has also recruited several academic professionals with terminal degrees.

Hiring processes and practices have also improved, as stated in the institutional report. Positions are being advertised widely through conventional channels as well as through the familiar local community networks. The benefits of hiring diversification and formalization were evident with recent additions to staff.

Without discounting the progress achieved so far, the visiting team recognizes that OVC should carefully consider and evaluate the effectiveness and appropriateness of its all-adjunct faculty model and provide additional external faculty professional development opportunities.

The visiting team also suggests implementing more thorough departmental review practices specifically emphasizing the need to compare and look closer at peer institutions for best practices, especially related to staffing levels. While Oak Valley made noticeable progress on the instructional/academic front, the visiting team recommends creating a well-articulated long-term staffing plan to ensure the balanced development of the whole organization.

Strategic Planning and Financial Goal Setting (CFR 3.4)

5. *Develop, in conjunction with the strategic plan, a three- to five-year advancement plan containing clearly defined financial goals and milestones. (CFR 3.4)*

In response to the SAV 1 Commission Action Letter, OVC drafted and provided to the visiting team a detailed advancement plan that became one of the five elements of the institution's overall strategic plan. During the SAV1, the team noted that private gifts and donations made up nearly half of OVC's net revenue, and the large majority of these gifts originated from three individual donors.

During SAV2, the team found that OVC has created a new advancement plan and is updating its financial records to help them better track gifts and donations. The College diversified its

donor base and the majority of gifts no longer come from the same three individuals. The new VP of Advancement noted some additional updating was necessary and that the College will create a revised plan after monitoring the trends in 2021-2022. The visiting team was impressed with the qualifications and competency of the new advancement staff. Also, despite the turnover and the COVID-19 pandemic, the College experienced record giving in FY2021, demonstrating its ability to fundraise during periods of adversity. To continue building on this upward momentum, the College already has plans to apply for grants, pending initial accreditation. The visiting team recommends that the College continue to diversify its revenue sources.

The latest independent audit resulted in an unqualified (positive) opinion. In FY20, OVC ended the year with a positive change in net assets. About half of their total expenses were attributed to Program Services.

Institution-wide Share Governance (CFR 3.2, 3.7, and 3.10)

6. *Strengthen and demonstrate shared governance by refining and implementing the faculty governance manual to include defined decision-making mechanisms, roles in shared governance and academic leadership and procedures, job descriptions and qualifications, and the practice of academic freedom and performance review and hiring practices. (CFR 3.2, 3.7, and 3.10)*

The institution reported, and the visiting team observed, several significant improvements around shared governance, decision-making and academic freedom. Per the recommendations of the previous accreditation visit, the participation of the President in faculty affairs was noticeably reduced.

The visiting team was made aware of several new shared governance efforts, such as revisions of the Faculty Senate Bylaws and Faculty Orientation Manual, the creation of the structured decision-making model, and the biennial program review process describing external and internal roles, among others. In addition, Faculty Senate meetings were formally reorganized to be led by a Faculty Chair. The President no longer attends such gatherings, although his guidance may be requested as necessary. The College instituted a formal performance review process emphasizing greater awareness among the faculty of autonomy, and faculty reported a greater sense of independence.

During open sessions, faculty confirmed that the redesigned faculty-orientation processes had been implemented to explain OVC's roles, resources, shared governance, and leadership opportunities. The team was also told that academic freedom is regularly discussed in Faculty Senate meetings.

To keep momentum in this critically important area, the visiting team recommends further strengthening shared governance processes across the institution by clarifying roles and responsibilities related to policies and curriculum change approvals. The team also recommends that OVC continue to reinforce collective decision-making empowering broad faculty participation.

Formalizing Board of Trustees Practices (CFR 3.9)

- 7. Formalize and codify board governance practices including roles and responsibilities for board members and committees, the relationship of the Board to the administration, presidential review and appointment processes, the process for review and approval of*

the executive roles and responsibilities, and regular review and development of the strategic plan. (CFR 3.9)

OVC reported it increased its focus on board governance practices by adopting new policies and launching significant initiatives. A new board manual was created and formally adopted in early 2021. In May 2021, the Board approved a modest reorganization plan, which turned over some control to the BOT Executive Committee to review and recommend specific regular business and vet new policies. The entire Board continues to approve all significant policies and financial items and now meets quarterly rather than six times per year.

The College has made progress formalizing the presidential and executive-level position reviews and approvals, including the establishment of salary scales for all staffing levels. The Executive Committee now reviews the Strategic Plan as well as plans for enrollment and advancement.

The visiting team met with the Board and its committees and noted increased enthusiasm and diversity. Several new members with notable expertise in education, finance, and development were added.

Additional Standard 3 CFRs to Consider:

Faculty and Staffing Model (CFR 3.1)

OVC's budget allows for part-time faculty and staff. Currently, the institution does not offer benefits, and staff and faculty are expected to use their own computer equipment. The team noted that all faculty work on an adjunct basis; none teach full-time for the institution. OVC's faculty profiles demonstrate that all faculty hold the appropriate degrees and experience for teaching in a bachelor's degree program. Additionally, most courses are taught by faculty with

significant experience teaching similar courses in other regionally accredited institutions.

However, given the critical importance of expert faculty and staff in establishing and maintaining a rigorous academic environment, OVC should continue with plans for more full-time positions as outlined in long-term budget documents and in alignment with peer institutions.

Relationship with Sunrise Church and Oak Valley College (CFR 3.4 and 3.5)

Upon request, the team was presented with an unsigned copy of a lease agreement between Sunrise Church and OVC. Sunrise provides a highly affordable rent for space in addition to IT and facilities services. Several of their leaders are on the OVC advisory board, and OVC students volunteer for some of Sunrise Church events. While the relationship between Sunrise Church and OVC is amenable, it is important to OVC's stability that agreements are fully executed and regular assessments are completed as part of ensuring the facilities and amenities are sufficient to meet OVC's needs. The team found no concerns with this relationship regarding institutional autonomy (CFR 1.5).

Overall, the visiting team concluded that OVC made notable progress in all previously highlighted CFRs. The team finds that OVC demonstrated evidence of compliance with Standard 3 at a level sufficient for Initial Accreditation, recognizing that only the WSCUC Commission can make a final determination.

Standard 4: Creating an Organization Committed to Quality Assurance, Institutional Learning, and Improvement

During SAV 1, the visiting team agreed that OVC demonstrated evidence of compliance with Standard 3 at a level sufficient for Candidacy. However, to demonstrate compliance at a level sufficient for Initial Accreditation, several CFRs required additional attention.

Refine and Adopt Institutional Quality Assurance Processes (CFR 4.3 and 4.4)

8. *Formally adopt, refine, publish, provide training for, and further implement the College's quality assurance processes, policies and procedures in order to foster a culture of evidence. Include learning outcome assessment and academic and co-curricular program reviews with significant involvement and appropriate leadership from the faculty and other academic personnel. (CFR 4.3 and 4.4)*

The institution has provided various academic training opportunities utilizing both internal and external experts. Training has included topics such as student learning outcome alignment, the overall effectiveness of SLOs, academic scholarship, pedagogy, and competency standards, to name a few. During interviews, faculty noted that they received training from OVC, but many have yet to take advantage of external opportunities due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff also reported doing some independent training in their areas, but none noted any opportunities completed based on external resources.

The outcomes assessment process at OVC is defined by an Assessment Flow Chart, captured using Signature Assignments, and evaluated using rubrics and the Signature Assignment Assessment Form. The Assessment Flow Chart defines an assessment process that includes the faculty senate, faculty leads, the Dean, and external experts; this was validated in interviews with these respective groups. The assessment findings are shared with these groups via institutional research semester reports. The institution made visible progress designing processes for gathering data and documentation.

Although the flow chart defines a process and improvements were shared, the team failed to find in the report or in interviews how the process has led to specific institutional advancement. It was unclear if milestones were set to particular criteria and what data scores

needed to be met for change to be initiated. In addition, during interview sessions with students and faculty, the team noted inconsistent use of rubrics by faculty across the institution.

The faculty chair and lead instructors oversee the review process with guidance from educational administrators. The report and interviews have demonstrated to the team substantial involvement and leadership of the faculty in assessment.

OVC has made impressive strides in addressing assessment methodologies, including creating, publishing, and implementing a two-year Program Review cycle, calendar, and handbook with significant involvement of the OVC faculty. The faculty and academic leaders developed the Program Reviews' methodology. The Program Review Handbook addresses four key areas for considerations during the two-year evaluation cycle, including:

1. Learning outcomes: Linkages
2. Curriculum Review: Rigor and logical progression
3. Review Program Components: Curriculum and student support resources,
4. Quality Control/Quality Assurance: Other data sources related to educational effectiveness

Additional Standard 3S CFRs to Consider:

Impact of the Pandemic and Future Plans (CFR 4.6 and 4.7)

The pandemic impacted OVC in a number of ways, but as is their culture, this time was used for reflection, assessment, and learning. Because the institution operates with a strong cohort model and students attend all classes in-person together, the forced move to emergency online learning did not provide a hospitable environment for most and retention rates decreased. Their recent experience in online education has underscored their desire to continue with in-person

cohort-based education going forward. The hope is that the return to in-person learning and their new location will lead to higher retention rates and increases in future enrollments.

Also, it should be noted that OVC's leadership expressed a desire to add an additional location, in the Inland Empire, within the next three to five years. As part of these discussions, it was noted that the institution would need to work to build its capacity while retaining its existing high-touch small cohort-based model.

Overall, the team finds that OVC demonstrated evidence of compliance with Standard 4 at a level sufficient for Initial Accreditation, recognizing that only the WSCUC Commission can make a final determination.

SECTION III. FINDINGS, COMMENDATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings

It is the opinion of the visiting team that OVC is in compliance with all four standards of accreditation.

Commendations

The team commends OVC for the following:

1. The institution's strong commitment, as demonstrated at all organizational levels, to its mission of offering high-quality debt-free educational opportunities to the region's underserved populations.
2. The institutional research team's clear and concise reports inclusive of data elements and graphic representations.
3. Significant progress in diversifying its faculty and staff in alignment with the student population it serves.
4. The Board of Trustees' efforts to diversify its membership, update its by-laws, and build more sustainability into its structure.
5. Substantial improvement to the shared governance processes, especially related to faculty leadership.
6. Its commitment to developing program learning outcomes appropriate to the degree and instituting review processes to improve educational outcomes.
7. Hiring faculty and staff in critical roles, providing a solid foundation for the institution's future.

8. The commitment and dedication of the senior leadership and the Board of Trustees in the development and maturation of OVC.

Recommendations

The team has identified the following recommendations for ongoing and future efforts:

1. The relationship between OVC and Sunrise Church (and any future partners) needs to be defined in a fully executed agreement to ensure the services meet the College's short and long-term needs and are regularly evaluated. (CFR 3.4 and 3.5)
2. OVC must demonstrate substantial progress in the standardization of procedures and processes related to student support services. The institution must work to better communicate to students and faculty the appropriate staff contacts related to specific policies and requests. (CFR 1.7 and 3.2)
3. OVC should carefully consider and evaluate the effectiveness and appropriateness of its all-adjunct faculty model. OVC should also provide additional external faculty professional development opportunities. (CFR 2.1, 3.1, and 3.3)
4. To better support the capacity of co-curricular and operational resources, OVC should implement a thorough departmental review, inclusive of staffing resources compared to peer institutions. The results should inform a revised, well-articulated long-term staffing plan and succession plans for critical positions. (CFR 3.1, 3.3, and 4.1)
5. Co-curricular and operational staff should deepen their professional and compliance expertise through professional organizations and learning opportunities. (CFR 1.7, 3.1, and 3.2)
6. OVC should continue to diversify its revenue sources. (CFR 3.4)

7. OVC should articulate, strengthen, and apply shared governance processes across the institution by clarifying roles and responsibilities related to policies and curriculum change approvals. Furthermore, OVC should continue to reinforce collective decision-making empowering broad faculty participation. (CFR 3.7 and 3.10)
8. OVC's leadership should ensure that institutional habits of outcomes-based assessment are adopted by the faculty and that academic decisions are based on data and evidence. (CFR 2.4 and 4.3)