

# **REPORT OF THE WSCUC VISITING TEAM**

## **SEEKING ACCREDITATION VISIT 1**

**Oak Valley College**

October 9-11, 2019

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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**

### **Description of the Institution and Visit**

Oak Valley College (OVC) is a non-profit 501(c)(3), liberal arts college that seeks to provide an affordable and loan-free college education. OVC offers a single degree program—Bachelor of Arts in Business—that students complete in three calendar years. Over 66% of OVC’s student body are first-generation college students primarily from the Inland Empire region where the college is located. OVC offers a cohort-based program in which the curriculum is infused with a Christian worldview. In this cohort-based program, students gain practical applied skills to seek careers in business, nonprofits, or ministry.

A distinguishing feature of the OVC education is the Launch Pad capstone experience, a three course sequence, which gives students the opportunity to create a business plan designed to launch a real world product or service for a business, nonprofit, or ministry. In addition, OVC designs its program so that small cohorts of students take all of their courses together in an effort to generate strong personal connections and a strong culture of trust, familiarity, and collegiality. Each course has a Signature Assignment, which is assessed by faculty with respect to the course’s defined learning outcomes.

Incorporated in 2008, the institution applied for Approval to Operate with the Bureau of Private Postsecondary Education (BPPE) in 2013 and received the approval in March 2016. In September 2016, OVC began recruitment of students and secured the use of facility within Centerpoint Church in Colton, CA. In 2017, the first cohort of 11 students matriculated in OVC’s

degree program. As of September 2019, the cohort size has grown from 11 to 27 students per year.

On March 12, 2018, the panel of the Eligibility Review Committee (ERC) of the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) conducted its evaluation of the application for Eligibility submitted by Oak Valley College for the purpose of obtaining WSCUC Initial Accreditation.

The team selected for the first Seeking Accreditation Visit (SAV1) included Priscilla Fiden (Chair), Franklyn Wu (Vice Chair), Vlad Bolsakov, Paul McReynolds and Nate Monley. While all members participated in the Pre-Visit Team Conference (PVTC) prior to SAV1 and attended the first on-site team meeting of SAV1, Paul McReynolds had to leave the team prior to the first meeting at the institution due to personal reasons. Still, the team determined there was sufficient expertise and knowledge to continue without interruption.

The team conducted the SAV1 during October 9-11, 2019. Prior to the site visit, the team reviewed the First Seeking Accreditation Visit Institutional Report (SAV1 IR) and its attachments that the college prepared, and conducted a Pre-Visit Team Conference (PVTC). As a result, the team requested additional information pertaining to governance, finance, learning outcomes, and organization structure. During the visit, the team reviewed documents and facilities, and interviewed members of the board of trustees (BOT), president and founder, executive vice president, dean, faculty, staff and student representatives, as well as the accreditation liaison officer (ALO) and accreditation steering committee.

The team room at the Institution was well-prepared and relevant printed materials were available or made available as requested. Oak Valley College provided nearby accommodations

and support for the team, including a conference room at the hotel. The visit was organized according to the schedule that was established during the PVTC and subsequently modified on site. The team expresses its appreciation for all the hospitality that the OVC community has shown throughout the SAV process.

### **The Institution's Seeking Accreditation Visit 1 Report**

In its Letter of Intent (LOI) and Seeking Accreditation Visit 1 Institutional Report (SAV1 IR), OVC addressed each of the points raised by the ERC. The SAV1 was consistent with the LOI, and OVC appeared to be committed to engage in serious self-review and improvement.

The team found that the SAV1 IR followed the WSCUC guidelines and template. It was comprehensive with evidence links and appendices that enabled the team to complete the advance preparation required for the visit. The attachments and additional requested materials were provided in a timely and organized manner, allowing the team to reference them as needed throughout the review of the report and SAV1.

OVC addressed its compliance with the WSCUC Standards of Accreditation (the Standards), which gave the team a clear view of OVC's educational objectives, core functions, resources and structures, and systems of quality assurance. The report reflects the transparency, honesty and sincere determination to learn, grow and succeed that the team experienced during the SAV1.

The team learned that some policies, processes, and procedures had been in place for only a short period of time, or were created for the SAV1 IR but not formally codified in formal institutional documents. Therefore, in several cases—for example, faculty governance and outcome assessment—the team did not find evidence of thorough understanding and practice

across multiple layers or wide cross-sections within the college. While OVC is well-positioned for Candidacy, it is the team's opinion that before gaining Initial Accreditation the college needs additional time to further develop and refine existing policies with widespread and significant involvement from appropriate stakeholders and to improve the implementation and communication of these policies, processes, and procedures.

### **Response to Issues Raised in the Eligibility Review Committee Letter**

The section Response to Issues Identified in the Eligibility Review Committee Approval of Eligibility Action Letter in OVC's SAV1 IR showed the college's understanding of the relevant CFRs and earnest attempts at addressing all the recommendations from the ERC.

To the issue raised regarding governance and administration (criterion 7), the Institution updated their bylaws to articulate further the role of the chairperson and reduce the number of non-independent board members (staff were removed from the BOT). The current chairperson of the board no longer has any teaching assignment at the college as of Fall 2018. The section describes a process that the board uses to review the performance of the president. Six board committees have been created and have met several times. Additional definition of roles, refinement and formalization of board processes, and strategic planning are recommended by the team later in the team's report.

The ERC raised the issue of the OVC's financial resources and long-term sustainability (criterion 8), and the team found that the updated budget and financial documents reflected true costs. As the long-term sustainability of the college is dependent on philanthropy, the team recommends that OVC develops a 3- or 5-year fundraising plan with clear goals.

OVC completed an academic program review, including external reviewers, and presented a five year strategic plan and the BOT has committed to reviewing the plan, addressing Criterion 9 from the ERC recommendations. Institutional research and relevant reports have been produced, and the foundations for long-term data collection and analysis are in place. The team recommends that OVC continues to build capacity for implementing quality-assurance processes such as program review.

In response to Criterion 10 and the viability of the cohort model, OVC admitted a larger cohort in Fall 2019 and several interviews and conversations with leadership, faculty and the board indicate that they are aware that the increased cohort size will require additional resources, staffing and review to ensure the program's continuing alignment with OVC's core mission and culture.

In response to Criterion 11, the SAV1 report describes several career resources that OVC has made available for students. Further, the college will collect data from the first cohort of alumni. The board, advisors, faculty and staff have volunteered their time and connections to help connect students with employers, take them to career fairs and networking opportunities, provide mentorship and potential career opportunities. The Launch Pad assignment allows students to enter the business world with a business plan and model to start upon graduation.

The general education and liberal education course offerings are prescribed in OVC's degree program, addressing Criterion 12.

While OVC has taken steps to address the ERC's recommendation on Criterion 13 related to faculty governance—defining faculty roles as distinct from those of administrators and providing remuneration for teaching faculty—this area needs more work. The college needs to develop and publish a clear articulation of ranks or categories of faculty and their respective responsibilities and expectations; faculty's academic leadership; faculty roles in institution

governance; and decision-making mechanism in faculty governance. A later section of this report will have a more in-depth discussion on this topic.

OVC established a new relationship with California State University, San Bernardino, since the ERC's recommendations (Criterion 16), allowing students to have full lending privileges and online library access.

## **SECTION II. EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL COMPLIANCE WITH WSCUC'S STANDARDS**

### **STANDARD 1: Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational**

#### **Objectives**

The team found the statements of purpose that define the values and character of Oak Valley College to be appropriate for an institution of higher education. These statements are published on OVC's website, and in the catalog and other institutional documents (CFR 1.1). The board of trustees spent time defining and approving the vision and mission statements for the college. The vision and mission are widely shared among all constituents, as evidenced in the team's interviews during SAV1.

OVC's SAV1 report describes that OVC has developed student learning outcomes (SLOs) that are consistent with the college's mission, including those at the program and course levels, and has developed and begun implementing a basic framework for outcome assessment (signature assignment assessment, sample rubrics, and the Launch Pad assignment). However, the team found clear indications in its interviews with OVC's faculty and academic leaders that these learning outcomes and assessment framework were not widely recognized and understood among the college's faculty at a sufficient level to demonstrate the outcomes' achievement (CFR 1.2). The team recommends that Oak Valley College strengthen and propagate the recognition and knowledge of the college's SLOs, both at the institutional- and program-level, as well as

outcome assessment and program review framework so OVC can demonstrate that its educational objectives are achieved. The team's report will discuss other recommendations in the area of quality assurance processes under the pertinent CFRs under Standards 2 and 4's

### Summary of Findings

The team found evidence that Oak Valley College has sufficiently addressed CFRs under Standard 1 related to Integrity and Transparency (CFR 1.3-1.8). The college has documented policies that relate to academic freedom; publishes and communicates to the public its worldview, values, goals, grievance processes, and costs for attendance; defines and publishes statements related to equity and inclusion; has education as its primary purpose without interference from third parties; and has demonstrated honest and open communication with WSCUC and the team throughout the SAV1 process. While sufficient understanding is demonstrated in these areas, additional work is required. The team recommends that OVC provides resources for professional development in the area of diversity, equity and inclusion for its faculty, leadership and the board for the purpose of increasing the community's sensitivity and awareness in this area (CFR 1.4). Further, in alignment with its mission and context, Oak Valley College needs to set clear goals on implementing its policy on diversity, with a particular focus on faculty hiring (see CFR 3.1 and 3.3).

### **Standard 1 Summary of Findings**

In many cases across the Standards, OVC has not yet had the time to fully implement and realize the impact of the policies that have been put to paper. The board, faculty and leadership understand that iteration and revision are part of the process of accreditation and institutional improvement. The commitment to continue to comply with WSCUC Standards and to gain Initial Accreditation is palpable and commendable. Between now and then, however, Oak Valley College needs demonstrate a significant level of implementation on all policies across the

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

- Oak Valley College strengthen and propagate throughout the institution the recognition and knowledge of the college's student learning outcomes as well as outcome assessment and program review framework so OVC can demonstrate that its educational objectives are achieved. (CFR 1.2)

## **STANDARD 2: Achieving Educational Objectives Through Core Functions**

### **Teaching & Learning**

OVC's catalog and website provide descriptions of OVC's academic program, including a scope and sequence of courses modeled after well-established liberal arts institutions. The program's learning outcomes and scope of courses encompass the core competencies of written and oral communication, information literacy, critical thinking, and quantitative reasoning, among others. (CFR 2.2a)

The nature of the degree offered by Oak Valley College is aligned with its mission, and the academic program is aligned around the degree. OVC students must pass two capstone experiences for graduation: the Launch Pad project and the comprehensive final examination. In the Launch Pad project students launch an entrepreneurial endeavor such as a business, non-profit organization, or other venture—a fitting capstone to OVC's business degree, and is well-aligned with its mission. The comprehensive final examination involves a wide range of questions drawn from a template from a national business program accrediting organization and adjusted by faculty to fit the objectives of their specific courses. (CFR 2.2)

OVC's scope and sequence of courses includes 32 courses spread across 8 semesters, totaling 128 units, beyond the 120 required for the bachelor's degree. Students take courses four days each week, two courses per day, 90 minutes per course. The design of the schedule allows students to work outside of course hours, which aligns with OVC's mission and tuition model. Several students commented on the advantage of OVC's schedule and its affordance of time to work. Additionally, multiple students, advisory board members, staff, and faculty described how the college assists students in finding jobs—one of several ways Oak Valley College supports its students to succeed inside of its model. Of note, while OVC's total number of units exceeds the federal standard, the college's currently stated credit hour policy does not meet the federal requirement for in-person instruction, an issue which institutional leaders will need to address. (CFR 2.1)

OVC's faculty includes leaders in business, non-profit organizations, and faith-based organizations. All teaching personnel hold a minimum of a master's degree, and two hold doctoral degrees. Of note, many instructors hold MBA degrees, which is relevant and appropriate for the professional training emphasis of OVC's business degree. Many Oak Valley College faculty teach in other institutions as adjunct professors. All course instructors are paid for teaching at a rate which corresponds with the local market for adjunct professors. Two of OVC's instructors work full-time for the institution, holding other positions (as dean and as executive vice president), and other course instructors are adjunct. The team noted that course instructors, while adjunct, are remarkably involved in the life of the institution. (CFR 2.1)

The team noted that Oak Valley College has made attempts to align its expectations for student learning outcomes and rigor across the institution. Two of the most notable efforts include a rubric template for course-level SLOs and the use of signature assessments in courses, both of which call instructors to align course assignments with course and program learning

outcomes. Additionally, outcomes are published in OVC's catalog and on syllabi. (CFR 2.4)

While these efforts have the potential to allow OVC to monitor progress in student learning, their implementations are clearly in the beginning stages. The team observed in multiple interviews with academic leaders and faculty that current student work in the culminating projects does not meet expected high standards of performance. (CFR 2.6) Additionally, Oak Valley College academic leaders have not yet clearly defined standards of performance for students. (CFR 2.4)

Therefore, to ensure the rigor of the academic program and that both the expectations for achievement of student learning outcomes and the quality of student work are appropriate for its degree, the team recommends that Oak Valley College faculty undertake a thorough examination of external sources (for example, the Lumina Degree Qualifications Profile, core competencies rubrics, senior projects from aspirational institutions, etc.) and clearly define standards for the quality of student work that are appropriately rigorous for the degree. (CFR 2.1, 2.4, 2.5)

OVC has made several steps forward in the past year in the area of learning outcome assessment as the college began to establish an assessment infrastructure. OVC's SAVI report lists program learning outcomes for its degree, explains how these outcomes are assessed at the course- and program-level, and provides several pieces of evidence of the infrastructure's implementation. For example, according to the report, Oak Valley College designed a rubric template for faculty to adapt to assess course-level learning outcomes; implemented Populi, an education information software system to record assessment data from faculty; created signature assignments for courses as an instrument of direct assessment of student work; and compiled these assessment data into an annual report to be analyzed by the academic dean. These pieces of evidence show deliberate attempts by OVC to strengthen its assessment practice and bodes well for the college's further and ongoing development in this area. (CFR 2.6) However, based on interviews with OVC's academic personnel the team observed a pattern of lack of familiarity

with the assessment processes presented in the SAV1 report and insufficient level of understanding of the general concept of outcome assessment among academic leadership and faculty. While this pattern of unfamiliarity is understandable given that OVC has just started to develop and implement its assessment infrastructure, Oak Valley College needs to demonstrate that understanding and practice of learning outcome assessment is both comprehensive and widespread across the institution, especially among academic personnel. To this end, the team recommends that OVC build its capacity to implement best practices in outcome assessment among its faculty and staff. These capacity-building measures might include professional development in outcome assessment methods and practices that are specific to higher education; and ongoing discussions among faculty on assessment results and methodology. (CFR 2.6)

OVC's SAV1 report describes an academic program review that the college undertook in 2018 and includes as attachments the following related documents: the 2018 program review report; reports from two sets of external reviewers who are leaders in OVC's peer and aspirational institutions; and a timeline and flowchart for OVC's program review process. These documents are evidence of OVC's efforts to establish and implement a regular program review process. During the site visit, the team observed that although faculty and other academic personnel were aware of the 2018 program review, few described substantively the review's process and results. In interviews, faculty and academic personnel discussed making changes to the program and the curriculum but it was not clear to the team whether these changes came about as results of a program review. In addition, two board members conducted the self-study portion of the 2018 program review, which is an unusual practice as an institution's academic leadership and faculty typically assume responsibility and leadership in the program review process. While involving external reviewers with strong credentials was a strength of the 2018 program review, OVC needs to improve engagement from its own faculty in this important

process. A second program review cycle is scheduled to begin in 2020. (CFR 2.7) A recommendation from the team related to program review is discussed under Standard 4.

### **Scholarship and Creative Activity**

Faculty described being members of professional organizations and engaging in the larger community in their fields as leaders in business and non-profit organizations. Oak Valley College describes the institution's approach to academic freedom for faculty and publishes a statement on research, scholarship, and creative activity that defines expectations for students. However, the team did not find such expectations for faculty stated in any formal institutional documents nor did any faculty share knowledge of them. Therefore, the college needs to clearly define and communicate expectations for scholarship activities for different categories of faculty. (CFR 2.8, 2.9)

### **Student Learning and Success**

OVC's commitment to "debt-free in three" graduation is commendable, and the academic program is designed to meet that goal. Student retention data demonstrate that students are making timely progress towards completion of degrees. (CFR 2.10) While OVC's co-curricular programs and student services are different from many other institutions, they are well aligned with the institutional mission and support student personal and professional development. For example, an active and functioning student government was established by students; students are provided with multiple mentoring opportunities, and there is effective support for finding jobs; and resources are provided for individual counseling. (CFR 2.11)

Oak Valley College clearly communicates the requirements of its academic programs in its catalog and on its website, and reinforces this understanding with individual meetings with students. In addition, each student has individual academic advising session every semester. (CFR 2.12) OVC students expressed strongly in their interview sessions with team members that

they found the college to be a supportive and caring environment, and faculty and staff go out of their way to help them succeed both in and out of the classroom. Given the College's youth and small size, many, if not most, of OVC's student services, co-curricular and advising programs are not formalized nor well-documented, even though the students are currently well-served in these areas informally by dedicated, caring, and well-intentioned faculty, staff, and advisors. However, as the college continues to grow its enrollment, it needs to formalize and clearly communicate the various student services and programs.

OVC does not accept transfer credits, but students who had experiences at other institutions reported finding a welcoming community where their needs were met (CFR 2.14).

## **Standard 2 Summary of Findings**

Overall, the team finds that Oak Valley College demonstrated evidence of compliance with Standard 2 at a level sufficient for Candidacy, recognizing that only the WSCUC Commission can make a final determination. Under Standard 2, the team recommends that:

- OVC faculty undertake a thorough examination of external sources (for example, the Lumina Degree Qualifications Profile, core competencies rubrics, senior projects from aspirational institutions, etc.) and clearly define standards for the quality of student work that are appropriately rigorous for the degree. (CFR 2.1, 2.4, 2.5)
- Oak Valley College build its capacity to implement best practices in outcome assessment among its faculty and staff. These capacity-building measures should include professional development in outcome assessment methods and practices that are specific to higher education; and ongoing discussions among faculty on assessment results and methodology. (CFR 2.6)

### **STANDARD 3: Developing and Applying Resources and Organizational Structures to Ensure Quality and Sustainability**

#### **Faculty and Staff**

The team observed substantial and genuine commitment of faculty and staff to the institution and its students. Oak Valley College has a strong network of business professionals willing to contribute time and talents by serving on the board, mentoring students, assuming administrative duties, and advising the president on a wide spectrum of issues. There also appears to be a strong pool of adjunct faculty interested in teaching at the college. Some administrators teach as part-time faculty. OVC demonstrated willingness to establish a sufficient number of faculty and staff. Hiring and staffing efforts were clearly directed toward meeting student needs, while operating within understandable budgetary constraints. Although there's only a small number of faculty with terminal degrees, interviews conducted by the team and institutional documentation revealed adequate ability to meet educational objectives at the undergraduate level of instruction. The team found limited understanding and commitment to diversity. For example, a group of faculty members seemed unaware of the idea of representation, and why it might be good for OVC to consider recruiting faculty members to better reflect OVC's student population. The college's leadership expressed its intention in the SAV1 report and in interviews that OVC will strive toward better reflection of its diverse student population. (CFR 3.1)

While OVC has put significant effort into drafting adequate policies and procedures aimed at aligning faculty and staff recruitment, hiring, orientation, and evaluation with its educational objectives, the team found limited evidence of robust and continuous implementation of such policies. The team recognized the fact that the institution has not been in existence long enough to establish meaningful patterns. (CFR 3.2)

Overall, the team found that OVC has addressed the relevant CFRs concerning sufficient faculty and staff for the stated purpose and the type of degree offered by the college.

Nevertheless, the team recommends that OVC develop a multi-year faculty staffing plan— with an aim of increasing the diversity of the teaching faculty—that includes qualifications, well-articulated faculty hiring processes and procedures, and allocation of funds for robust on-going faculty development. (CFR 3.1 and 3.3)

### **Fiscal, Physical, and Information Resources**

To serve its unique mission, Oak Valley College founders developed several innovative approaches to meeting the challenges presented by limited start-up fiscal resources. The institution relies on a well-established relationship with a local religious congregation— Centerpoint Church Colton—using its facilities as instructional and administrative space. The team was assured of the institution’s conservative fiscal mentality extending into the future through expanding partnerships with Centerpoint Church and other local Christian congregations that share in the vision of providing debt-free education and a willingness to share their physical plants. (CFR 3.4)

The team interviewed members of OVC’s board of trustees, and was impressed with the availability and quality of fiscal/budgetary expertise. Although OVC’s budget is relatively small, it is detailed, conservative, and well-prepared. For the past three years of record the institution functioned without operational deficit, and presented a clean independent audit. (CFR 3.4)

OVC’s undergraduate program does not require significant investments into information resources. The current program fully relies on the library/online offerings, including providing students individual library membership at California State University, San Bernardino. Students and faculty use individual laptop computers. (CFR 3.5)

OVC administrative and board leadership clearly realize and acknowledge the institution's vital dependence on a comparatively inexpensive physical plant, robust philanthropy, and future accreditation. OVC expressed its commitment to creating operating cash reserves in the future.

As private gifts and donations made up forty-six percent of OVC's net revenue, and in 2018-2019 sixty-two percent of all such donations originate from only three individual donors, the team recommends that Oak Valley College include in its strategic plan a three to five-year advancement plan, containing clearly defined financial goals and milestones. (CFR 3.4)

### **Organizational Structures and Decision-Making Processes**

The team found that OVC's leadership at all levels, including administration and board, is characterized by high integrity, commitment to the mission, appropriate responsibility and accountability. (CFR 3.6)

OVC employs a fully-dedicated chief executive and financial officers whose primary responsibilities are to the institution. Both individuals are passionate and committed to the success of OVC. In addition, the college employs other individuals serving part-time, who are well qualified to provide educational management. (CFR 3.8)

OVC has drafted, especially recently, a number of practical policies and procedures aimed at clarifying organizational structures and the flow of decision-making. Nevertheless, being such a young organization, OVC's application and reliance on such processes is yet to be systematic and consistent. The team observed strong reliance on the college's founding leadership at all decision-making levels, presenting certain risk to long-term sustainability of the organization. (CFR 3.7) For instance, while OVC established a faculty senate and drafted a statement on faculty governance, the statement needs further development to become a robust

guide for faculty to exercise faculty leadership and responsibility. OVC's statement on faculty governance currently provides very general statements on the powers and responsibilities of the faculty (and how those powers are curtailed by the administration and the board) but does not provide procedures and important details on how any of the powers and responsibilities can be carried out. It is especially lacking in that it doesn't outline any decision-making mechanism for the faculty to act as a group in providing academic leadership and in shared governance. (CFR 3.10)

To ensure continued focus on building strong decision-making and governance processes throughout the college, the team recommends that Oak Valley College strengthen and demonstrate shared governance by refining and implementing OVC's faculty governance manual to include defined decision-making mechanisms; roles in shared governance and academic leadership and procedures thereof; job descriptions and qualifications, the practice of academic freedom and performance review and hiring processes. (CFR 3.2, 3.7, 3.10)

The institution has an independent board of trustees comprised of devoted and passionate individuals, who are members of the local business community. Trustees appeared to be engaged, possessing a good understanding of their fiduciary and legal authority. Trustees also support OVC by actively engaging in mentorship, coaching and, at times, employment of the students.

Trustees clearly expressed their vision of fostering and advancing the board's independence and autonomy. Some new members were recruited and added to the board without relying exclusively on the president to do so. The team also recommends that Oak Valley College formalize and codify board governance practices, including roles and responsibilities for board members and committees, the relationship of the board to the administration, the presidential review and appointment processes, the process for review and approval of the

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

### **Standard 3 Summary of Findings**

Overall, the team finds that Oak Valley College demonstrated evidence of compliance with Standard 3 at a level sufficient for Candidacy, recognizing that only the WSCUC Commission can make a final determination. Under Standard 3, the team recommends that:

- Oak Valley College develop a multi-year faculty staffing plan—with an aim of increasing the diversity of the teaching faculty—that includes qualifications, well-articulated faculty hiring processes and procedures, and allocation of funds for robust on-going faculty development. (CFR 3.1 and 3.3)
- Oak Valley College develop, in conjunction with its strategic plan, a three- to five-year advancement plan, containing clearly defined financial goals and milestones. (CFR 3.4)
- Oak Valley College strengthen and demonstrate shared governance by refining and implementing OVC’s faculty governance manual to include defined decision-making mechanisms; roles in shared governance and academic leadership and procedures thereof; job descriptions and qualifications, the practice of academic freedom and performance review and hiring processes. (CFR 3.2, 3.7, 3.10)
- Oak Valley College formalize and codify board governance practices, including roles and responsibilities for board members and committees, the relationship of the board to the administration, the presidential review and appointment processes, the process for review and approval of the executive roles and responsibilities, and on-going review and development of the strategic plan. (CFR 3.9)

## **STANDARD 4: Creating an Organization Committed to Quality Assurance, Institutional Learning, and Improvement**

### **Quality Assurance Processes**

Oak Valley College presented the following quality assurance processes in the SAVI report: 1) process for curricular change and approval of new programs; 2) outcome assessment processes and procedures; and 3) a brief outline of academic program review process that includes a timeline and a flowchart. OVC also provided evidence that the college has begun to carry out the assessment and program review processes it presented. (CFR 4.1)

OVC's institutional research (IR) capacity is mature relative to the college's age and current stage of development. OVC's Director of IR has IR experience in K-12 education and there is evidence of strong incorporation of IR activities in OVC's outcome assessment and program review processes. The part-time/volunteer status of the IR director (who also serves as OVC's ALO) at Oak Valley College poses a concern in the long-term sustainability of this arrangement, especially given the IR director's integral roles in the design of OVC's quality assurance processes. Oak Valley College needs to devise a plan to maintain its IR capacity for the long term. (CFR 4.2)

### **Institutional Learning and Improvement**

OVC's adoption of outcome assessment and academic program review processes with a tight integration of institutional research in their design bodes well for the establishment of a campus-wide culture of evidence. The Team found evidence that OVC's academic personnel are following through with the tasks that are part of outcome assessment and program review. For

example, faculty members create rubrics for course-level learning outcomes and score student work using the rubrics and record the results in a software system; the Director of IR aggregates the results and creates a report for the academic dean, and the dean analyzes the results and looks for patterns. On the other hand, the team discovered that, with few exceptions, OVC's academic personnel need to grow in their understanding of the principles of quality assurance processes such as outcome assessment. Faculty and academic leaders had some difficulty answering questions such as: "What are OVC's program learning outcomes?" "Please explain OVC's outcome assessment process?" "Does OVC have rubrics for program-level learning outcomes?" "How do the tasks you perform for assessment relate to the overall process?" "What are the standards for achievement at graduation for OVC's program?" and "How does the faculty at Oak Valley College set such standards?" This insufficient clarity among academic personnel is understandable given that quality assurance processes are still in the early stages of development and implementation. However, it highlights the need for Oak Valley College to build capacity for carrying out these processes among its faculty and academic leaders, which the team recommends. To foster a culture of evidence, the team further recommends that OVC, with significant involvement and appropriate leadership from the faculty and other academic personnel, formally adopt, refine, publish, provide training for, and further implement the college's quality assurance processes, policies and procedures, including learning outcome assessment and academic and co-curricular program reviews. (CFR 4.3, 4.4)

Relative to its youth and size, Oak Valley College is has earned success in many areas. OVC has been able to more than double its incoming freshman enrollment since its inception in 2016; usher approximately 70% of its first cohort to graduation; and stay financially solvent, all

while operating as an institution without regional accreditation. Among the factors that contribute to this success are the college's responsiveness to the needs of the external environment and the involvement of relevant stakeholders in the assessment and alignment of OVC's program. The mission of Oak Valley College is to provide a debt-free education—one of the most significant issues facing higher-education today—primarily, though not exclusively, to students from the Inland Empire, a region that's underserved in terms of higher education. The team observed that administrative leaders, faculty, governing and advisory board members displayed keen awareness and detailed knowledge on the demand for affordable higher education, especially in the Inland Empire region. (CFR 4.7)

Throughout the visit, the team was impressed with how OVC's president and other leaders were able to rally the local community around the college's mission to provide a debt-free, faith-based, business education to students. This tightly-knit network consists of local small business owners, churches and ministries, community organizations, and education leaders. The team saw evidence of ongoing advice-seeking on the part of OVC's administrative leaders and board members from such stakeholders. For example, all the advisory board members recalled regular conversations with the president; the board elected a recent graduate as a fellow member; and the administration sought regular feedback from the student government. Though informal, involvement of stakeholders appears to the team to be part of the culture at Oak Valley College. (CFR 4.5)

The launch and ongoing operations of a new college is itself evidence of a successful strategic planning process, even if such process was not necessarily formal before the institution's inception. OVC's response in the SAVI report displays an understanding that

strategic planning needs to become a formal and ongoing activity that the institution undertakes. The report includes the college's 2018-2020 strategic plan as an attachment and discusses briefly how OVC arrived at the plan. However, OVC did not include an articulation of a formal strategic planning process as an attachment to the report, and the description of the process was brief and vague. For example, the team could not ascertain how key groups on campus—faculty, staff, and students—participated in the process. The team found in its interviews that several leaders, namely the president and the two members of the board's executive committee, demonstrated a good understanding of strategic planning. For example, the board chair, who sits on the executive committee, commented that the process allows the board and other stakeholders to “zoom out” from daily operations and to take a “big picture” view of the future. However, this strong grasp of the process seems to be limited to these few individual leaders at the moment. The team's initial question to board members on this topic drew mixed responses, and most of the members appeared unsure, and looked to the board chair to field the follow-up questions related to strategic planning. When questions related to the topic of planning were posed to faculty and academic leaders, they tended to defer to the president to respond. OVC needs to articulate clearly a formal strategic planning process that considers how to incorporate input from key stakeholder groups on campus. (CFR 4.6)

## **Standard 4 Summary of Findings**

Overall, the team finds that Oak Valley College demonstrated evidence of compliance with Standard 4 at a level sufficient for Candidacy, recognizing that only the WSCUC Commission can make a final determination. Under Standard 4, the team recommends that:

- Oak Valley College, to foster a culture of evidence, formally adopt, refine, publish, provide training for, and further implement the college's quality assurance processes, policies and procedures, including 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, 4.4)

## **SECTION III. PREPARATION FOR ACCREDITATION UNDER THE 2013 HANDBOOK OF ACCREDITATION**

Oak Valley College displayed in its SAV1 report and during the visit that it is motivated to address seriously 1) meaning, quality, and integrity of its degree; 2) setting standards of performance at graduation; and 3) long-term sustainability. The team found that OVC recently developed quality assurance processes such as outcome assessment and program review and began to implement them. The college also has an institutional research capacity that is mature relative to its age and deliberately incorporates it in its quality assurance processes. These are strengths that Oak Valley College can rely on as it develops.

The team also found, however, a pattern of lack of familiarity, awareness and demonstrated competency among faculty and key academic personnel on OVC's own quality assurance processes. Faculty and personnel have started to participate in assessment and program review activities, but they stumbled on the team's questions related to their understanding of the purpose and import of these processes; faculty's roles and leadership in these processes; how to

use these processes to engage substantive conversations on the meaning, quality, and integrity of degree and setting standards of performance at graduation; and how to use the results of these processes to make improvements to teaching and learning at Oak Valley College. The team, while affirming OVC's efforts in this area given the institution's youth, view it a main area that OVC needs to devote attention to make significant progress and made several recommendations.

OVC's relative success at this early stage speaks amply to the responsiveness of its mission of debt-free business education to the overall external environment. OVC's president and other administrative and board leaders have also shown their adroitness in leveraging very little material resources to launch and stably operate a new college, and seemingly achieving a high level of student satisfaction. The prospect of WSCUC Candidacy will lend the college an added level of legitimacy and federal student financial aid as a new source of revenue. OVC's success beckons enrollment growth and expansion—both a desirable outcome as well as a significant challenge. Can OVC transition from a successful startup of a handful of charismatic, inventive, and skilled leaders, to an institution with enduring structures and systems that encapsulate its founding spirit yet ensure the college's ongoing success beyond its founders?

There is no better illustration of this quandary than the structure of faculty at the college. OVC's faculty demonstrated strong dedication to the institution and sufficient expertise for the program. However, at the time of the visit, with two exceptions, all faculty members were adjunct and part-time, including the faculty chair. The two faculty that are full-time employees have additional roles as the vice president and the academic dean of the college. Perhaps the use of adjunct instructors is necessary to staff a one-cohort program with needs for specialties as diverse as theology, general education, and business. This current near absence of full-time teaching faculty presents challenges for the faculty to assert leadership in core academic functions that are multifaceted and wide-ranging: curricular oversight; definition of learning

outcomes and standard-setting for achievement; recruitment, retention, evaluation, and development of qualified faculty; and continuing improvement of the program. To recruit and retain qualified full-time faculty will significantly alter the cost structure at OVC. The team therefore made several recommendations for OVC to build a strong faculty and a robust set of systems and processes governing the faculty’s academic leadership and governance roles as they will be important to ensure OVC’s long-term sustainability.

**SECTION IV. INVENTORY OF EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS INDICATORS**

Oak Valley College’s Self Study includes a complete inventory of educational effectiveness indicators (IEEI):

Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators

Category	(1) Have formal learning outcomes been developed?  <i>Yes/No</i>	(2) Where are these learning outcomes published (e.g., catalog, syllabi, other materials)?	(3) Other than GPA, what data / evidence are used to determine that graduates have achieved stated outcomes for the degree? (e.g., capstone course, portfolio review, licensure examination)?	(4) Who interprets the evidence? What is the process?	(5) How are the findings used?	(6) Date of the last program review for this degree program.
At the institutional level:	Yes	Catalog and website	Capstone courses, comprehensive final exam,	President and Dean play the key role. In addition, external reviewers (employers, alumni, and faculty and institutional leaders at other WSCUC schools), and Faculty through the Faculty Senate and program review.	To review, analyze, and improve program learning and student success in terms of being prepared for good careers, graduate school, and meeting alumni and employer needs.	November 2018
For general education if an undergraduate institution:	Yes	Catalog, website, and syllabi	Course level signature assignments, capstone courses, comprehensive final exam	Dean and Professor of General Education play a lead role in reviewing the results. , In addition, external reviewers (faculty and institutional leaders at other WSCUC schools), and Faculty through the Faculty Senate and program review.	To review, analyze, and improve general education requirements, academic standards and identifying, as needed, changes to the general education curriculum.	November 2018
List each degree program: 1. BA	Yes	Catalog, website, and syllabi	Course level signature assignments, capstone courses, comprehensive final exam	President, Dean, Faculty Chair, and Professor of Business play the lead role. In addition, external reviewers (employers, alumni, and faculty and institutional leaders at other WSCUC schools), and Faculty through the Faculty Senate and program review.	To review, analyze, and improve major coursework, learning outcomes, and preparation for the world of work and graduate school. To also prepare individuals for life, work, spiritual balance and integration.	November 2018
2.						

The IEEI offers an overview of the outcomes the institution has identified to evaluate student learning at various levels and ongoing tasks to improve the systems. The team has recommendations related to outcome assessment and program review.

## **SECTION V. FINDINGS, COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Commendations**

There are several commendations embedded in this report and recognition that for a number of CFRs Oak Valley College has demonstrated sufficiency for candidacy. As a matter of emphasis, the team offers the following commendations:

- At all levels of the institution, there is a profound and unified commitment to debt-free, highly accessible, liberal arts education with a Christian worldview. Faculty, staff, board and advisory members dedicate their time, treasure, and talents in the service of their common commitment to student success and to creating and transforming educational possibilities for students in the Inland Empire. Addressing student debt is among the most crucial issues in the landscape and future of higher education, and the OVC's commitment to this effort is praiseworthy.
- The Oak Valley College community is genuinely and uniformly devoted to its students' development and success. Students who participated in the visit emphasized that OVC created an environment in which they feel safe. Students reported feeling cared for, nurtured, and respected by OVC's faculty and staff. Additionally, multiple stakeholders in OVC participate in career preparation, assistance with job placement, and continuous mentoring sessions with students, which undoubtedly advances student success and likely contributes to OVC's admirable student retention rates.
- The active and engaged student body has self-organized to form a fully functioning student government. Student representatives participate in the OVC board of trustees meetings, and are forming groups and clubs that address student needs as well as align with the college's mission. In addition, they have demonstrated enthusiasm for OVC and its accreditation process by energetically participating in the WSCUC visit.

- The Oak Valley College board of trustees is composed of qualified stakeholders. They are engaged, dedicated and committed to the mission and long-term success of the institution.
- The dynamic leadership of the college shepherds a tightly-knit community that cares deeply for one another and their mission. They have recruited a team that is highly capable and hardworking. At every level, there is a willingness to accept feedback, to learn and grow, and adapt to new procedures and policies in service of OVC's mission. As the college evolves, the leadership understands the need to preserve this unique culture to the extent possible.
- The Oak Valley College staff, especially the admissions team, displays exceptional dedication to both prospective and active students. The staff demonstrate insightful understanding of the needs and challenges facing student population they serve. They are skilled, perceptive, and many are actively seeking mentorship for continuous improvement and development.
- Oak Valley College prepared a well-organized Institutional Report and extended warm hospitality and professionalism during the visit. The team especially appreciates the college's responsive and forthright communications.

### **Recommendations**

The team's eight formal recommendations for Oak Valley College are presented at the end of their respective Standards. In addition, OVC's current credit hour policy is not compliant with the Federal Credit Hour Policy and the college needs to address this non-compliance.

## **APPENDICES**

### **APPENDIX 1: STUDENT COMPLAINTS REVIEW FORM**

Under federal regulation\*, WSCUC is required to demonstrate that it monitors the institution's student complaints policies, procedures, and records.

Material Reviewed	Questions/Comments (Please enter findings and recommendations in the comment section of this column as appropriate.)
Policy on student complaints	Does the institution have a policy or formal procedure for student complaints? x YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	If so, Is the policy or procedure easily accessible? Where? Website, Catalog, Student Handbook <a href="https://wascsenior.box.com/s/n5cp6ctwj6k1w0f3k5hah4sjx9r6c1ee">https://wascsenior.box.com/s/n5cp6ctwj6k1w0f3k5hah4sjx9r6c1ee</a> <a href="https://wascsenior.box.com/s/evrvvzaeey8q02yaibh4b2e26c70vh5g">https://wascsenior.box.com/s/evrvvzaeey8q02yaibh4b2e26c70vh5g</a>
	Comments: A student complaint policy and procedure is in place, and the college has reported zero grievances to date.
Process(es)/ procedure	Does the institution have a procedure for addressing student complaints? x YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	If so, please describe briefly: Grievances go to the President's office (or to the Faculty Chair) first. Students will then put complaint in writing, President or designee will review. Students may request a committee of faculty to hear complaint as well. So far there have not been any written complaints.
	If so, does the institution adhere to this procedure? x YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Records	Does the institution maintain records of student complaints? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO If so, where? No formal written complaints have been filed.
	Does the institution have an effective way of tracking and monitoring student complaints over time? X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO If so, please describe briefly:  There is a grievance form that the student services staff will use to then enter the information into the Populi software system for long-term retention.
	Comments:

\*§602-16(1)(1)(ix)

See also WASC Senior College and University Commission's Complaints and Third Party Comment Policy.

Review Completed By: Priscilla Fiden

Date: 10/30/19

**Appendix 2 TRANSFER CREDIT POLICY REVIEW FORM**

Under federal regulations\*, WSCUC is required to demonstrate that it monitors the institution’s recruiting and admissions practices accordingly.

Material Reviewed	Questions/Comments (Please enter findings and recommendations in the comment section of this column as appropriate.)
Transfer Credit Policy(s)	Does the institution have a policy or formal procedure for receiving transfer credit? X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO Transfer Credit Policy: <a href="https://wascsenior.box.com/s/n2zcfhe7dxivs46rpm316pa90oi6iyd">https://wascsenior.box.com/s/n2zcfhe7dxivs46rpm316pa90oi6iyd</a>
	Is the policy publicly available? x YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO If so, where? Public Website, OVC Catalog
	Does the policy(s) include a statement of the criteria established by the institution regarding the transfer of credit earned at another institution of higher education? x YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments:  The credit policy is clear and accessible – no transfer credit is permitted.

\*§602.24(e): Transfer of credit policies. The accrediting agency must confirm, as part of its review for renewal of accreditation, that the institution has transfer of credit policies that--

- (1) Are publicly disclosed in accordance with 668.43(a)(11); and
- (2) Include a statement of the criteria established by the institution regarding the transfer of credit earned at another institution of higher education.

See also WASC Senior College and University Commission’s Transfer of Credit Policy.

Review Completed By: Priscilla Fiden  
 Date: 10/30/19

### Appendix 3 MARKETING AND RECRUITMENT REVIEW FORM

Under federal regulation\*, WSCUC is required to demonstrate that it monitors the institution’s recruiting and admissions practices.

Material Reviewed	Questions and Comments: Please enter findings and recommendations in the comment section of this table as appropriate.
**Federal regulations	Does the institution follow federal regulations on recruiting students? X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments:
Degree completion and cost	Does the institution provide information about the typical length of time to degree? X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO The information is publicly available on the website, in program catalog, in enrollment agreements that each applicant gets prior to enrolling into program and / or paying any part of the tuition or fees.
	Does the institution provide information about the overall cost of the degree? x YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO Enrollment Agreement: <a href="https://wascsenior.box.com/s/bhikkvonvf9gztksv4r8momf1jx26ql4">https://wascsenior.box.com/s/bhikkvonvf9gztksv4r8momf1jx26ql4</a>
	Comments: Additional information including student completion data, data on diversity, actual time to degree, and career data are being provided (as collected).
Careers and employment	Does the institution provide information about the kinds of jobs for which its graduates are qualified, as applicable? x YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Does the institution provide information about the employment of its graduates, as applicable? x YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO The first cohort just completed and they intend to collect and provide this data.
	Comments:

\*§602.16(a)(1)(vii)

\*\*Section 487 (a)(20) of the Higher Education Act (HEA) prohibits Title IV eligible institutions from providing incentive compensation to employees or third party entities for their success in securing student enrollments. Incentive compensation includes commissions, bonus payments, merit salary adjustments, and promotion decisions based solely on success in enrolling students. These regulations do not apply to the recruitment of international students residing in foreign countries who are not eligible to receive Federal financial aid.

Review Completed By: Priscilla Fiden  
Date: 10/30/19

### Appendix 4 CREDIT HOUR AND PROGRAM LENGTH REVIEW FORM

Material Reviewed	Questions/Comments (Please enter findings and recommendations in the Comments sections as appropriate.)
Policy on credit hour	Is this policy easily accessible? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Where is the policy located? OVC Catalog: <a href="https://wascsenior.box.com/s/r3a7wuw8zg1pvdhohmmv14w7nxhfm97g">https://wascsenior.box.com/s/r3a7wuw8zg1pvdhohmmv14w7nxhfm97g</a>
	Comments: The policy is available but is not in compliance.
Process(es)/ periodic review of credit hour	Does the institution have a procedure for periodic review of credit hour assignments to ensure that they are accurate and reliable (for example, through program review, new course approval process, periodic audits)? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Program review includes review of the credit hour – however, the policy is not in compliance currently.
	Does the institution adhere to this procedure? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	OVC has conducted one program review to date, but another is scheduled in 2020. Comments: Credit Hour Policy is not in compliance.
Schedule of on-ground courses showing when they meet	Does this schedule show that on-ground courses meet for the prescribed number of hours? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments: OVC’s in class hour requirement is not in compliance.
Sample program information (catalog, website, or other program materials)	How many programs were reviewed? 1
	What kinds of programs were reviewed? BA in Business
	What degree level(s)? Bachelor
	What discipline(s)? Business
	Does this material show that the programs offered at the institution are of a generally acceptable length? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	However, the credit hour policy needs to comply with federal policies.

Review Completed By: Priscilla Fiden  
Date: 10/30/19