

Futuristic View of a College Impacts a County in

Southern Oregon

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Abstract

This paper is a research on Klamath Community College (KCC) in southern Oregon and how its futuristic view and leadership impacts a rural community. It briefly describes its history, demographics and presents future scenarios. It also explains what futuring means and two of the techniques that can be used to predict the future: scanning and scenarios. Based on researches, this paper gives KCC a vision for five years into the future and suggests a plan for action stating the first two steps KCC should take to start on the path of its future vision.

Introduction

Klamath Community College (KCC) is located in Klamath Falls in southern Oregon. KCC primarily serves the rural Oregon counties of Klamath and Lake with a total population estimate of 73,730 and a large geographic area of 14,494 square miles (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The large geographic area consists predominantly of farm and ranch land. Klamath and Lake counties face strong challenges due to geographic isolation and insufficient infrastructure. Major markets are a half-day drive over often treacherous mountain passes, strictly limiting services for the low-income learners and families who call Klamath County home (Community Health Assessment, 2015).

In addition to the impacts of the Great Recession and the resulting downturn in the housing market, the extreme decline in the target area's historic timber industry has taken a great toll (Albrecht, 2009). Since the economy has traditionally been driven by blue collar work, a culture of high school non-completion has prevailed, exacerbating unemployment rates. Consequently, Klamath County has educational disadvantages and low literacy skills when compared with Oregon statewide percentages. Additionally, agriculture has been one constant in the local economy and has attracted migrant and immigrant workers, mainly Hispanic or Latino, to the region (American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, 2011-2015). Klamath and Lake counties trail the state in terms of educational and economic well-being defined by persons living below poverty, unemployment rates, and median household income.

Past & Present

Klamath Community College was founded in May 1996. Initially, KCC contracted with other colleges in Oregon for educational services. Later, it associated with the local university, Oregon Institute of Technology, to provide general education courses, student health, and library services. In July 1996, KCC joined Oregon's largest education network (Jarrell, 2014).

During its first year of operation, KCC offered just three one-year certificates to students, serving approximately 3,000 students. Classes were conducted in facilities rented from the Klamath County School District and Klamath Falls City Schools.

In 1999 KCC purchased 57 acres, and on March 27, 2000, KCC students attended their first day of classes on the new campus. In 2005, the NWCCU granted accreditation to KCC that has been reaffirmed since.

Currently, KCC offers several certificate and degree programs as well as community and adult education programs, face-to-face, and online. KCC has become a local benchmark, and has pumped \$64.3 million into the local economy. This sum accounts for 3 percent of the gross regional product of Klamath County, equivalent to supporting 1,206 jobs.

Technology

Since Dr. Roberto Gutierrez took KCC's presidency in 2012, as stated by the Horizon Report (Johnson, Adams & Cummins, 2016). leadership and collaboration have made a difference. According to Dr. Gutierrez, "recent need for remedial mathematics and science classes has reduced", as cited by Dillemath, 201, p. 5. He also states that "enhancing teaching and learning by providing affordable, innovative, and flexible in a full range of instructional formats is crucial" (Dillemath,2017).

In the article “Universities need to adapt to become part of shaping a better future”, It is stated that “Universities need to develop organizational platforms that are dedicated to researching complex issues of sustainability and resilience” (The Conversation, 2015). These should typically be geared to multi-disciplinary participation and engagement with external partners. Extending teaching and learning environments to provide new avenues for development and delivery of collaborative content, courses, and programs become part of shaping a better future. Outreach and connections with other colleges, high schools and businesses have grown under President Dr. Roberto Gutierrez in the past six years.

In 2017, KCC inaugurated the Work Skills Technology Center. The WSTC is a state-of-the-art center that houses new and current technical programs, and serves more than 500 students each year. The center is a hub for high-wage, high-demand technical programs directly related to workforce needs in the local community and region. It offers computer engineering lab, manufacturing engineering, 3-D computer science, PCR amplification, digital media, and health science management. It has five computer labs, smart boards, conference room equipment, manufacturing program equipment, wireless network technology, and synchronous equipment.

KCC’s catalogue for online classes has become extensive with a total of 81 online courses this winter, fulfilling its mission, that is, provide accessible, quality education and services in response to the diverse needs of the student, business, and community.

Futuring Techniques

Although literature reveals mixed evidence about institutions that succeeded based on futuring techniques, abundant researches show that organizations that are better than others in those techniques are more likely to be prepared for the future, and consequently succeed.

According to futurist Lynn Burton (2003): “we live in an exciting, tumultuous era, during which our environment and experiences will change more than during any comparable span of history” (Burton, p. 3).

Futuring is an anticipatory decision-making process that leads to planning and program development (Sobrero, 2004). It looks forward 10, 20, or 30 years, while planning looks ahead one to four years. Futuring used to conjure a vision of a fortuneteller with a crystal ball; however, in the 21st century, futuring has become a respected science, in which data collection is crucial. According to a Helical IT survey, if a decision is made relying on data rather than pure intuition, the chances of succeeding are 79% higher (Dietrich, 2015). The world has been facing significant changes such as cultural, environmental and technological. Futuring delves into this process of revolutions to attempt to forecast what might be the next one.

The quality and quantity of data that a business collects over the years, and how it decides to use it, will strongly influence its competitive advantage and sustainability. Some companies even develop futuring newsletters and use anticipatory techniques to give the organization advantages in dealing with fast-paced change (Sobrero, 2004).

Although futuring is not planning, it overlaps with the first step in program development, requiring anticipatory techniques. This study will focus specifically on scenario and scanning.

Scenarios

Scenario is a visioning method that can be understood as a synthesis of different paths events and actors’ strategies that lead to possible futures. In practice, scenarios often merely describe particular sets of events or variables (Roubelat, 2000, p.4). However, it often carries an unclear concept that can be misused with various shades of meanings.

Scenarios, as a prime technique of future studies, have long been used by government planners, corporate managers and military analysts as powerful tools to aid in decision making in the face of uncertainty. The idea behind them is to establish critical thinking about possible futures which can minimize surprises and broaden the span of managers' thinking about different possibilities. Futurists often use five different variations of scenario building: (1) Continuation —things will continue much as they are now; (2) Optimistic —things will get considerably better; (3) Pessimistic —things will get considerably worse; (4) Disaster —things will go terribly wrong; and (5) Miracle —things going stunningly well (Kirkwood, n.d.).

The great value of a scenario is being able to take complex elements and weave them into a story which is coherent, systematic, comprehensive, and plausible (Mietzner & Reger, 2005). Futuring can promote leadership initiatives and change the corporate culture. Scenarios are a great way to recognize weak signals, technological discontinuities or disruptive events and include them into long-range planning. Among the pitfalls involved in building scenarios is that it can lead to wishful thinking other than focusing on black and white scenarios. In addition, it entails extensive collection of data that have to be interpreted, making the process time consuming.

Scanning

Scanning is an approach that involves systematic survey of information sources, focusing on trends. Also known as environmental scanning, it is usually used at the start of a future project, and the process consists of interpreting observational and research-based data, relevant to identify external opportunities and threats. According to Sobrero (2004), scanning should include data from counties as well as state, national, and international databases, aiming at broad

exploration of all major trends, issues, advancements, events and ideas across a wide range of activities (Sobrero, 2004). The data collected should reflect both the external and internal worlds and its competitors. Examining the external and internal environment allows organizations to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

Ongoing scanning and monitoring of the environment identifies the direction of issue-based change and the relevant events affecting changes observed. Based on the information gathered, the institution should then respond by changing its strategies and plans when the need arises. The process may involve the creation of a trend map, allowing for examining how historical trends are connected and related to emerging issues. Alexander & Serfass (1999) suggest a benchmarking process, researching the most current best practices and program models that have been thoroughly researched and proved to be successful (Alexander & Serfass, 1999).

Environmental scanning process allows organizations to make informed decisions, resulting in better performance. It is an important component of the organization's strategic planning process. Some of the challenges presented by such method though, is the difficulty in locating all available information sources, causing organizations to overlooking important information highly beneficial to better outcomes. Through this method, it can be difficult to perceive positive impact of environmental scanning on a company's performance.

Technology Trends

More than a quarter of higher education students are enrolled in at least one online course. The latest report from the Babson Survey Research Group shows that online enrollment is up. According to the same report, the number of students taking online courses grew to 5.8 million nationally, continuing a growth trend that has been consistent for 13 years (2016). Virtual

education is not a trend anymore, but a fact. Educational institutions must be prepared to meet the demand, quality and challenges of virtual classes, including the unique needs of adult learners in today's college methods to deliver education. The better a company is at futuring techniques, the better are the chances to succeed in today's and future worlds. This paper will explore synchronous and online approaches adopted by KCC to keep pace with present and future demands.

In 2014, KCC expanded learning opportunities by adding distance education through synchronous course delivery and hybrid courses, thus allowing the college to offer its students classes anywhere and anytime.

Synchronous technologies not only allow instructors to interact with students in real time but also offer an advantage over traditional courses during lecturing. It enables students to learn from anywhere, without having to physically travel to a traditional classroom (Morrow, Phillips, & Bethume, 2007). Lectures, discussions, and lesson presentations occur at a specific point in time with the expectation that all students will be available to participate. Synchronous learning environments support learning and teaching, besides offering students and teachers with multiple ways of interacting, sharing, and the ability to collaborate and ask questions in real-time through synchronous learning technologies.

Videoconferencing is the technology used by KCC. According to KCC's Network and System manager Mike Pearson, "the synchronous system gives opportunities to community members who do not have access to higher education. It puts the college in front of them in the comfort of their own space" (Jarrell, 2017).

KCC has five synchronous classrooms at the Klamath Falls campus, each costing several thousand dollars and funded by grant awards. The synchronous rooms include an audio/video control panel, a life-size video conference system, a 75-inch SMART TV, two 70-inch presentation TVs used to stream distance classes in real time, and an interactive podium for instructors to write on the screen without moving to a whiteboard or TV. The synchronous classrooms in the Work Skills and Technology Center operate using high-tech cameras, and high-resolution 4k technology in its monitors and smartboards, which complements collaboration, sharing and viewing of highly detailed subjects.

KCC stream classes in real time to six cities in Klamath County: Bonanza, Merrill, Chiloquin, Lakeview, North Lake, and Paisley. Additionally, via synchronous technology, KCC was able to partner with several High Schools in the county and offer dual credit classes.

Since 2014, KCC has covered lots of ground. It has become a reference in online education and is currently offering 81 distance ed. courses. They have an extensive online veterans program and offer five credit classes to the military. Even deployed students were able to complete their degrees.

Online learning allows nontraditional students to get their degree and improve skills at their convenience. More students than ever before are taking classes in coffee shops, at kitchen tables, or late at night once the kids are tucked in bed. Along the years, more students have enrolled in online courses, more organizations have offered alternative credentials such as digital badges and nanodegrees, and more employers have accepted online degrees from job candidates (Friedman, 2017).

More Micro Masters programs are expected to be launched through MOOCs (Massive open online courses). Students will be able to complete a portion of a graduate degree using MOOCs and then apply to finish the full curriculum on campus at a lower total cost.

To match the changing models of education, especially with trades and research institutions, colleges are looking to invest more in online programs. For schools that offer an online degree program, they maintain a consistent view that online programs are as effective as or more effective than in-person learning. This means for schools offering online degree programs, more investment in courses, student technology, and teachers. Teachers understanding, and acceptance are the main factors for success.

The education system in the U.S. may not be moving to an entirely online process. However, the number of students taking online courses and the quality of those courses are expected to continue to grow throughout the coming years. Klamath Community College is in the right path.

Budgetary and Public Policies

Budgeting is a very important process that allows an institution to create a spending plan and ensures it will have enough money for the things that are needed. Based on KCC's futuring plans, the budget is a crucial factor for its success, and the institution would not have been able to grow to such extent without grants and donations.

Colleges and universities regularly receive grants from the Federal Government that pay for educational programs and other institutional costs (College Scholarships.org, 1999). Most of the grants awarded are spent behind closed campus doors and helps students directly and indirectly. Grants come from states, corporations and other private organizations, but the U.S.

Federal Government has the deepest pockets for awarding direct student grants. The advantage of Federal Government grants is that it disburses free college cash that can be applied towards tuition, books, housing and other school expenses. KCC has been awarded millions of dollars through Federal and State grants, tuition and foundation. As a result, KCC has been able to offer high quality and free education to the underserved population. KCC was granted Title I and Title II money two years ago, and most recently, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). This was a big step for KCC, whose mission is to provide accessible, quality education and services based on students and community needs. KCC will be able to prepare low-income and low-skilled individuals with barriers to employment for good jobs by providing assistance and training.

Demographic Trends

Klamath Falls is a city in Klamath County, Oregon, United States. Originally called Linkville when George Nurse founded the town in 1867, after the Link River whose falls this city sits; the name was changed to Klamath Falls in 1892 (Jarrel, 2014). The population was 20,840 at the 2010 census. The city is on the southeastern shore of the Upper Klamath Lake and about 25 miles (40 km) north of the California–Oregon border (U.S. Census Bureau. 2010). There have been many recent changes in the demographics of Klamath County. First, much of the population is aging and there has been an overall outward migration of young people. Additionally, many retirees have been coming in from out of the area, from places such as California. Because the large geographic area in Klamath consists of farm and ranch land, and its proximity to California, Klamath County has seen increases in the number of its Latino community members.

Immigration's impact is often first seen in the classroom. The increasing diversity of the nation's education system is the most detailed measure of where immigrants have settled in recent years. The percent chance that two students selected at random would be members of a different ethnic group is very high. Klamath Falls City Schools ranks first of two in diversity in Klamath County, and this new generation is not only of migrant workers, as in the 1940's, but as permanent community members. They have a very diverse background and represents numerous countries of origin from Guatemala to Cuba to Mexico, and most of the time, language is a big barrier.

For Hispanics in the United States, the educational experience is one of accumulated disadvantage. Many Hispanic students begin formalizing schooling without the economic and social resources that many other students receive, and schools are often ill-equipped to compensate for these initial disparities. As Hispanic students proceed through the schooling system, inadequate school resources and their weak relationships with their teachers continue to undermine their academic success (Schneider et al., 2006).

Bilingual Education Act, formally called Title VII was passed in 1968. This act provided for the education of students of "limited English speaking ability" (Wiese & Garcia, 1998, p. 1). However, passing this Act did not provide a regimented method to teach bilingual or foreign speaking students. The result is that these students are clearly at a disadvantage when compared to the English-speaking students in their same class. A frustrating experience for the students who are struggling to be successful learners.

Dr. Gutierrez, whose heritage is Mexican, wants the best for Klamath population and envisions a better future for the Hispanics as a result of education.

In 2014, KCC received a \$43,000 grant for Early Learning Development to help facilitate professional development opportunities for those working in early childhood education in the Klamath Basin. Klamath has Migrant Schools and Migrant Head Start, and this was a great opportunity to provide educators with additional services that helped them be more effective in the classroom. Classes were offered free of charge, to anyone who was teaching at the preschool and kindergarten levels, as well as paraprofessionals. This was a comprehensive program that had a huge positive impact on early childhood education throughout the Klamath Basin.

According to Dr. Gutierrez,

this program aligns with the Klamath Promise and will have a great impact on early childhood education in our community, raising the level and quality of teaching early. It will give preschool and kindergarten students a better early educational experience, which we believe will pay dividends down the road.” (Jarrell, 2014).

Through Title II Grant, KCC has also been able to provide the Hispanics access to education offering ESL classes not only on Campus but outlying towns in an effort to make learning more accessible to the Hispanic community.

KCC Five Years from Now

Scenario

KCC will continue to grow in terms of constructed areas, new administrative offices, and classrooms. Its LRC (Learning Resource Center) will expand and offer more online tutoring and search engines. Classrooms with old technology will gradually be upgraded as a target of its first initiative: Prosperity. KCC will offer fewer synchronous classes and more online options. Synchronous classes will be recorded so students can access it at their convenience. KCC will

partner with universities as part of its second initiative: Access. KCC will be awarded new grants and consequently be able to attend more and more the underserved population. KCC scholarships will include laptops to students who cannot afford to buy one. KCC campus will be modern, attractive, and a place where students will feel like spending time. KCC will increase the number of completers and will increase the employability of its students. KCC instability will still be present due to poor management. According to Smith (2009), employee turnover is expensive, but the impact, however, is not only financial. It may affect employee morale that can become a domino effect that negatively impacts efficiency and effectiveness.

Rational

After five years attempting to offer synchronous classes for the outskirts of Klamath Falls, data is leading KCC to conclude that synchronous technology is a very expensive method to maintain. Very few students choose this method and the classrooms are barely used nowadays. Synchronous technology is very expensive to run and requires maintenance in both ends – the college and the physical classroom where the class will be hosted. With the introduction of Canvas for online classes, Zoom and Big Blue Button© the need of a classroom diminished. Online classes offer the advantage of taking class from anywhere, whenever students are available. Students do not need to commute to the college and KCC can hire instructors from anywhere because they do not need to physically be in Klamath.

Synchronous classes are operating with a maximum of eight students, while the online classes have an average of twenty-five students currently. KCC will start recording the synchronous classes and make them available for students, however, one of the odds of doing it, is that students have no interaction by watching a recording, there is active learning involved. On

the other hand, as mentioned earlier in this paper, online classes are not a trend anymore, but a fact. With new technologies and approaches, classes will become more and more interactive and convenient. In addition, it is very cost-effective to the institutions and students.

KCC grant department is extremely competent and has been awarded KCC millions in grants. As a result, KCC has expanded and a new building will be finished this May. In KCC's strategic plan for the next three years, applying for grants is key. Based on the results and prosperity KCC has had so far, chances of being awarded more millions in grants are big. Consequently, technological advances will continue, and accessibility by providing the means for students who cannot afford the technology for distance learning, for instance.

A committee was formed just to decide about the art on the campus project. The Health committee has been having discussion on how to make the campus a healthy place to be, including walking trails. KCC also has a very strong "Foundation" committee that frequently organizes very profitable fundraising events.

Although KCC has been very successful since Dr. Gutierrez took presidency, instability has been one of the biggest KCC's problems. His management style and structure have cost KCC thousands of dollars. KCC operates with six Vice-Presidents and unfortunately, they lack decision-making skills. According to Smith (2009), far too many managers micromanage to the level of minutia. Organizations need employees to have ownership and be empowered. An organization should give employees latitude to do their jobs by placing trust in them. In an article published by Harvard Business School "Managing the Impact of Employee Turnover on Performance: The Role of Process Conformance", Zeynep Ton, and Robert S. Huckman state that both profit margin and customer service are adversely affected by turnovers. They conclude

saying that less experienced workers are less likely to sell higher value solutions and deliver optimized service (Huckman and Ton, 2017). Rumors and fears are a constant at KCC.

Five Challenges:

Budget

KCC budgeting process is not effective. It has invested in technology; however, it will need enough money to keep up with technological advances. At the same time KCC makes lots of money, it often loses it investing in programs that do not bring any return, and eventually fail.

Enrollment and Completion

The number of students enrolled has steadily decreased along the years because of poor planning. KCC's completion rate is very low as well.

Clear Goals for Distance Ed.

KCC has been successful with its online classes, however, very little is discussed about its future, how it can be improved and standardized. There is little investment in training and research on trends.

Employee Turnover

Employee turnover has cost KCC thousands of dollars and it is hard to build strong foundation to keep moving on in the same direction.

Organization Structure

According to Duggan (n.d.), organizational structures can inhibit or promote performance, depending how effectively the supervisory relationships and workflow

influence productivity. KCC has several subdivisions, lacks effective communication and employees often complain about how toxic the environment at KCC can be.

Five Opportunities:

IT Staff

KCC IT staff is highly qualified and has very good networking.

Expend online catalogue and focus on distance ed.

KCC is geographically isolated, especially during the winter. Online classes would give KCC the opportunity to grow, enrolling students not only from Oregon, but at a national range. Besides, KCC would spend less money with indirect costs involved in maintaining a classroom.

Synchronous technology for training and local partnership.

KCC is a benchmark in the area in terms of courses offered and technology used. Classes could be taught, and training given synchronously in places such as local hospitals and governmental agencies.

Community classes offered online

KCC's community classes catalogue has become very attractive, offering courses like Pharmacy Tech, Phlebotomy, and Public Server Trainings, such as Emergency Response Patient Transporter and Wilderness First Responder. These classes could be offered nationwide through synchronous technology.

New campus can attract population in and off the county

Klamath Falls is a small city and the new generation cannot wait to leave it. KCC could convince the millennials to stay in the county and attract clients from other regions interested in its innovative classes and campus facilities.

The more funds, the more prosperity it can bring to the underserved population in Klamath Falls

Chances are that KCC will be awarded more grants and consequently provide more opportunities for the population living in Klamath County.

If No Change Occurs:

KCC administrative style and structure is a big challenge and needs to be changed. If no changes occur, KCC will continue losing qualified staff and credibility. Futuring techniques should be used, so money can be invested wisely.

Plan for Change:

- Re-evaluate organizational structure.
- Use PDCA cycle (plan-do-check-act). Collect data and analyze them to verify and prioritize problems or root causes.
- Hire consultants if necessary.
- Visit and mirror colleges and universities with best practices.
- Partner with local business to make Klamath Falls more attractive for people to stay and work.

Calls to Action:

KCC should conduct a Campus survey involving students and administration about satisfaction, what is working and what needs to be changed, and general suggestion. KCC should hire a company to conduct a 360° assessment of KCC, and work with futuring techniques; someone who would see KCC from a different perspective, neutral. Then, a strategic planning for the next five years should be developed. Finally, based on the results, KCC should develop a budget plan.

Conclusion

Scenarios and scanning were the techniques explored in this paper as futuring techniques. According to Sombrero (2004), Futuring is an anticipatory decision-making process that leads to planning and program development.

KCC is a fairly new college founded in 1996 and has become a benchmark as a small college in just 22 years (Jarrell 2017). It has an outstanding grant department and has been awarded with millions of dollars. It has grown remarkably and has a state-of-the art-technology. However, despite Dr. Gutierrez innovative ideas, KCC has to improve administratively and planning. A 360° assessment of the company should be conducted, and a strategic planning and budget should be developed, based on the results and researches. Using scanning and scenarios techniques may KCC become reference in Oregon.

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