

## **Columbia Christian School's Accreditation Renewal Through ACSI and AdvancEd Fall 2015**

### **Conclusion from the External Review Team**

Through deliberations during the visit the External Review Team (ERT) observed the reoccurrence of organizational themes. These were revealed through the Self-Assessment, inspection of artifacts, observations, interviews, and collaboration.

One emerging theme was the rich heritage and commitment of Columbia Christian's alumni. In every meeting we had, be it student, parent, volunteer, support staff, teacher, or administrator, there was a multi-generational connection to CCS. Many of the staff attended Columbia Christian or graduated from Columbia Christian College/Cascade Christian College and are now serving the Lord with joy at CCS. One student interviewed proudly shared that he would be a third-generation Columbia Christian graduate.

Another emerging theme of this close-knit school was its welcoming spirit towards new students and staff. While Columbia Christian enjoys deep connection with one another, it also has an open-arms attitude. During a grade 6-12 student group-interview, a seventh grade student shared how accepted and included she felt at CCS and that it felt like a family.

A third theme that was evident at Columbia Christian was its strategic positioning for future success. In 2012, CCS purchased the adjacent Cascade Christian College campus. The acquisition of this campus grew Columbia Christian to a 12+ acre campus and added a rental revenue producing benefit, as the college campus has apartment units, several houses, dormitories, a gymnasium, and numerous classrooms. The expanded campus has also supported a growing student enrollment--the largest in Columbia's history.

Standard 1 - CCS is a strong, mature Christian school with a rich heritage and dedicated school community. The mission, faith statement, and philosophy are understood and supported by the school's stakeholders. School leadership annually reviews the school's purpose, seeking input from all stakeholder groups. From the promotional materials on the website to the student handbooks, CCS is clear in its commitment to, "Faith, Character, and Academics." The school board and leadership are reaping the benefits of their commitment to a continuous improvement process that has provided clear direction for CCS' future. They have just celebrated the completion of several strategic initiatives and are currently in the process of establishing action plans for the school's vision and goals for the next 10 years.

Standard 2 - CCS is blessed with a Christ-centered governance and administrative leadership that promote effectiveness of the school/program and growth of the student through an established structure which contributes to a well-managed and operationally and financially sound Christian educational institution. The governing body ensures that the school leadership has the autonomy to meet goals for achievement and instruction and to manage day-to-day operations effectively. There is a clear distinction between the roles and responsibilities of the school board and school administration. Leadership and staff together foster a culture consistent with the school's purpose and direction. CCS is clearly Christian in its philosophy and orientation with a 68-year history of Bible-centered education, building up students in faith, character and academics. The school richly provides for the spiritual nurture and discipleship of its students. The culmination of these efforts has yielded multiple generations of students who have a solidly developed biblical worldviews. Respect, compassion and caring for self and all others are taught and demonstrated in alignment with biblical teachings. This is evident in student behavior and various interviews. Many stakeholders expressed a deep love for the atmosphere of the school which feels like family. It was expressed over and over that while many students have been at the school for years, even those who are new to the body feel welcome and accepted right away.

Standard 3 - It is the function of the school's curriculum and assessment practices to guide and ensure teacher effectiveness and student learning. Expected student outcomes include character development, acquisition of Christian values, and spiritual formation. Columbia Christian School has taken significant steps to provide challenging learning experiences, monitor instructional practices, and create a quality Christian education for its students. CCS staff has created comprehensive curriculum guides and maps that are powerful tools for organizational integrity. Parents are viewed as a vital part of the educational plan. The school engages families in meaningful ways, including consistent communication between school and home.

Standard 4 - CCS has created programs for support of their students to provide for their spiritual, character and academic needs. This is evidenced through the budget and support of personnel and programs that directly meet the needs of CCS students. Among the school's strongest assets is the student support center. This well-staffed department provides for a variety of counseling, assessment, and referral needs of all students. School personnel provide or coordinate programs necessary to meet the needs of all students. CCS maintains a strong partnership with local schools to increase the opportunity for student assessment and services. CCS's facility is maintained and safe, providing the space to promote a strong breadth of program. Along with attractive field space to support a variety of sport and recess activities, CCS also maintains a large gym and student center for student activities. In addition, CCS has a co-op agreement with another local Christian school to offer several other sports programs. CCS has recently obtained a grant which resulted in the donation of a high school computer lab and laptops for teachers. The effectiveness of this technology will improve access to a collection of media and information resources necessary to achieve the educational programs of the school.

Standard 5 - Columbia Christian School exhibits a commitment to continuous improvement in professional development, student learning, and school effectiveness. The CCS staff has opportunities to improve teacher effectiveness and training. Various student assessments are administered. These assessments are driving overall curriculum decisions and student learning improvements.

The Major Recommendations from its previous ACSI accreditation team visit and SIP Strategic Plan have been implemented and achieved. Goals set forth from April 2000 to 2015 have been accomplished through collaboration from all stakeholders of CCS.

Columbia Christian is moving in a positive direction. The acquisition of Cascade Christian College, coupled with strategic decision-making, for example its generation of rental revenue, along with creating an effective Student Services and Spiritual Life department has the potential to support a thriving Christian school student body for generations to come. Its challenge will be to support its current student body while implementing plans and then committing the resources to not only maintain but also repair the building and grounds campus well into the future. Attention to the expressed improvement priority will allow the school to work collectively and systematically toward strategic goals. As CCS implements school-wide professional development, it better ensures comprehensive understanding of and implementation of resources and processes that directly impact student success.

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