



Admin 201:

Transformational Leadership

Local Community College (LCC) A CASE STUDY *Review, Analysis, and Perspective Exercise*

You do not need to submit the assignment in advance, but please *bring your responses with you to the program.*

BACKGROUND AND MISSION

Local Community College (LCC), located in a mid-western metropolitan area, has a rich tradition as a technical college focused on vocational education and as an open-enrollment community college focused on offering general studies for transfer students and the local workforce.

LCC was established in the early 1980s by the merger of Public Technical College (established in the 1920s) and City Community College (established in the 1960s). Current enrollment at LCC is 7,612.9.

The college's mission is to *"help individuals achieve their dreams by providing quality learning experiences that prepare citizens to live and work in a democratic society and a global community."* To achieve this mission, LCC delivers a diverse, and occasionally competing, set of educational initiatives, including: general, liberal, technical, baccalaureate transfer, dual-enrollment, developmental (or remedial), English language, and continuing education, as well as workforce training.

LCC finds itself increasingly expected to help the region transition into a more knowledge-based workforce. In addition to its longstanding tradition of workforce training, LCC's new Guided Pathways initiative reflects a concerted strategy to assist in the region's economic development. Under the direction of **President Elizabeth Nolan**, who was hired 18 months ago, LCC's academic **Vice President Jeffrey Pollen**, recently created a Guided Pathways work group to develop and implement Guided Pathways.

At the same time, the state legislature has launched a new Guided Pathways development initiative connecting student completion and student success measures to economic growth; state leaders envision an active role for the region's higher education institutions in these efforts. While LCC was working on its guided pathways initiative and coordinating the state's guided pathways initiative, a global pandemic was declared in March 2020.

Although the Guided Pathways work group have not yet finalized its recommendations, potential ideas being considered include: opportunities to collaborate with other colleges and universities in the region; funding scholarships to LCC graduates, especially underrepresented students, who transfer to neighboring

All-State University (A-SU); providing support services such as tutoring and career development for LCC students hoping to transfer into A-SU; and co-sponsoring after-school and summer workshops about career and academic opportunities for area high school students. The recommendations of the Guided Pathways work group are likely to affect LCC's relationships with external stakeholders such as other higher education institutions, regional businesses, and local and state government agencies. The Guided Pathways proposal, which represents the centerpiece of President Nolan's strategic agenda, will also affect numerous relationships within the college, especially among academic units.

EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

Local Community College is one of four higher education institutions in its community.

The most prominent institution is All-State University (A-SU), a large land-grant university that is part of the state's higher education system. In addition to its College of Arts & Letters and College of Natural Science, A-SU has colleges of agriculture, business, education, engineering, medicine, nursing, and social science. The University offers more than 100 doctoral and masters programs and enrolls more than 47,000 students.

In recent years, A-SU has received state funding for new state-of-the-art classroom buildings and initiatives to improve undergraduate and graduate programs targeting high-growth professions in the health sciences. The state is experiencing a prolonged economic expansion, and A-SU's total appropriations have been increased by more than 10% over a three-year period. A-SU's general fund budget has benefitted from these increases, including targeted investments in academic programs and classroom technologies.

In addition to A-SU, a second higher education option in the region is Walnut College. Walnut College is an urban private, four-year residential liberal arts college. Walnut has been a fixture in the city for more than a century. It was founded in 1872 by a religious order as a boarding college and became a four-year accredited college in 1923. In 1943, it became a private, independent institution after merging with a junior college nursing program. The institution was reorganized in 1953 into a college with one division (Arts and Sciences) and three schools (Business and Public Affairs,

Education, and Allied Health Professions.)

The third higher education institution in the region is a for-profit trade school, Top Notch Tech (TNT). Opened in the 1950's, the school originally trained secretaries and bookkeepers for local businesses by providing programs for skilled trades to serve the community's expanding manufacturing base. Through an agreement with regional school districts, TNT provides vocational education to high school students and graduates. Despite its long-standing presence, TNT enrolls a modest number of students and graduates, about 200 clerical workers and 85 skilled trades-people each year.

Today, less than half of community college students complete their programs or transfer within six years. Further, only 42% of Latino students and 37% of African American students complete a certificate, a degree or transfer within six years. A decades-old community college apportionment formula-which has based funding on the number of students enrolled at a particular point in time-is under scrutiny as the state contends it is not the most effective way for community colleges to reach their student success goals and close the achievement gap.

Following are some key changes in the 2024-25 budget compared to the enacted budget for the prior year [2023-24]:

- The budget proposal for the California Community Colleges continues to be shaped by *Concept 2030*, introduced in 2023-24 is a collaborative action plan that provides focus, equity, and direction to community colleges. It guides field practice, removes barriers, fosters policy reform, and supports college implementation. And it responds to technological and environmental changes facing our community while holistically addressing the needs of colleges and students.
- Under the May Revision, the overall state budget would be lower than proposed in January and lower than the 2023-24 enacted budget, decreasing by about 7% to \$288 billion related to a projected budget deficit of \$45 billion. General Fund spending would decrease by about \$25 billion (11.1%) to \$201 billion.
- Revised proposals for ongoing spending include about \$100 million for a 1.07% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for community college apportionments, \$31 million more than the Governor's original proposed COLA of 0.76% in the January budget proposal. The proposal also includes an additional \$13 million for COLAs

and adjustments to certain categorical programs, and \$28 million for systemwide enrollment growth of 0.5%.

- One-time funding in the revised proposal remains limited but retains the previously proposed \$60 million for expansion of nursing program capacity from the Governor's Budget and adds \$35 million for several projects related to the system's Vision 2030 priorities.
- The Governor's revised proposal includes \$29 million in capital outlay funding from Proposition 51 to support the working drawings and construction phases for one continuing project, the same as included in the Governor's Budget.

Changes in Overall Budget Framework

The Governor's May Revision proposes modest additional ongoing resources of approximately \$142 million to California Community Colleges appropriations and categorical programs, as compared to the 2023 Budget Act, up from the \$110 million increase proposed in January.

Revised Budget Proposal Reflects Higher Expected Deficit

In January, the Administration projected a \$38 billion deficit for 2024-25 which, while significant, was smaller than that estimated by the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO). In February, the LAO provided an updated estimate that substantially increased its own deficit projection based on revenue collections that continue to lag behind projections, which were nearly \$6 billion below projections at the end of March. In its update, the LAO recommended budget solutions that start with pulling back or reducing specified one-time and temporary spending that has yet to be disbursed or committed, with the largest amounts related to the environment, infrastructure, and housing. The Governor's May Revision also reflects the lower-than-projected state revenues and now projects a total budget deficit of \$44.9 billion, an increase of \$7 billion over the \$38 billion estimated in the Governor's Budget. The proposal expects an additional \$28.4 billion deficit for 2025-26 (for deficits totaling about \$73 billion over two years). The Administration cautions that persistent inflation and elevated interest rates could hamper economic activity by more than projected and worsen budget conditions.

Early Action Plan Took Some Steps to Address Deficit

Assembly Bill 106, passed in April, amended the Budget Act of 2023 to reduce the expected \$45 billion shortfall by \$17.3 billion. The early action agreement included a mix of \$3.6 billion in reductions (primarily to one-time funding), \$5.2 billion in revenue and borrowing, \$5.2 billion in delays and deferrals, and \$3.4 billion in shifts of costs from the General Fund to other state funds. The primary higher education-related issue included in the early action plan was a \$499 million deferral of the expected five percent increase in funding for A-SU. While no changes to CCC funding were included in the plan, the bill's language authorizes the Administration to freeze additional one-time funding from the 2021, 2022, or 2023 Budget Acts.

Some Additional Actions are Planned Over Two Years

The revised budget plan uses several mechanisms to close the remainder of the projected shortfall for 2024-25 of \$27.6 billion, including some funding delays and reductions from the 2022-23 and 2023-24 budgets, internal borrowing and fund shifts, and withdrawal of some state reserves. The proposal maintains the Governor's Budget withdrawal of \$12.2 billion from the Budget Stabilization Account (BSA) and \$900 million from the Safety Net reserve but spreads the use of the BSA withdrawal over two years such that \$3.3 billion would be used in 2024-25 and \$8.9 billion would be shifted to 2025-26. Spreading the use of reserves over two years would leave nearly \$23 billion in reserves in 2024-25, including \$19.4 billion in the BSA and \$3.4 billion in the Special Fund for Economic Uncertainties.

The May Revision includes other proposals to address the projected deficit for 2025-26 through similar mechanisms as those planned for 2024-25, and notes that two-year budget planning should be the approach going forward. As was the case in the Governor's Budget, the May Revision points to the need for legislation that would allow the state to save more during economic upswings to better protect state services during budget downturns, and proposes a requirement that the state set aside a portion of any anticipated surplus in a new reserve account to be allocated in a subsequent budget year once it actually materializes. This could be easier than amending Proposition 2 to allow larger deposits into the BSA, which would require voter approval.

Enacted Budget Could Include Alternative Solutions

- It is critical to note that the final enacted budget may look different than the May Revision proposal and will be developed through negotiations between the Administration and Legislature. The Chancellor's Office has received numerous requests for information regarding remaining unspent funds in various areas. The May Revision continues to borrow nearly \$9 billion from future non-Proposition 98 sources which has drawn criticism from both the Legislative Analyst's Office and various K-14 stakeholder groups. Should the concept of borrowing from future non-Proposition 98 sources be rejected by the Legislature, it could lead to programmatic reductions and/or deferrals. Active discussions around alternative budget solutions are ongoing. The Chancellor's Office will continue to advocate for funding stability given community colleges' central role in providing equitable access to higher education, serving as engines of social and economic mobility for Californians, and bolstering the state's economy.

LCC will receive 0.75% of the state allocations listed above in revenue.

Second, like many in the state, this urban region continues its transition from an industrial economy to a knowledge-based economy. The largest employers in the region are a computer parts manufacturer, an automobile assembly plant, a hospital, the headquarters of a national department store chain, and A-SU.

Over the past decade, the state's economic development agency has increasingly recruited new knowledge-based businesses, including biotechnology research firms and financial services companies. The biotechnology companies, including several start-up ventures commercializing A-SU-sponsored research, have begun sponsoring endowed chairs in the sciences and are seeking similar opportunities to sponsor an entrepreneurship cognate in A-SU's business school.

Guided Pathways will continue to create opportunities for the region's higher education institutions, whether it is A-SU identifying faculty research projects ripe for commercialization, or LCC retaining industrial workers for new high-tech jobs. LCC's President Elizabeth Nolan, while attending the press conference announcing Guided Pathways, commented, "*The region's higher education institutions can offer unique contributions to helping lead the region into the 21st century. Our collective efforts can help re-energize our economy and stimulate a new era of regional prosperity.*"

In addition to the state's Guided Pathways initiative, LCC offers new opportunities to develop relationships with external partners. For example, the college is exploring how to strengthen existing dual credit programs with local K-12 school systems. In addition, President Nolan wants to develop stronger relationships with regional business executives and richer partnerships with local businesses.

One anonymous member of the Guided Pathways work group mentioned that businesses will be sponsoring faculty and hosting faculty "field sabbaticals" to provide applied experiences as a potential partnership, as well as hosting student internships and career development seminars for students. The college's Guided Pathways initiative also offers new opportunities to collaborate with A-SU. In addition to recruiting A-SU graduates to LCC's faculty, LCC and A-SU collaborate on curriculum development for Guided Pathways disciplines, on promoting transfer opportunities for LCC graduates, and on grant proposals supporting faculty development, curriculum development/alignment, advisement, and student services.

In July 2023, the State Chancellor's Office (SCO) released *Concept 2030: Strengthening the State's Community Colleges to Meet the State's Needs*. Citing the economic and educational needs of the state, this document established a plan for achievement, including clear goals and a set of commitments needed to reach those goals.

Concept 2030 deliberately included just a handful of concrete student outcome goals in order to establish a clear message about what matters most, and a clear and simple focus for the system as a whole. The ultimate aim of the SCO is to help students complete their educational goals-whether a degree, certificate, transfer, or good job. *Concept 2030* goals reflect this ultimate mission, as well as the need to serve the state efficiently and equitably.

The goals of *Concept 2030* are summarized as follows:

GOAL 1: Equity in Success

Ensure the academic and career success of all Californians who are current and prospective California community college students.

Outcome 1: Completion

Increase with equity the number of California community college students who complete a meaningful educational outcome.

Outcome 2: Baccalaureate attainment

Increase with equity the number of California community college students attaining a baccalaureate degree.

- Outcome 2a: Increase, with equity, the number of California community college students who ultimately earn a bachelor's degree.
- Outcome 2b: Increase, with equity, the number of California community college students who earn an Associate Degree for Transfer.
- Outcome 2c: Increase with equity the number of California community college students who earn a community college baccalaureate.
- Outcome 2d: Increase with equity the number of California community college students who transfer to A-SU.
- Outcome 2e: Increase with equity the number of California community college students who transfer to non-profit private/independent four-year institutions.

Outcome 3: Workforce Outcome

Increase with equity the number of California community college students who earn a living wage.

Goal 2: Equity in Access

Broaden the opportunities for all Californians to participate in higher education by starting or continuing their higher education at a California community college.

Outcome 4: Student Participation

Increase, with equity the number of students attending a California community college, with particular emphasis on the number of underserved Californians.

Goal 3: Equity in Support

Partner with other systems, agencies, institutions and community-based organizations to provide students the academic, financial and social supports necessary to thrive by taking education opportunities and the accompanying support to Californians.

Outcome 5: Maximizing Financial Aid

Increase with equity the number of California community college students receiving state and federal aid for which they are eligible to better support their educational journey.

Outcome 6: Reduce Units to Completion

Decrease with equity the number of units in excess of 60 units for the Associate Degree for Transfer (ADT).

ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

LCC organizes its academic programs into three main units: Arts and Sciences led by Dean Lesley Field; Business, Advanced Technologies, and Careers led by Dean David Johnson; and Health and Human Services led by Dean Janet McClearly.

In 2023-24, LCC's Arts and Sciences department enrolled 5,087.0 full-time equivalent students (FTES) and employed 108.0 full-time equivalent (FTE) faculty. Business, Advanced Technologies, and Careers enrolled 1,869.2 FTES students and employed 39 FTE faculty, and Health and Human Services enrolled 656.7 FTES students and employed 14 FTE faculty.

In 2023-24, 987 associate degrees, 752 certificates, and 234 diplomas were awarded. LCC awards five different types of associate degrees: Associate in Arts (A.A.), Associate in Applied Arts (A.A.A.), Associate in Science (A.S.), Associate in Applied Science (A.A.S.), and Associate in Fine Arts (A.F.A.).

The top five most awarded credentials by LCC's in 2022-23 were the liberal arts A.A. degree (203 graduates), the nursing assistant certificate (165 awardees), the business management certificate (132 awardees), and the law enforcement certificate (17 awardees). These credentials comprised 46.3% of all credentials awarded by the college.

LCC's new Guided Pathways initiative has caused some tension among departments and faculty. A recent article in LCC's student newspaper, *The Local Herald*, featured some of the mixed feelings about it. The business management program at LCC has a

strong reputation in the community (including business leaders who employ LCC graduates) and their student success rates have been some of the highest in the college. But according to the business faculty, writers of the Guided Pathways grant disregarded their perspectives.

Stanley Winters, the Associate Dean of the Business Division, was particularly perturbed. In a recent division meeting he stated, *"It's unbelievable to me that the Guided Pathways working group hasn't involved us much at all in the design of this initiative. The faculty perspective is key to its success."*

Yet those coordinating the Guided Pathways initiative offer a different perspective. In response to Stanley's remarks, Dean of the Business, Advanced Technology, and Careers unit, David Johnson, explained, *"The Guided Pathways initiative committee work group has considered the programs and, of course, they are important to the success of the initiative. Our committee was already getting unwieldy with ten members. Although Stanley wasn't officially part of the work group, his input and his departments' perspectives have been considered and will continue to be important."*

The Dean of Health and Human Services, Dr. Janet McCleary (also one of President Nolan's first hires) serves on the Guided Pathways initiative work group. She is very excited about the potential of the initiative to put LCC *"on the map"* as the best, most affordable option in the state to pursue a nursing degree or certificate. At a board meeting she cited the national and state-wide job reports that the success of the health industry will be the cause of good paying and stable jobs for years to come.

"This Guided Pathways initiative will help LCC serve its community and its students in ways it hasn't been able to before," McCleary explained to the board. *"Our nursing programs are already strong and are improving. If enrollment trends showcase where the college should invest, then the growing demand for our nursing programs affirms the decision to expand and develop the programs in our Health and Human Services academic unit."*

Yet, many faculty have argued that LCC should focus on and invest in what it already does well. In addition to its business programs, LCC has developed reputable law enforcement programs. Before the economy declined in 2009, 87 % of graduates found a job within six months of graduating, but now that figure is closer to 55%. The Digital Arts department has also seen an increase in enrollment and student success. Like the business faculty, the law enforcement faculty also wonder why LCC

doesn't focus on and invest in its existing strengths.

Other faculty question the appropriateness of Guided Pathways all together. Many faculty have expressed their concerns with letters to the president. One faculty member wrote, *"some of my colleagues and I are questioning if we can ever do our jobs well enough so that we can just keep things the same for a while. It's so hard to be part of such a committed faculty and staff who are always being told we have to do things differently because our current best efforts aren't good enough to reach the stats and outcomes desired by administration. You say we are an exceptional faculty and staff - and you should hear the praises we get at convocation. But then each year, another proposed major change emerges that clearly signals we aren't doing our jobs correctly. First it's about reducing the number of failing students in gateway courses, then it was about writing Student Learning Outcomes, now it's about Guided Pathways. It's disheartening to feel like you are working so hard for these students, many of whom come to us horribly underprepared for college, and still we are told to take on even more roles and try even more shiny new initiatives, all of which take away from the time we need to spend on teaching and working with our students. Will we ever get it right?"*

Another faculty member wrote, *"Guided Pathways has me and many of my fellow faculty and staff gravely concerned. We worry that this Guided Pathways redesign is going to limit student choices and turn our community college into a job factory rather than a learning institution. We question whether it's right to push students into a pathway and not allow them to explore their possibilities to the fullest. Isn't higher education about intellectual curiosity and self-exploration? Community colleges are open access institutions, but now we are limiting students' access to the possibility of falling in love with a major they didn't even know about when they arrived here. Our college is adamant about moving forward with this change, but I'm not sure it syncs with my true beliefs - and I am not alone in questioning this clash of values. All the administration has done to date has been to show us data that our students are failing to meet success outcomes - but does that mean that pathways is the right answer? I don't know."*

Another faculty member wrote, *"as we are about to undergo Guided Pathways redesign, yet another major change initiative, many of us faculty are gearing up to take on more and new responsibilities that are not in our job descriptions. Most faculty are at this community college because we love teaching our academic disciplines and want students to find their own spark in learning. But now with this*

change, we are going to add more advising responsibilities on top of our heavy course loads, make time to enter data into a new early alert system, track attendance and participation, serve on data inquiry committees, and on and on. When will we have time to stay current in our disciplines and focus on improving our teaching? They don't tell new faculty all of this during the hiring process, and no one has changed our job descriptions. My colleagues and I want to continue to earn high performance marks every third year, but now it's getting confusing as to what matters most at this college. Were we hired to enter student data into tracking systems, or are we supposed to teach and work with students?"

In contrast, other faculty are excited about the opportunities of Guided Pathways. The Director of e-Learning, Sam Gonzalez, believes his department can play an important role in the initiative's development and success. The number of online and hybrid courses have doubled over the last five years, from 31 in 2017 to 64 in 2024. Additional online degrees have also been added since 2016, including the interdisciplinary humanities and the business office systems programs. Online degree programs with growing enrollment include business management, computer networking, business office systems, and interdisciplinary humanities. The online certificate programs, including business management, computer networking, and business office systems, have become even more popular. Director Gonzalez believes Guided Pathways will increase student success outcomes in these programs.

The faculty, therefore, remain split on their impressions of the Guided Pathways' potential for positive impact on LCC. In response, President Nolan was recently quoted in the school paper as stating, *"the reality is that the world is changing and the needs of our community are changing. As a community college, we have to constantly evolve. We can never be satisfied with doing things the way we've always done them. That's not good for our students, and that's not good for our community at large. Investing in Guided Pathways is an investment in our future."*

Figure 1: Academic Units and Divisions

Arts & Sciences [5,087.0 FTES]

- *Languages and the Arts*
- *English*
- *Math*
- *Science*
- *Social Science and Humanities*
- *Academic Development*

Business, Adv. Tech. & Careers [1,869.2 FTES]

- *Business*
- *Applied Manufacturing*
- *Computer Information Technologies*
- *Design and Construction Technologies*
- *Public Service Careers*
- *Utility and Energy Systems*

Health and Human Services [656.7 FTES]

- *Allied Health and Human Services*
- *Nursing*
- *Physical Fitness and Wellness*

CAMPUS AND FACILITIES

Local Community College occupies a prominent place in the region's downtown area.

The LCC campus is quite visible, buttressing a popular downtown park, Goddard Park, and within walking distance to cultural landmarks and institutions. LCC's campus features buildings with modern architectural appeal. It is also conveniently accessible by gateway freeways, public transportation such as light rail and bus, and the city's popular bike path. The campus is impossible to miss while driving or walking by LCC's location.

However, its prominent downtown location also causes challenges for LCC. Most notably, the college cannot easily, or affordably, expand its operations. A former facilities administrator jokes that the college will dominate the city's skyline if LCC expands over time because the primary opportunity for physical expansion is to build "up." Students, faculty, and staff also grumble about limited (and expensive) parking options. The campus has fewer than 1,400 parking spots and there are inadequate "drop-off" locations for commuter students.

Its urban character also frustrates attempts to create a campus "feel." There are few

integral demarcations to separate the "campus" from the city. There is also a recurrent proposal to explore the creation of a residence hall near campus, whether by building a new structure or buying an existing hotel or apartment building. Although most administrators and some faculty like the idea of offering affordable and convenient residential housing, the likely cost of the project always undermines any serious evaluation of the idea. The Student Center was scheduled for renovations in FY2017 but was delayed until FY2018 after voters decided on a bond proposal to fund a part of LCC's deferred maintenance needs.

The urban character of LCC's campus means that it is smaller than many community colleges. The campus includes 17 acres and 10 buildings with a total of 1,100,000 net assignable square feet; its buildings are valued at \$380 million. In 2023-24, deferred maintenance totaled \$31.3 million. The oldest building, Jefferson Hall, dates back to 1931, while the newest building, the Williams Community Recreation Center, was built in 2009. In addition to its downtown facilities, LCC operates a workforce training center by leasing a 46,000 square-foot building in the industrial section of the city. LCC implemented wireless technologies in all of its buildings in 2008.

The campus space constraints pose serious challenges for LCC's expansion, as illustrated by a recent attempt to renovate LCC's gymnasium. In 2002, then-President Thomas Fitzhugh established a committee to discuss renovating Johnson Gymnasium into a state-of-the-art athletic facility for students, staff, faculty, and the community. In a LCC newsletter, Fitzhugh described the project as *"another way of engaging the community. It complements our missions of educating students and the community about healthy lifestyles. By building a community-focused recreational facility, LCC can further establish itself as a 'hub' for the city and promote healthy citizens."*

The president's proposal offered clear benefits. The recreational sports facility would have upgraded facilities for students, helping to attract new students and establish a greater campus feel. The proposal called for new cardiovascular equipment such as treadmills and elliptical machines, new weightlifting equipment, and a new pool. The upgraded facilities also promised to generate new attention for LCC's popular men's and women's basketball teams. The college's marketing director proposed hosting pre conference basketball games for local schools, as well as rock concerts at the new center. President Fitzhugh courted the support of city council members for the project, negotiating opportunities for the city to help finance the project.

Although the project offered clear benefits to LCC and the city, it soon encountered

serious difficulties. First, the project coincided with a steady rise in commercial real estate prices. Although LCC was prepared to spend top dollar for the right property, it lost a bidding war with one of the city's top real estate developers to purchase a building across from Goddard Park.

Moreover, in addition to a city-funded subsidy, LCC's initial projections for generating new revenues from membership fees overstated consumer demand; although some city residents were willing to consider spending less money at LCC's facility than for a private health club, a second market research study found that the actual demand was 6 % less than original forecasts by LCC's financial analysts. The facilities team encountered significant cost overruns when it projected costs for renovating Johnson Gymnasium into the proposed facility.

Despite numerous frustrations, LCC opened the Williams Community Recreational Facility to much media fanfare in May 2010. The project, with the help of a state-sponsored Brownfield Redevelopment Grant, just exceeded original cost projections although the project took almost three years longer to complete.

In a fortuitous sense, the project strengthened relationships with city and state redevelopment officials, and these relations will prove helpful as LCC pursues its next construction project: the proposed *Schechter Science Center*. In fall 2010, Fitzhugh announced a proposal to build a new science center to enhance classroom and laboratory technologies for the college's science classes. As President Nolan contemplates how best to implement the proposed STEM initiative, the facilities staff will face new challenges designing the academic and administrative space of the Schechter Science Center.

FACULTY AFFAIRS AND GOVERNANCE

When President Nolan visited LCC for her on-campus interviews, she was immediately struck by the strong commitment of its faculty and staff.

"It was clear that the people who work and teach at LCC just love this place. They are strongly committed to the students here. That was definitely a determining factor in why I ultimately took the job. I'm glad I did, and that commitment and loyalty that I felt from the faculty and staff then, I feel even more strongly today." LCC was recently named a "Great Place to Work" in its metropolitan area.

That is not to say, however, that it does not have its fair share of tensions and challenges. One of the major issues facing the college today is its increasing numbers of part-time faculty. As Ms. Golden from the English department explained, *"Our department hasn't had the funds to hire any additional full-time faculty for three years in a row. Meanwhile, the number of students seeking writing remediation has been growing. We rely on part-timers to teach 70% of our classes, and most of those classes are our remedial courses which are the most difficult courses to teach. This Guided Pathways initiative is supposed to be the best thing since sliced bread, but where's the funding to help us support the students who come here who use us the most?"*

LCC's part-time faculty rates have been constantly creeping upwards, especially in the remedial education classes. By 2023-24, LCC had a total of 161 full-time instructors and 394 part-time instructors, a 71% part-time faculty rate, it marked the college's highest adjunct rate ever, and was only two full-time faculty over the minimum full-time faculty obligation number of 159 as determined by the state. In 2008, adjuncts represented 65% of all faculty and in 2012, 68%.

LCC's adjunct faculty are represented by a union and have busy and irregular schedules. *"We come and go. We're in and out,"* explained an adjunct that teaches sociology. *"I teach three other classes at two other institutions in the region. I wake up some days and have trouble remembering which college I'm supposed to be driving to; it gets that bad. Do I feel connected to LCC? Ah, no. But I'm happy to have a job. I like teaching and I like my students. I hope to get a full-time job somewhere eventually."*

Another group feeling overworked is the student support staff. *"I can tell you, not only are we seeing more students coming into our department seeking help, but they're coming in with more complicated and serious issues,"* remarked Sherry Jones, a counselor in the Student Services division. *"My student appointments have been booked solid since the beginning of the semester. Whether they are right out of high school or have just come back from overseas or have their own kids to support and look after, a lot of our students face a great number of challenges at home and at school. They need a lot of support figuring out how to navigate this place and their future options. It seems more of them are working full-time or multiple part-time jobs, too. They are better described as workers who study, not students who work. I love my job, but I think I speak for everyone in our office: we are burnt out."*

The new president recognizes the need to focus on developing faculty leaders at the college, but it's not on her (or the board's) "top-priority" list. With a strong background in the sciences both academically (in addition to her Ed.D. in higher education administration, she received her Ph.D. in Biological Sciences from A-SU) and professionally (she worked in research development at a pharmaceutical company headquartered in the region), President Nolan got the board's support to make the Guided Pathways initiative her most important project for 2024-2025.

President Nolan explains: *"For the past twenty years, LCC has served its community well, but LCC needs to implement Guided Pathways to finally put LCC on the map and equip us with the resources to provide the best, most affordable education for our students."*

Not all faculty are thrilled with the opportunities for professional development, however. *"I heard about the professional development opportunities,"* remarked a longtime faculty member in the physics department. *"Someone should tell Nolan that LCC has much better teachers than A-SU! It's like she doesn't get community college or something. We value teaching here. They [A-SU] don't. **We** should be teaching **them** how to teach; not the other way around."*

The Guided Pathways work group has also discussed plans to offer teaching internships to A-SU Master's students at LCC and develop a one-year teaching academy that will serve as a recruiting pipeline for talented, mid-career professionals interested in experiencing teaching careers.

Although some of LCC's faculty are worried and skeptical about President Nolan's leadership abilities, the board of trustees is not. *"President Nolan is just what we need,"* remarked Daniel Portman, the longest serving LCC board member. *"The time is now to put the college on this kind of strategic path towards Guided Pathways. The board sees the predicted growth in jobs as a real opportunity for the college to serve the region well."* Portman continued, *"if we are going to really serve our community right, we have to make this sort of change. With the new president's background and connections across the region, she's the perfect leader for us right now. We're lucky we got her when we did."*

LCC's board is elected and the board members serve four-year terms. *"My term date ends in 2025, so this Guided Pathways initiative will likely either make or break me,"* remarked Amy Noler, one of the youngest members of the board. *"But I have faith in*

President Nolan and the college as a whole. This is what's right for our students and our community."

FINANCES

Local Community College has established a reputation for prudent financial management.

In recent years, LCC's commitment to planning has only underscored this reputation within the college by developing a series of five-year plans to better coordinate academic, facilities, and financial planning.

Although meeting the accountability requirements of the state's coordinating body was the genesis behind early planning efforts, LCC soon realized the value of modifying this process for its own purposes. Former President Fitzhugh explained to President Nolan during the interview process that *"we were all sitting in the board room and realized that if the state was going to ask for this data, we should do something with it for ourselves. Their mandate actually pushed us in a better direction."*

A differentiating feature of LCC's financial planning is its coordination with academic and facilities planning. The financial master plan provides data, such as five-year forecasts for enrollment, capital needs for strategic projects, increases in compensation and benefit expenses, continued debt service and revenues from external sources. Between January and June every year, LCC's financial analysts formulate forecasts and more importantly, discuss the emerging plans with academic, administrative, facilities, and student services staff.

Although financial staff kick-start the process, academic and facilities staff really shape the contours of planning by submitting annual work plans that articulate and prioritize unit-level goals in February and March of every year. After reviewing the plans of academic and administrative units, the financial staff and senior academic leaders transform the unit-level reports into an integrated institutional work plan. This institutional budgeting process ultimately provides many of the requested resources to the units but also identifies some projects and units to prioritize while lowering investment in other units and projects.

The state's coordinating body believes that other state colleges and universities should emulate LCC's budgeting process. Despite this fanfare, some administrators admit (although quietly) that the budget process typically "rubber stamps" previous budgets and reinforces the status quo. *"The truth is folks get what they request each year. Sure, on the margins some departments get more and some get less, but most of my fellow department heads can guess what we'll get each year,"* explained one anonymous department chair. *"We're all a tad anxious to see what happens when we really start trimming our budget. How will 'winners' and 'losers' be determined?"*

These refined budgetary practices will be tested as LCC confronts potential financial challenges. LCC's financial growth remained strong in 2023-24. Total revenues increased by 7.9 % to \$63.9 million, and assets totaled \$133.0 million while liabilities totaled \$38.9 million, equaling net assets of \$94.1 million.

In 2023-24, total operating revenues increased by \$2.8 million. Importantly, \$500,000 in federal stimulus funding that helped the college with operating expenses over the past two years will no longer be provided, ending June 30 of 2023. The college's external grant revenues have remained at around \$2 million annually for the past decade, with the bulk of grant funds coming from Carl Perkins Act federal flow-through dollars and two federal TRIO grants.

LCC has also observed a steady increase in total operating expenses in recent years. Total operating expenses increased by \$3.3 million in 2022-23 and by \$4.9 million in 2023-24; total operating expenses totaled \$69.5 million in 2023-24.

The higher expenses stem from continued growth in enrollment and more faculty to expand offerings to meet unprecedented demand. Although these increasing expenses alarm some business administrators, they acknowledge that the college hired higher percentages of part-time faculty to mitigate expenses. Despite the increasing costs, the use of part-time faculty might be LCC's most efficient alternative for expanding its programs.

The proposed Guided Pathways initiative presents potential revenues and likely expenses, and the initiative offers new revenue streams. The Guided Pathways work group is currently preparing a grant totaling \$1.1 million, and partnerships with regional businesses and the state economic development agency offer opportunities for future revenues. The college's initiative, however, will create expenses.

Academic programs in fields such as health services and engineering services for example, are more expensive than most programs due to their labor-intensive nature and accompanying specialized technologies; and new staff will need to be hired to coordinate the work of new partnerships with regional businesses and the state's economic development agency.

One potential source for future revenues is expanding LCC's modest endowment. LCC benefits from a small group of committed donors who fund several endowed scholarships, but most private donors gravitate toward supporting the popular men's and women's basketball team. The LCC Foundation, which manages a modest endowment of \$5 million, is exploring how best to leverage interest in the Williams Community Recreation Center as it prepares to launch a capital campaign in Spring of 2025.

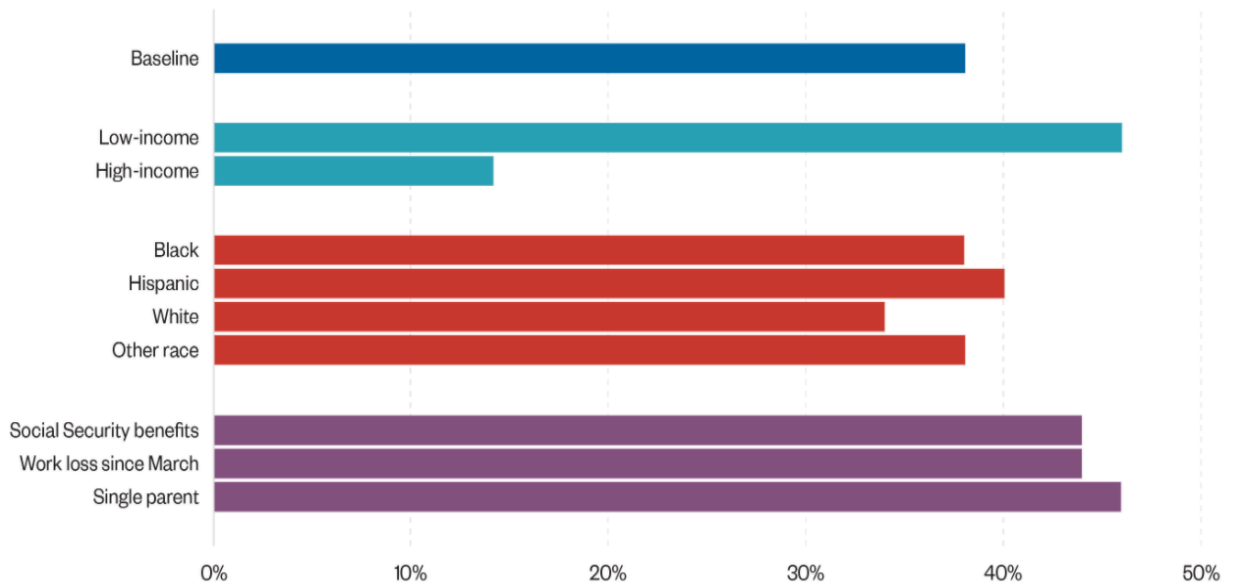
STUDENT PROFILE

For the 2023-24 academic year, enrollment tumbled, flipping a longstanding trend in which people flock to LCC when the economy weakens and raising concerns about LCC's financial outlook.

Overall enrollment at LCC fell 9.5% in the fall term. Enrollment by first-year students plummeted 18.9%, indicating that some people who weren't yet on the path to a degree are sidestepping it entirely right now. Those drops are far worse than what has been reported by four-year public and private nonprofit colleges, which saw small, single-digit declines overall. *"In hindsight, knowing what we know about the pandemic and who was most affected, it perhaps should not have been a surprise,"* said President Nolan. LCC overwhelmingly serves students of color, those from low-income backgrounds and those who would be the first in their families to attend college.

A survey was conducted and not all students changed their plans in 2023-24 the same way or faced the same pressures on their college choices. The figure below shows the characteristics of students who canceled all plans at LCC. The bar labeled "baseline" represents the average for all households with a current or prospective LCC student.

Canceling All Community College Plans



Income and economic security played a big role in who canceled their LCC plans. For low-income households, exits are much higher: Almost half have canceled their plans. Economic insecurity—relying on social security benefits, losing a job during the pandemic, or being a single parent—mattered too. The pandemic pushed these types of students out of LCC.

Given the uncertainty of various factors, projections for 2024-25 are unknown. There's speculation from various credible sources that enrollment, compared to 2023-24 will remain relatively flat.

In 2022-2023, the number of credit enrollments (i.e., the number of registrations in courses) decreased 13.6%, while enrollments in non-credit continuing education courses decreased 3.8%. Prior to the pandemic, the president remarked, *"I'm not so worried about the declining enrollment in the continuing education classes. We essentially break even in those classes anyway. Meanwhile the incredible growth in enrollment in our credit programs is almost more than we can handle."* Over the last five years prior to the pandemic, enrollments in credit courses have increased 35%, while non-credit enrollments have only increased by 10%.

The demographic composition of the student population had not changed much over the past five years prior. In the current year (2023-24), 54% of credit students are female and 74% are students of color. Almost half (41%) of students are eligible for the Pell Grant and, therefore, considered low-income students. One in four students is a first-generation college student.

The college is eligible for funding under Title III of the Higher Education Act as a developing institution given the percentage of its students receiving need-based aid and its low average educational and general expenditures per FTE. However, the college's grant writer is unsure as to the focus a Title III grant of close to \$2 million should take, so no clear plans are in place to apply in the year ahead. The college also receives two TRIO grants from the U.S. Department of Education aimed at assisting disadvantaged students, including a Student Support Services grant and a Talent Search grant.

The mentoring program has had difficulty attracting students. After a weeklong marketing blitz, only eight students showed up for its introductory meeting. *"But really, let's be honest. What's a single program going to do anyway?"* asked one of the faculty in the history department. *"In my opinion, LCC needs a campus-wide culture change in order to really get at the root of the achievement gap problem. A mentoring program might help a few students. Is Guided Pathways going to change our culture campus wide and help the other nearly 3,500 Black students here at LCC?"*

Like most community colleges, LCC attracts a student body encompassing a wide range of ages. The average age of credit students at LCC is 28 years old; the youngest student is 15 and the oldest is 69. The median age of credit students is 24 years old. Thirty-seven percent of students are recent high school graduates under the age of 20. The number of students dually enrolled in high school and the college has increased by 1% over the last five years, representing 3% of all credit students.

Prior to the pandemic, LCC had seen a growing number of students (aka "swirlers") who enroll at LCC and at least one other postsecondary institution, but the exact number of swirlers is difficult to determine exactly because students do not always disclose their multiple enrollments. Current figures suggest 17% of students fall into this category and that their enrollments peak during the summers.

Two other student groups that have been enrolling in greater numbers over the last

few years-displaced workers and returning veterans. These students are generally either seeking new skills or opportunities to retool their current skills in order to be more competitive in the job market. The displaced worker population tends to be older (in their 30s and 40s), male, and has had limited experience with postsecondary education; most have just a high school diploma. The returning veteran population is difficult to categorize because they represent all races, all ages, and enroll in a variety of programs.

LCC has a small but enthusiastic student activities office led by two full-time staff members and assisted by six part-time employees and coaches. They coordinate all of LCC's student activities and clubs, including two club sports teams (coed cross country and women's volleyball) and two varsity sports teams, men's and women's basketball, which are often called "the pride and joy" of LCC sports.

In fact, LCC's popular (and competitive) basketball teams are the only athletic programs that receive consistent funding. Most students are asked to pay full price to participate in sports activities and classes, but low-income students can seek financial support through LCC's foundation. The foundation itself, though, is on somewhat shaky grounds; it has not received the same level of donations since the recession. LCC's sports programs remain limited because A-SU's sports teams have long dominated the athletic booster scene in the region; moreover, past presidents simply did not prioritize athletes.

Before President Fitzhugh, President Oakes was known to say that LCC should be more focused on serving the students who are in school to support their families rather than the students who are here to play sports. With the construction of the new recreation building, however, both student activities staff and students are excited about new opportunities to expand LCC programming.

For some students, sports activities and clubs are an essential part of their education. *"Man, I think I would have dropped out of the first year of classes if it wasn't for basketball,"* stated T.J. Davis, the starting point guard on the men's team, and a psychology student who receives a scholarship from the foundation. *"It keeps me focused, you know?"*

The number of students participating in activities is only between 450 and 500 students each semester, but Debby Gross, director of the student activities office, highlights that their students' grades and academic indicators are generally much

better than the average LCC student.

The three-year full-time student success rate at LCC is pretty strong: 15% of students earn an associate's degree, diploma, or a certificate; 22% transfer to a four-year institution; and 14% continue taking classes. *"Our three-year success rate is something to be really proud of,"* remarked President Nolan. *"It's emblematic of the dedication of all our faculty and staff. The success of our students is our number one priority."*

STUDENT OUTCOMES

For much of its history, LCC was a solid, stable educational institution and an important regional resource. It was not, however, a particularly high-performing college.

On most student outcome measures, including retention and completion, LCC's metrics hovered around the state average. For non-White students and students from households with low incomes, success outcomes have remained stubbornly low. Fewer than half of BCC's students complete degrees/certificates or transfer within six years. These rates are even lower for Hispanic/Latinx and Black students, specifically:

- The gap between Hispanic/Latinx and White students in completion of college-level credits with a grade of C or better is 8%; between Black and White students the rate is 18%
- The graduation rate gap between White students and Hispanic/Latinx, Black students is 17 %
- The gap in fall-to-fall persistence between Pell and non-Pell students is 14%.

In 2015, LCC joined other institutions across the state in an initiative to build the capacity of two-year, degree-granting institutions to understand and use student-outcome data. But when former President Nolan joined the college in 2022, student success did not have the kind of urgency that was likely to generate large-scale improvement.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

How should Local Community College define its future and how will the college know if it's achieving this vision?

In summer of 2024, LCC is better equipped than in previous years to explore and answer this question. Over the past decade, the importance of strategic planning has increased at LCC. When then-president Fitzhugh arrived in 2009, he led the creation of an Office of Accountability and Strategy (OAS), moving the institutional research staff and a special assistant for strategic initiatives under the new OAS umbrella, while also recruiting a vice president for accountability and strategy.

Although LCC had developed numerous strategic plans over the years, the planning process had always been managed through the president's office with budgetary and financial support from the Administration and Finance office.

With the new structure in place, Fitzhugh embarked on formalizing LCC's performance management practices. LCC began measuring a broader set of indicators; the college had long measured and tracked indicators relating to enrollment and finances but began investigating important student segments such as students of color and those studying science and mathematics. With the support of many deans and directors, and external consultants, LCC launched a "performance dashboard" on its website that showcased metrics such as the college's enrollment trends, its revenue per full-time student equivalent, and the retention rates of students of color, among other metrics. The dashboard, for example, has helped increase awareness of the college's achievement gap problem.

Fitzhugh and other faculty and administrative leaders, however, soon realized that creating the dashboard merely represented an initial step in refining strategic planning at LCC. President Nolan recalls Fitzhugh saying *"we knew changing people's behaviors would be difficult, but in retrospect we hadn't a clue of how easily we could create and tweak the dashboard without anyone noticing-and this proved both good and bad."*

During the interview process, President Nolan learned of some frustrations over ideas for improving performance on key metrics. A discussion of LCC's passage rate

for remedial and introductory math and writing classes, for example, apparently frustrated faculty who perceived Fitzhugh and OAS's vice president as critiquing teaching practices. In a Faculty Senate meeting coinciding with the annual budgeting and planning cycle, the mathematics chairperson argued, *"If the president wants to launch a curriculum review or content that we could teach these students better, then do so or say so. Don't disguise critiques as a project supporting a fancy website for the board of trustees."*

So, when President Nolan assumed office 18 months ago, she knew that the college still confronted daunting strategic planning challenges, especially as LCC now considers how to develop and implement the proposed Guided Pathways initiative with the additional challenge of planning enrollment in the middle of a pandemic.

The board of trustees has also begun applying pressure on President Nolan to establish and track targets for performance indicators such as graduation and retention rates. Administrative and faculty leaders may agree that strategic planning has benefits--and they may understand the relationship between budgetary and academic affairs--but the LCC's strategic planning process has yet to be tested during tough economic circumstances or periods of retrenchment and reprioritization.

One anonymous administrator hinted at skepticism while saying *"Yeah, in the shadows, you'll hear people question whether we're going to pull-off this Guided Pathways plan. I mean, what does it really mean for our college? How can we both 'succeed' at Guided Pathways and meet our many other goals? I don't hear much discussion along these lines."*

Finally, the Board wants enrollment to "at least" keep pace with other community college districts in the regional area, despite no one knowing what those enrollments will be.