

ADMIN201

Transformational Leadership Program

CASE STUDY ASSIGNMENT

The attached case study on "Local Community College" (LCC), and your responses to the three questions below have been developed to serve as a tool to integrate the concepts of the Jeremy Buller book and explore your own analysis and strategic capacity *as if you were the president of LCC*.

This assignment provides you an opportunity to think through the case study, gather various data points within the case study, organize and prioritize your thinking, express your analysis and discuss what you would do going forward.

You do not need to submit the assignment in advance, but *bring your responses with you to the program*. You may want to update, edit or revise your original responses after participating in daily discussions, panel presentations, or the leadership assessment presentation at the beginning of the program. In the end, simply crafting your responses to these questions will be a useful exercise in developing analysis and strategy based on the entirety of the Admin 201 program, and it will provide you with documentation of your work and experience.

The Assignment: After you've read the Jeremy Buller book, please carefully read the entire case study and highlight any key portions of narrative that you feel are indicators of the health of the organization, its potential crises and opportunities, and possible resources or references to solutions to the challenges illustrated in the study for the College. Please be mindful of diversity, equity, and inclusion aspects of the case and be sure to consider the State's Chancellor's Office (SCO) Goals #5 and #6 in the Future of Achievement in responding to all three case study questions below.

Once you've familiarized yourself with the narrative, take some time to consider the questions below and document your answers. Your responses should be comprehensive, citing specific evidence to validate any analysis you offer, but your written responses should not be more than three pages in total length.

Your resulting paper will not need to be turned in, nor will it be graded in any way. Instead, your responses are intended to help inform your class and small group discussions and will be critically important to helping you compare and contrast the ideas of others during the program. We promise that you will get as much out of the exercise as you put into it.

Case Study Question #1: What are the salient features of the situation the new president and their team are facing?

Conduct a big-picture analysis of the situation using the 10 Analytical Lenses, STEEPLED Analysis, Strategic Compass, and Learning Culture.

Case Study Question #2: How successful or unsuccessful has LCC been during the past 18 months under President Nolan?

Please be sure to take a clear position and explain your reasoning with evidence and analysis. Please include the most compelling criteria you identified that informed your position.

Case Study Question #3: Should President Nolan make any changes to LCC's strategy (maintain the same strategy or choose one of the other two different strategies)? If yes, what specific changes and why? If not, why not?

Secondly, which one or two of the 5 "Practices of Exemplary Leadership" will be **most important** to the changes you're recommending?

To get the most from this experience, please consider and attempt to do the following in writing your responses for the case study questions:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the fundamentals of the book [*Change Leadership in Higher Education*, by Jeremy Buller] with respect to the case study.
- Draw on the book's concepts and the case appropriately.
- Reason clearly and consistently.
- Cite specific evidence for your conclusions.
- Dig below the obvious (don't repeat what is already clear in the case).
- Do not fall into the "story-telling" trap – a retelling of the facts of the case in a way that satisfies common sense – instead, link book concepts, case, and discussions to specific evidence to the case to provide analytical insight.

- Do not fall into the “concept-telling” trap – a retelling of the concepts in the book rather than connecting these concepts to the evidence in the case.
- Do not describe events, facts and figures.
- Do not ask questions, but answer them (e.g. not “John should ask himself what he would like to get out of this?” but rather, “John needs to take the following actions, for three main reasons”).
- Do not offer vague advice, but specific recommendations (e.g. not “John should retain an outside consultant to decide how he should proceed,” but rather, “John must first communicate his message to the staff in the following way, for two principle reasons”).
- Rely on the information in the case study only; do not use or cite any other sources of information. Make reasonable assumptions when absolutely necessary and clearly indicate assumptions.
- Answer the questions directly. Do not invent other questions that are not asked; do not evade the questions asked.
- *Have fun and enjoy the challenge of this written discussion!*

ADMIN201

Transformational Leadership Program

Local Community College (LCC) A CASE STUDY

Review, Analysis, and Perspective Exercise

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.

For 2023-24, the state made a significant investment in the public higher education segments, and the students of the state, with much of the budget intending to respond to the pandemic. The budget provided significant increases in base funding to both segments that was intended to increase the quality of education and expand access. Moreover, the state has maintained financial aid programs to ensure that students of all backgrounds can succeed. The budget builds on the reforms and investments of the past several years to further accelerate improvements in student success.

Following are some key changes in the 2023-24 budget compared to the enacted budget for the prior year [2022-23]:

- Under the May Revision, the overall state budget would be \$306 billion, slightly lower than the 2022-23 enacted budget (\$308 billion). Compared to the 2022 Budget Act, General Fund spending would decrease by about \$10 billion (4.4%) to \$224 billion.
- The budget proposal for the California Community Colleges continues to be shaped by the *Future of Achievement*, introduced in 2022-23 and intended to advance equity, student success and the system's ability to prepare students for California's future. The Future of Achievement is part of the Administration's agenda to help the state reach a goal of having 70% of working-age Californians possess a degree or credential by 2030. Budget investments across higher education aim to support students to improve educational outcomes, close equity gaps, address basic needs, and increase affordability.
- Revised proposals for ongoing spending include \$678 million for an 8.22% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) and \$26.4 million ongoing to fund 0.5% enrollment growth for community college apportionments. The proposal also includes an additional \$3 million for COLAs and adjustments to certain categorical programs.
- The revised budget proposal reflects continuing concern about enrollment declines across the community colleges. One-time funding proposals in the revised budget include \$100 million to continue supporting community college efforts and targeted strategies to increase student retention rates and enrollment.

- The May Revision re-appropriated funds allocated in 2022-23 for Deferred Maintenance and the COVID-19 Recovery Block Grant by \$452 million and \$344.7 million respectively, even though most of these funds have already been distributed to districts through apportionment. In part, the re-appropriation allows for the May Revision's proposal to provide \$503 million in one-time resources to support the Student Centered Funding Formula (SCFF), despite a reduction in the Proposition 98 guarantee.

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 2017, the State Chancellor's Office (SCO) released *The Future of Achievement: 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.

The Future of Achievement 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. *The Future of Achievement* goals reflect this ultimate mission, as well as the need to serve the state efficiently and equitably.

The goals of *The Future of Achievement* are summarized as follows:

GOAL 1: Completion

Increase the percentage of CCC students who acquire associate degrees, credentials, certificates, and specific skill sets that prepare them for an in demand job by 20 percent; and improve completion rates, transfer rates, and units to degree completion among Pell Grant recipient, underrepresented minority, and disabled students such that they meet the average of all students by 2026 (baseline 2019-20).

GOAL 2: Units to Complete

Decrease the median units to completion in excess of 60 by 15 percent and establish system wide stretch goals regarding the number of students completing their educational program or transferring to a four-year institution within the minimum amount of time necessary (e.g., completion of an associate degree within two years; baseline 2019-20).

GOAL 3: Mathematics and English Placement and Completion

Improve the placement and completion of students into transfer-level mathematics and English that satisfies a requirement of the student's intended certificate, degree, or intended major of transfer within one year.

GOAL 4: Transfer

Proportionally increase the number of CCC students transferring annually to A-SU by 35% or relative to enrollment growth at the state universities (baseline 2019-20).

GOAL 5: Reporting

Beginning with the 2023 annual report, annually publish the two-year associate degree graduation rates, the average units to degree for those graduating with an associate degree, and the percentage of first-time students who have completed at least 30 units prior to entering their second year, disaggregated to reflect underrepresented students, Pell Grant recipients, and disabled students to facilitate evaluations of equity gaps.

This data will be published on the Student Success Metrics dashboard and annually updated in the State of the System report issued each May. The SCO will work with colleges to compile reasonable baseline data regarding any existing equity gaps between the types of students able to access a dual enrollment program, and will include this information and annual metrics for improvements to close any such equity gaps in the 2023 annual report.

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 2022-23, 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 2022-23, 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 2023. 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 2022-23, 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 2022-23, 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 2018-2019.

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 2024, 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 2022-23. 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 2022-23, 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 2019-20 and by \$4.9 million in 2022-23; total operating expenses totaled \$69.5 million in 2022-23.

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 2024.

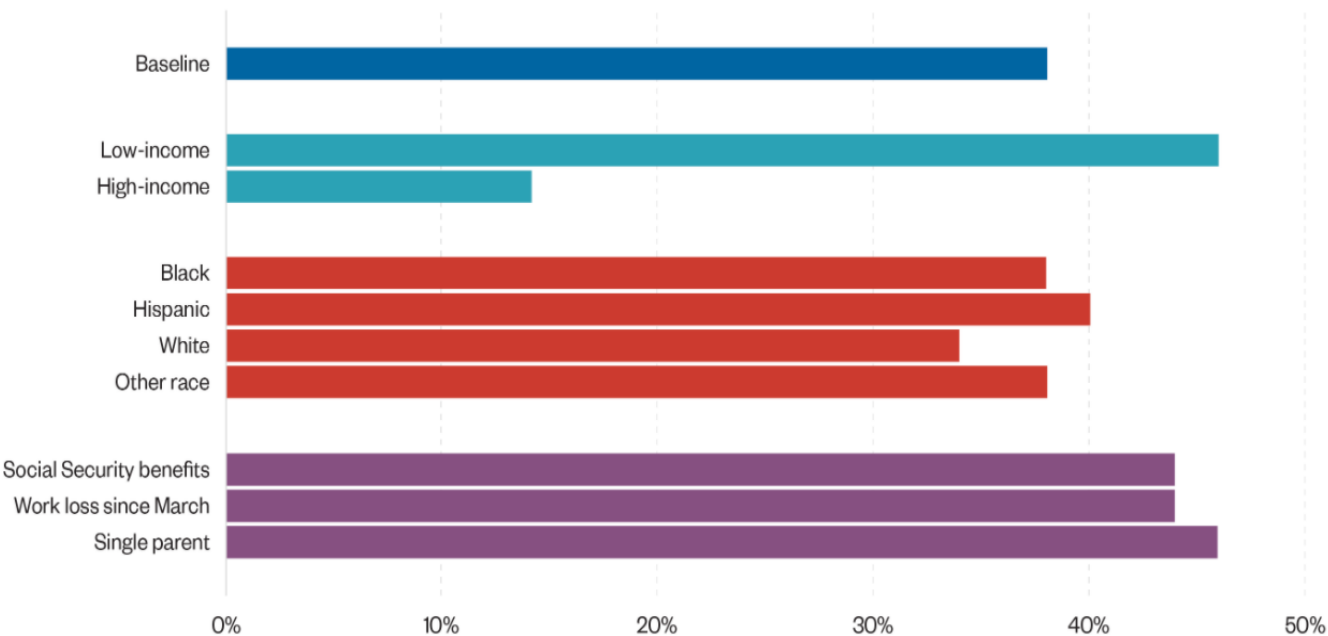
STUDENT PROFILE

For the 2022-23 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 2022-23 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.

Cancelling 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 the pandemic including variants, vaccine supplies, and fatigue, projections for ~~2023-2022-2423~~ are unknown. There's speculation from various credible sources that enrollment, compared to 2022-23 will continue to deteriorate another 5-10%, remain relatively flat, or increase 5-10% assuming the pandemic gets under control.

In 2022-2023, the number of credit enrollments (i.e., the number of registrations in courses) ~~decreased~~ ~~increased~~ 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%.

Up until the pandemic, the demographic composition of the student population had not changed much over the past five years prior to ~~20202022-20212023~~. In the current year (2022-23), 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 2020, 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 2023, 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.