

March 13, 2018

Dear Colleagues,

A year ago, I observed the budget process from 3,000 miles away and became committed to help LCC approach planning and budgeting in a way that focused on the goals of the college and student success. This summer, I worked with our board and staff in a commitment to 1) begin the process earlier, 2) be more inclusive and transparent, and 3) focus on creating a mission-based budget aimed at improving student success within our means. The board committed to four principles to guide future budgeting:

1. Invest in initiatives that drive student success.
2. Invest in growth opportunities to meet workforce demands.
3. Focus on mission: LCC can no longer do everything it has done in the past.
4. Be more planful in using one-time funds.

I have added a fifth goal: Work toward building a more sustainable budget for long-term planning.

All fall, the college community sent me and the vice presidents ideas on how to improve the efficiency of the college, reduce barriers and improve student success. These ideas were discussed among the vice presidents with regard to how they met college mission, supported student success, or addressed regional economic growth. I asked the vice presidents to vet these ideas with the executive team and then with those who were directly involved. Ideas that reached the level of the budget proposal were based on recommendations coming out of program review to improve student success, patterns of escalating costs resulting in increased financial burden on students, potential for new program growth, or program/service redesign intended to increase student success and/or reduced costs. The current budget proposal is intended to address access and affordability, student success and economic growth.

However, as ideas appeared in a budget proposal, the college community sprang into action, contacting me, board members and members of the executive team to please not make any changes to their departments, their benefits, their services or their programs. So, as your new president, it is time for me to ask you if this is what you think is best for your college? Budget proposals are public and being discussed. You have an opportunity to attend the next budget forum and identify what proposals will have the most impact on increasing the efficiency of the college and student success and what proposals will help us build a more sustainable long-term budget that will not put LCC in the position of cutting positions each year. The next forum is Thursday, March 15, 3-4:30 p.m. in CML 103.

I would rather see every department on campus work with their vice president toward thoughtful solutions to improve their efficiencies than a lack of participation in the solution. **The most effective way to address the constant decline in enrollment is to address student success through retention and completion.** Lane Community College needs to rally together to improve enrollment and retention. Schools that work together as a team to improve enrollment and retention *are seeing results*. By challenging ourselves to deliver programs and services more efficiently, we are making a commitment to free up desperately needed revenue to provide students more academic support services, update or enhance the programs we have, and create new programs needed to grow the economy in the region.

Many of you have asked why enrollment is down. We have become too comfortable responding that unemployment is down and students are working more hours. But if we dig a little deeper, there are strategies and initiatives being implemented all across the country that are improving enrollments at other colleges in the same situation. These colleges have embraced putting students first. That means

asking students *when they can attend classes*, and *offering classes at less traditional times*, in *less traditional modalities* like evening and weekend hybrid classes for non-traditional adults and *developing a robust online education program* to truly address access in our population of working adults. For a student friendly schedule to exist, we all need to reconsider what courses are offered, when they are offered, and how they are offered. We also need to ask ourselves if we are prepared to address the growing number of students who are taking their online courses elsewhere.

We also know that schools who take *retention seriously* are rewarded with increases in enrollments and graduation rates. Instructors who take attendance and contact students who aren't attending will have higher retention rates. Schools that use early alert programs and assign proactive advisors to contact students after the first missed class will have higher retention rates. Instructors who use class time to encourage students to register will increase enrollments, and schools that encourage full-time students to take at least 15 credits will see improvements in completion in their full-time population. Schools that are able to let go of a reliance on one standardized test to determine college readiness and use multiple measures and co-requisite courses rather than requiring prerequisite developmental courses are demonstrating significant improvement in completion and success rates in their college level courses. We need to look at our barriers restricting students from taking college level courses and ask how other colleges have helped students overcome these same barriers.

Each and every one of us has an opportunity to increase the bottom line at LCC – by helping students achieve their completion goals. I am asking you to think about how we serve students, how they see your program or service on our website, what they hear and what message is received when they call us or walk into your department. How are we perceived when they use our application process, ask for help in financial aid, walk up to a counter on any campus to pay a bill or ask for help in picking a major or career. I am asking every instructor to take some time in class to ask students if they registered and if they know where to go and who to ask if they need help. I am asking everyone who talks to a student to ask them *what their program of study is, when they plan on graduating* and if they are *using a curriculum map* to get them to that goal. Most important, I am asking everyone to encourage students to *stay in school and not drop out*. If we all work together to retain the students we have, help them register for courses offered at times they need; and ***if we tell them we expect them to complete and we believe that they can be successful, they will be successful and complete*** in much larger numbers.

As we move through the budget season, I ask you to work with your department or program to think about ways for the college to improve retention and enrollment, increase revenue, and offer services more efficiently. If you don't agree with the ideas in the current proposal, then provide some alternate solutions. We need to be thinking about growing and thriving, and ways to be entrepreneurial if we are truly committed to our mission. Please send your ideas to the appropriate committee member, dean, director, or vice president who can bring your ideas to the table.

I thank you for your ideas, and I ask you to please put students first as we continue to build the FY19 budget.

Sincerely,

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Margaret Hamilton, President
Lane Community College