Ad-Hoc/Special Evaluation

Peer-Evaluation Report

Lane Community College
Eugene, Oregon

March 3, 2026

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A confidential report of findings prepared for the

Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities

Contents

Introduction

The purpose of this Ad Hoc/Special Evaluation report was outlined in a December 15, 2025, letter to Lane Community College (LCC) from the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) noting "concerns related to the effectiveness of LCC's governance following news articles and an investigation report."

Those concerns had emerged from complaints received by LCC in March-April 2025, initially alleging discriminatory behavior by trustees — particularly toward LCC's president — during meetings in that period. A June 2025 internal investigation upheld the bulk of the allegations, leading to the censure of one trustee, a public apology to the president, and acceptance of a set of remedial actions at LCC's September 3, 2025, board meeting. Pursuant to the Receipt of Unsolicited Information Policy, NWCCU requested a written response from LCC in an October 17, 2025, letter citing concerns about the board's "functioning as a whole entity and acting in the best interest of the entire community" as well as its "ability to demonstrate an effective governance structure, creating a respectful environment, and adhering to ethical standards." In response, LCC's attorney provided a 10-page report to NWCCU on November 11, 2025. In it, the college asserted that, while the board's "actions have not consistently met the expectations of ethical, respectful, and policy-based governance," the board "has taken corrective steps [and] remains accountable for continued improvement." Concluding that onsite follow-up was needed, NWCCU notified LCC on December 15, 2025, of its determination to conduct an evaluation team visit in spring 2026.

Meanwhile, along a similar summer-fall 2025 timeline, NWCCU had received two additional complaints from LCC. The first, filed in June 2025 by a board member who became chair in July, questioned whether the college had followed NWCCU Substantive Change Policy in its reduction of Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN) pathways. The other, filed in late October by an officer of LCC's faculty union, claimed that LCC's budget-setting processes had violated Oregon statute. Both complaints were resolved to NWCCU's satisfaction before late December 2025.

Visit Summary

A three-person peer evaluation team conducted the Ad Hoc/Special Evaluation visit to LCC on March 3, 2026. The evaluators were accompanied by an NWCCU staff liaison.

In anticipation of the visit, NWCCU offered LCC an opportunity to provide additional documentation "which may include descriptions of LCC governance structures and related evidence" pertinent to the notification. In response, LCC submitted a set of 10 board policies and two operating procedures. No additional self-assessment or documentary evidence of compliance was provided. The absence of a college voice, itself a worrisome sign, deprived the team of a potentially important set of inputs.

Nevertheless, the evaluation team was able to review a considerable body of evidence in advance. Written materials included college policy documents, complaints submitted to

NWCCU, and LCC's responses to them. In addition, the evaluators reviewed video recordings of board meetings held between October 2025 and February 2026. The team met three times in February 2026 to discuss the materials, plan for the visit's interviews, and refine their understanding of the visit's scope and purpose.

Onsite, the evaluation team met with all eight board members, separating them into groups of two or three per session. In addition, evaluators interviewed the president and, separately, the President's Cabinet. Several of these sessions were conducted in hybrid format to accommodate the travel commitments of one trustee and several senior administrators.

Board members and senior staff were universally cordial and forthcoming in their interactions with the evaluators. Across the team's interviews, respondents were engaged and open in sharing their impressions, even when people's impressions differed. The evaluation team is grateful for the time, thought, and candor that Lane's representatives invested in the visit. Their collective willingness to engage transparently and constructively greatly assisted the evaluation team in developing a clear understanding of where progress has been made and where further improvement is needed. The team is also thankful for Lane's hospitality.

Areas of inquiry

To the extent possible, the evaluators limited their inquiry to the period between September 2025, when the board agreed to take remedial action, and the present.

The team organized their onsite activities around assessment of the college's governance policies, its current level of adherence to them, and its commitment to any continuing need for improvement. Through these questions, the team sought to address the areas of concern enumerated in NWCCU's initial October 17, 2025, letter to Lane:

- Institutional integrity and appropriate ethical standards (Eligibility Requirement 8 and Standard 2.D.2)
- Respectful, nondiscriminatory, and inclusive discourse (ER 7 and Standard 2 preamble)
- A functional governing board responsible for the quality and integrity of the institution (ER 9 and Standard 2.A.1)

Encouragingly, LCC's November 11 report echoes these themes, concluding (page 10) with an institutional commitment to "ethical, respectful, and policy-based governance."

Impressions

Governance policies

Lane Community College does not suffer from a lack of substantive polices around governance. In fact, ample evidence suggests that Lane's governance-related artifacts are plentiful, comprehensive, and detailed. The college's Governance System Manual sets forth an ambitious institutional decision-making model with timelines, protocols, careful distinctions between process and substantive issues, and detailed descriptions of stakeholder roles, including constituent groups, governance councils, the president, and executive administrators. With specific relevance to board process, Lane has adopted policies to govern ethics and standards of practice (BP 2715), board officers' roles (BP 2210 and 2211), and the board's relationship to college divisions (e.g., BP 4350, Education Programs – Global Directions).

Other groups of policies prohibit harassment and discrimination (BP 3410, 3430, and 3431). Still others address budget development (BP 6200, 6105, 6110, 6200, 6410, and 6205).

In addition to Lane's catalog of board-level policies, a two-page Board Operating Agreement, signed annually by all trustees, includes sections on governance and decision-making, meeting structure and conduct, and communication and collaboration. The most recent March 2025 version binds the signatories to "strive for consensus and make decisions as a unified governing body," to "adhere to the highest ethical standards," and conduct discussions "with respect, curiosity, and a commitment to problem-solving," among other provisions.

Evidence suggests that the college takes policy maintenance seriously. Lane was an early subscriber to Oregon Community College Association's Policy Library, a statewide resource offering standard templates for local modification and, ultimately, adoption. Board agendas regularly include a section on policy updates.

Despite Lane's seemingly comprehensive policy foundation, the evaluators heard concerns about contradictions, gaps, and ambiguities lurking amid the multiple documents in use. A key example is the discrepancy between BP 2211, which empowers the board chair to *set* the board's meeting agendas, and BP2210, which requires only *consultation* with the president in agenda-setting. Similarly, it is evidently unclear to stakeholders whether, under in BP 4350, the board's power to "approve major substantive changes" extends to cutbacks or modifications of delivery. Finally, while BP 2710 addresses conflicts of interest, it largely defers to Oregon statute and government ethics policies, rather than advancing local definitions or processes.

Suggestion: A comprehensive review of Lane's governance-related documents may promote constructive dialogue around streamlining them and resolving inconsistencies among them.

Evidence of progress

At the board's September 3, 2025, meeting, alongside its apology to the president, the trustees adopted a list of future remediation steps that included commitments to:

- Direct all questions for staff through the college president
- Complete training on bias, discrimination, and harassment, and
- Commit themselves to "self-reflection, monitoring their actions and behaviors, and improving communication with [the president] to immediately improve their professional working relationship."

Even more recently, in mid-October 2025, the trustees adopted and signed a code of conduct which stipulates, in part, that trustees will "make decisions based on the college's best interests," "speak with one voice," "communicate respectfully in all interactions," and avoid actions that "manage day-to-day operations," "undermine the president's authority," or "create separate communications channels that bypass leadership."

The evaluation team verified that Lane Community College's Board of Education members had taken some steps to fulfill those promises.

The evaluators confirmed, for example, that the board participated in training required as part of the September memo. Specifically, the board completed *Creating a Culture of Inclusion and Compliance: Board Roles, Responsibilities, and Boundaries* presented by Chaska Consulting, and *Am I Covered?* presented by OSBA PACE (Oregon School Boards Association Property and Casualty Coverage for Education). In addition, the board received training on accreditation and governance presented by the president of the Northwest Commission of Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) at the November 5, 2025, board meeting.

Other positive steps taken to reduce tension during board meetings include November 2025's appointment of a parliamentarian to resolve procedural questions in real time. The evaluators noted that decorum had improved in December 2025, January 2026, and February 2026's meetings. A particularly promising initiative is the board's creation of an *ad hoc* board subcommittee charged with identifying ways to make public comment — often lasting hours at Lane — more effective while affording the board reasonable time to conduct its work.

Finally, the evaluators saw tangible evidence of progress on governance-level milestones. At the time of the visit, despite delays that will be discussed below, Lane had reached a tentative agreement on its faculty contract and had adopted a three-year plan to rebalance the college budget. The president's employment contract and goals had been renewed as well.

Evidence of continued concern

While the foregoing efforts represent real progress, the evaluators nonetheless found substantial evidence of continuing concern. Much of that evidence emerged from interviews with the trustees themselves. With the exception of the chair and vice chair, most board members expressed significant worries that Lane's governance dynamics remained problematic and continued to undermine the president's ability to lead. At times, the participants appeared agitated. The board's November 18, 2025, self-evaluation reinforces those mixed impressions. Its comments section, in fact, precisely articulates many of the same concerns that evaluators heard onsite.

Some common themes appear below.

Operations versus governance

The board's understanding of the distinction between its role and that of management appears to remain inconsistent. In the self-evaluation's broad question on defining the difference (Section B, Statement 1), the score is 5.0 on a five-point scale. However, for the statement "The board focuses on policy and strategic oversight, not operational details" (Section E, Statement 4), the average score is 2.5. Although the self-evaluation represents only a single point in time, this concern was consistently raised during interviews with both senior administrators and board members. Both in stakeholder interviews and videos of public board meetings, the evaluators heard multiple instances of board members continuing to "get into the weeds" through information requests and public discourse that is unrelated to policy implementation. A prominent recent example was the board's handling of LCC's three-year budget mitigation plan. The board characterized the administration's original proposal as a "B" plan, setting up an ad hoc committee to make it, in their words, an "A" plan. Multiple information requests to support this process ultimately delayed the plan's adoption by months, compressing the implementation timeline even though the final product remained largely consistent with the original recommendation from senior administration. Interviewees noted that some board members have repeatedly delayed votes that were necessary for administration to receive guidance while others have raised questions about the verifiable data presented by the LCC's professional staff.

Unity and institutional best-interest

Another concern centers around the board's difficulty speaking with "one voice." The team found evidence of continued inconsistencies in communications channels across board members and with the president. Further, the evaluators heard multiple references to the sense that factions exist within the board, an impression that trustee interviews and self-evaluation comments reinforced. Respondents suggested that, at times, these factions appear to reflect the interests of particular constituencies, both inside and outside LCC. Of particular import is the appearance of board alignment with LCC's collective bargaining units, most notably Lane Community College Education Association (LCCEA). While positive labor relations are undeniably worth maintaining, the evaluators heard concerns that at Lane the relationship may go beyond that. Multiple interviewees reported instances of LCCEA talking-points surfacing in board discussion, while others pointed to the November 5, 2025, public meeting as a particularly striking example of seeming partiality, noting the board's unwillingness to curtail uncivil commentary from union advocates that evening. Among some interviewees, the lack of a single, consistent board-wide voice raised particular concerns during the college's recent labor negotiations.

The evaluators are cognizant of the complex obligations that elected boards must balance. Voters and campaign backers quite reasonably expect that their electees will work to fulfill their elections-season platforms. But the transition from candidate to trustee elevates the college's best interests to primacy, requiring a collaborative approach to decision-making that spans the full board, college leadership, and all constituencies.

Board-president communications

Finally, there is the matter of the board's relationship with the president and, beyond that, with the senior staff. Materially, there are signs of progress there, as evidenced by the board's recent renewal of the president's contract and approval of the president's goals. Likewise, the behaviors that led to September 2025's apology appear to have been tempered. Even so, the evaluators saw signs of persistent discomfort and distrust between particular individuals involved, suggesting a need for additional work to rebuild relationships, foster mutual respect, and sustain open communications across the board members, president, and senior leaders. Throughout the day's interviews, the evaluators heard concerns that the precipitating actions, investigation, and outcomes of summer 2025's harassment complaint had left scars that remain unaddressed — an impression echoed in board self-evaluation comments. While the president mentioned recent successes in building relationships with individual trustees, the team was told that, today, the president and board leadership have yet to agree on a satisfactory arrangement for holding conversations outside the formal board meeting process.

Throughout its stakeholder interviews, the evaluation team heard multiple comments on persistent barriers that continue to impede meaningful governance progress. As noted above, contradictions between board policies such as BP 4350, 2210, and 2211 create confusion, ongoing instability, and inconsistent expectations. Meeting effectiveness was also raised as a stubborn concern, with observations that, even now, board sessions are frequently prolonged by extensive questioning of content experts, which diminishes efficiency and detracts from strategic-level governance work. Despite some initial subcommittee work, ambiguity also persists around how to appropriately manage public comments — particularly those about the president — in a manner that does not consume excessive meeting time, undermine respect and decorum, or impede the board's ability to complete essential college business. Along the same lines, stakeholders expressed concern that unverified public challenges are given equal weight to information provided by the administration, undermining trust in institutional expertise and further complicating decision-making.

Collectively, these barriers underscore the need for greater policy clarity, improved meeting discipline, greater trust in administrative leadership, and more deliberate structures to elevate authentic stakeholder voice and maintain a focus on mission-driven governance. Although the bulk of the work remains with the board, the team recognizes the shared role that senior leaders and other college constituencies can play in restoring the integrity of LCC's governance systems. Given past injuries, the work will require forbearance, rigorous attention to professional boundaries, and a willingness to take risks in reestablishing proper collegial relationships.

Commitment to continuous improvement

While board members and senior staff emphasized the importance of a sustained commitment to continuous improvement for the institution and for the board, the evaluators heard few specifics about next-step priorities, action plans, or timelines for further work. The board's ad hoc committee on public comments, while promising, stood as the sole example of new initiatives aimed at improving board effectiveness. In the evaluators' opinion, a greater sense of urgency, prioritization, and concrete action is warranted if LCC is to maintain progress.

Conclusion

Lane Community College has adequate policies, governance structures, and stated values and goals in place to ensure functional decision-making. Onsite and in the materials provided, the evaluation team observed some initial efforts to strengthen board development, clarify roles, reinforce policy adherence, and rebuild trust among board members and with the president. These efforts have produced positive results.

The challenge appears to be in sustaining the momentum in clarifying roles, expectations, and responsibility boundaries. While stakeholders appreciate the improvements to date, the evaluators encountered significant evidence of ongoing, substantive concern, suggesting that additional work is needed to ensure the practices of effective governance are fully and dependably in operation at Lane.