



President's Report September 2018

The challenge of community colleges: Can we deliver?

We know a college education has never been more essential to the success of families seeking living-wage jobs. And we know that for many, community colleges provide a critical—and sometimes an only—pathway to a meaningful credential.

And yet, precisely because of their unique role, community colleges are also responsible for educating a populace who increasingly struggles the very most in our society. In fact, for a low-income, first-generation student (many of whom turn to community colleges for education), the likelihood of making it all the way to graduation is still far too low.

We need to do more to assure ALL students have the opportunity to succeed. Across the country, at last politicians and educators are beginning to work together to face what is essentially not just a college, but a “whole community”, problem.

Take the recent developments in California. In their August 27th edition, the *Albany Democrat-Herald* reprinted an editorial from the *Los Angeles Times*, written by David L. Kirp, a professor of the Graduate School at UC Berkeley and a senior scholar at the Learning Policy Institute. Here's a link to that editorial:

http://democratherald.com/opinion/columnists/article_5d4d9fb4-b9ab-5b40-8b42-ad18c04dbdcd.html

The background to the story is legislation recently passed by the California legislature that will change the way its 114 community colleges are funded, and focus more of those resources on students' completion of degrees or certificates through a version of what we refer to as “Outcomes Funding.” It was also a pointed critique of the steepest challenges facing students in community colleges across the country, and what California should do to address them.

How does that compare to us here in Oregon, you might ask? What is Linn-Benton Community College doing to assure our students' future?

The answer is, quite a lot. In fact, this editorial identifies three specific ways the California system will seek to make changes....and I'm proud to say, that at LBCC, we are already working on strategies in each of those key areas:

1. Creating momentum:

Students who attend college full-time are far more likely to graduate than those who can only attend part-time – and yet, for students struggling to pay rent and go to class, that's often the only option. That's why the **LBCC Affordability Initiative** makes full-time attendance its central goal. By coordinating traditional student financial assistance with an array of resources that address issues like housing and food insecurity, health care, childcare, and transportation, we are working to help students overcome the leading impediments to full and continuous academic progress. In addition, course scheduling that is built around our **Program Pathways** will make it easier for students to get into the classes that they need in the term that they need them, ensuring that momentum can be maintained throughout our students' time at LBCC.

2. Fixing remedial education:

For many students, remedial education has proven to be an impassable wall instead of the pathway to a postsecondary education it was intended to be. But at LBCC we have made considerable progress toward improving students' success in their remediation -- and, in more and more cases, bypassing remediation altogether. First, we have improved the methods by which we assess students' readiness for collegiate-level work, using what we call "**Multiple Measures**" in place of a single high-stakes test, adopting an assessment tool called ALEKS. The ALEKS tool is a web-based learning system that uses adaptive questioning to determine exactly what a student knows and doesn't know. Then, based on a more comprehensive picture, we have significantly restructured remediation itself. For instance in Math, the whole remediation sequence has been overhauled, making it shorter and more responsive to the pace at which individual students are able to progress through those courses. In Reading, almost all of this has been moved into the individual program areas, and in Writing, we are transitioning to a model called "accelerated learning programs," or co-requisite courses, where remediation support is provided simultaneously with the collegiate-level course. Through all of these strategies, students are experiencing greater success and moving more quickly into their chosen collegiate-level programs.

3. Providing a roadmap to graduation:

Like the State of California, LBCC has chosen the "**Guided Pathways**" model as the way to create roadmaps to graduation. Putting this in place has meant more than two years

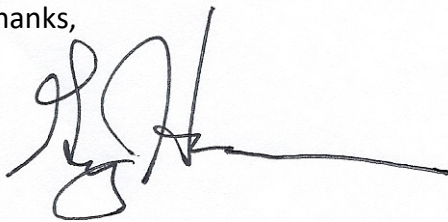
of deep planning and preparation to address the massive task of aligning curriculum and improving technology...but I'm so pleased to say that as a result of this hard work, we are ready for full implementation this Fall Term. And, while enhancing students' ability to navigate their college journey is a critical part of creating these "pathways" for us at LBCC, of equal importance is the "guided" part of this effort. So to that end, we have expanded access to advisors who can help students address the broader context of their education, including program exploration and selection, opportunities for and transition into employment associated with their selected program, and personal challenges experienced while on the "path."

Finally, I've joined with Portland Community College President Mark Mitsui to serve as part of a Strategic Funding Workgroup formed by the Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) that is tasked with investigating, and then proposing, ways in which State funding can be more strategically focused on **equitable student success**. While Outcomes Funding is not specifically identified as a product of this group's work, it is part of the conversation and certainly has its advocates among the membership of that workgroup. Regardless of where that discussion ultimately leads, our shared commitment around working together to create more solutions for community college students will surely make Oregon a stronger place to live and work.

The challenge is ongoing! At LBCC, we are constantly asking ourselves how we can do more to guide and support students. The editorial from the Los Angeles Times provides us with some reassurance that we as a college are on the right "path" and that we are well on our way.

My sincere thanks to all our faculty and staff—and to our extended community in Linn and Benton Counties—who join together with me in this critical work of enabling all our students to "participate in, contribute to, and benefit from the cultural richness and economic vitality of our communities." This is the true meaning of Student Success!

Thanks,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. H. ...', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.