

Date: March 17, 2015
To: Lane Community College Institutional Effectiveness Committee
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Subject: Revision of Core Themes

On February 27, 2015, approximately 30 to 40 people gathered to discuss the revision of Lane's Core Themes. Currently, Lane's mission statement is:

- Lane Community College is the community's college; we provide comprehensive, accessible, quality, learning-centered educational opportunities that promote student success.

Lane's Core Themes are:

- Academic Transfer: Foster student learning and success through accessible, quality academic transfer preparation.
- Career Technical and Workforce Development: Foster student learning and success through accessible, quality career technical preparation and workforce development.
- Foundational Skills Development: Foster student learning and success through accessible, quality foundational skill development.
- Lifelong Learning: Provide accessible, quality lifelong learning experiences for the communities we serve.

Some issues/concerns with the current Core Themes: They are redundant, and students don't fit into one category so they can be hard to measure separately. They appear as silos, and don't represent the symbiotic relationship that exists amongst the themes. There are many important aspects that are left out – Lane's emphasis on diversity, sustainability, and strong support services for students. It has been hard to connect the analysis of data related to achievement of core themes with specific efforts to make improvements.

Key Elements of Lane's Mission Statement

Participants were asked to consider the key elements or concepts expressed in Lane's Mission Statement. There was general agreement on the key elements:

Lane is the community's college
Promote student success
Comprehensive educational opportunities
Accessible educational opportunities
Quality educational opportunities

Learning-centered educational opportunities

New core themes should reflect these key elements and should help the college determine the extent to which it is achieving these elements. Standard 1.B.1 reads: “The institution identifies core themes that individually manifest essential elements of its mission and collectively encompass its mission.”

Potential Core Themes for Lane

From the notes of the core theme meeting, and additional feedback through email since that meeting, three potential core themes are emerging. I have outlined these themes and attempted to synthesize the discussion and comments related to each core theme. I am NOT suggesting that these potential core themes be used verbatim from this report. I have stayed true to the language in the mission statement, but it is important that these core themes be expressed in ways that are easily understood by the college. Each of the themes will need to be examined and discussed with a focus on clarity.

Lane is the community's college.

Some discussion points related to this theme:

1. Lane creates two-way partnerships that are responsive to community needs and the individuals within the communities.
2. Lane expands the community's view of what's possible.
3. Students thrive in their future, and contribute to the community in which they live and work.
4. Lane learns from its community and mobilizes the community to provide resources to support Lane's mission.
5. Listening, talking and working with stakeholders of the community

This element of the mission had fewer notes than the other elements. Further discussion will be needed to articulate objectives and indicators.

Lane promotes student success. Students achieve/attain their goals.

Some discussion points related to this theme:

1. After achieving their learning goals at Lane, students successfully access employment and/or higher education opportunities.
2. Students learn core outcomes and faculty assess that learning.
3. Students expand their view of what is possible. They expand their goals and explore new areas.
4. Students build skills, gain knowledge, and enrich their lives through learning. Students learn how to transfer learning from one situation to another. Faculty provide feedback that is useful for student learning and growth.
5. Completion is defined differently for different students (depends on their goal?) and Lane tracks these different types of completion. Academic progress is an important component of this – completion of developmental levels, then credit level classes, certificates, degrees transfer.

6. Lane has knowledge and awareness of the groups of students served, what their goals are, and how to best support students on their path to these goals. Includes supportive services – tutoring, counseling, guidance. Student focus groups might be useful.
7. Get, retain, educate, complete and transition students. Identify steps of this cycle from LCC to educational program to the community, continuing education and the foundation.
8. Driven by Student Success: all decisions about funding, program review, curriculum development, placement, support services, advisement, administrative action, faculty professional development and facilities are rooted in and centered on research-based best practices in student learning, retention and success.
9. Appropriate placement, progress, support and completion.

Lane provides educational opportunities that are comprehensive, accessible, high quality, and learning-centered.

Some key concepts of this theme:

1. Comprehensive: Includes needed support services, adequate learning environment, curricular and co-curricular activity, facilities; Lifelong learning opportunities; Engage students where they are; Includes foundational skill development; Includes entrepreneurial skills
2. Accessible: Affordable; Students, staff and programs reflect the diversity of our communities and Lane provides supportive environment for diversity; Students can move from campus to campus; Multiple points of entry and completion; Universal design; Full range of education modalities; Seamless transitions
3. High-quality: Quality support services and effective operations; students earn certificates and degrees that are respected and valued; foster cultural competency as a life-long pursuit that is vital to success in a global economy; integrated approach to Liberal Arts; Assessment of learning outcomes and systematic program review followed by on-going, reflective improvement of the learning environment;
4. Learning-centered: faculty are facilitators who engage students in learning; Includes technology, faculty and staff development; Integrated curricular and co-curricular realms; Applied learning across the college
5. Sustainable: Find the right balance to maximize resources; Ensure sustainability of mission; Use resources wisely; Model of sustainability in education programs and fiscal responsibility

Where do we go from here?

The second part of Standard 1.B Core Themes discusses objectives and indicators. It states: 1.B.2 “The institution establishes objectives for each of its core themes and identifies meaningful, assessable, and verifiable indicators of achievement that form the basis for evaluating accomplishment of the objectives of its core themes.”

Some possible next steps:

1. Write 3 to 5 clearly stated core theme. I suggest these statements should be about 80% set before you move on to objectives. (Keep good notes as you talk about their meaning because some of those discussions will lead you to objectives and indicators at the next step.) You need to understand what you mean by the statements, but you don't need to be fully satisfied with how they are stated. The process of identifying objectives and indicators will probably cause you to make some refinements in the words.
2. Identify one or more objective for each core theme. These objectives should further define and describe the meaning of the core theme. They should provide an area of focus. For example, if one core theme is "Students achieve their goals", your objectives might be four or five statements of different student goals. Any one of these statements doesn't tell the whole story because it is focused on just one aspect of students achieving their goals.
3. Identify at least one indicator for each objective. The indicator should help you evaluate whether or not you are accomplishing that objective.
4. The combination of indicators from all the objectives in a core theme should help you evaluate whether or not you are accomplishing that core theme.

Summary

Lane has begun the process of revising its core themes with the intent of improving the extent to which the themes reflect its mission and the extent to which the themes provide direction for celebrating areas of success and indentifying areas for improvement.

After a facilitated discussion of core themes, three potential themes are emerging. The college will need to continue to define these themes and identify objectives and indicators for them.

The flipchart notes from the core theme meeting and the email submissions about core themes are available electronically.