

THEMES

INTRODUCTION

As a precursor to your accreditation reading adventure, Las Positas College is providing the six themes as the framework through which you see the picture of our travels. Since our last accreditation visit in 2003 the college, like Gulliver, has travelled to many lands and exotic places in our efforts to secure student success as a part of their educational voyage. This introductory section, through example, provides the context of our thematic response as an institution of higher learning. The undertakings and achievements highlighted in this section are the road signs of that journey, and they mark both progress and new directions in Institutional Commitments, Evaluation, Planning and Improvement, Student Learning Outcomes, Organization, Dialogue, and Institutional Integrity. Although the journey is never finished, Las Positas College is proud of the accomplishments represented here, and we offer them as demonstrations of collective steps forward that improve student learning. As you peer through the lens of Las Positas, and come to know us for our response to the standards, remember the stepping stones we have trodden to become the college we are today. We wish you well on this adventure and look forward to a continued dialogue with the team regarding new roads we may wish to travel.

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THEME 1

INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENTS

For the life of Las Positas College, we have been on a journey formed by our commitment to students. This commitment to students has several dimensions, one of which is a commitment to diversity, inclusion, and equity. As a part of our vision and continued presence in the community, the college's face is changing to represent the needs of our ever-changing landscape.

Las Positas College's commitment to providing high-quality education involved the creation of the Campus Change Network (CCN). CCN was created four years ago and is "dedicated to increasing diversity, equity and inclusion through dialogue, reflection and action. We will create this environment by: modeling culturally competent leadership; supporting and encouraging honest communication, risk-taking and openness reinforcing the principles of equity and diversity in word and deed; and being a catalyst for education and empowering our community. As learners on our journey towards social justice, we approach our work with conviction, courage and compassion." CCN is comprised of administrators, staff, faculty and students. This group meets monthly and has also participated in annual retreats.

In the 2007/2008 academic year, subcommittees were created to implement CCN's mission. The subcommittees facilitated activities and projects including a Speakers Series, Brown Bag Discussions, and Web Presence. The Speakers Series comprised one event the first Friday of every month to enable both campus and community to participate in campus change. Events included a panel discussion celebrating National Coming Out Day and an evening with Dr. Doris Allen. The theme for the Brown Bag Discussions was "privilege", and it included an exploration of "Unpacking the Knapsack," as well as a viewing and discussion of the film "Mirrors of Change: Making Whiteness Visible."

The theme for the fall 2008 Brown Bag Series was cultural competency, and for spring 2009, it is students of the future. The fall theme for the Speakers Series was "Exploring the American Landscape: Celebrating our Diversity." Both themes exemplify CCN's mission to increase diversity and equity through dialogue and action.

CCN is also examining ways to infuse the group's goals into the curriculum and hiring practices, and documenting the impact CCN members have on campus constituencies by creating a "sphere of influence" report. This report documents other groups to which each CCN member belongs and how those groups may be influenced by the work that CCN is doing.

CCN, through its mission and programs, encourages understanding and respect for diversity. As a teaching and learning campus community, we promote the mission of Las Positas College with the focus of diversity and equity as it relates to all aspects of the institutional mission. This focus continues to guide the CCN as we support lifelong student learning.

As the college moves to its future, the commitment to campus change will change the look of education as it delivered to our dynamic community. These changes will reflect college-wide discussion and, ultimately, college-wide outcomes as they relate to diversity, inclusion, and equity.

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THEME 2

EVALUATION, PLANNING, AND IMPROVEMENT

Las Positas College participates in ongoing institutional evaluation and improvement to ensure our students receive the best educational experience possible. As with other journeys, this one continues to move us forward by trial and error and by continued discussions with faculty and staff on how the college can both simplify and integrate this theme across the institution. Las Positas College considers itself a learning college, where the students' needs are prioritized in all institutional processes and decision making. The theme of evaluation, planning, and improvement is vital to the success of students, and the college is committed to increasing its capacity to make this process meaningful for students' educational goals and achievement.

The planning cycle is comprised of goal setting, resource distribution, implementation, and evaluation. Evaluation focuses on student achievement, student learning, and the effectiveness of processes, policies, and organization. Improvement is achieved through an ongoing and systematic cycle of evaluation, integrated planning, implementation, and re-evaluation.

The institution relies upon integration of all three of these processes for ongoing development of programs and services. The college pursues all avenues available to develop, implement, and maintain these processes as they relate to the goals and overall mission of the college.

In 2001, the College Enrollment Management Committee (CEMC) was formed to help disciplines to develop schedules that would maximize access for students and offer students a broad range of choices to help them complete their educational goals. The development of the CEMC was faculty-driven and program-focused. The disciplines work with the CEMC to determine the number of sections of each course offered by a discipline, the comprehensiveness of course offerings, and the scheduling of classes to maximize students access, success, and equity. Discipline coordinators submit discipline plan proposals to the CEMC each fall semester, and through a deliberative process, the CEMC assesses the aggregate plans relative to college enrollment and productivity goals.

The CEMC has been a model of evaluation, planning, and improvement as they relate to scheduling, program planning, evaluation of program effectiveness, and program improvement. The data derived from the process serves the college in other processes as well, including resource allocation, curriculum, and facilities efficiency.

Las Positas College has been energetically engaged with process development and change through evaluation, planning, and improvement. This journey has taken the college from its small, familial origin to an institution with close to 9000 students, all with unique educational needs. Along the way, Las Positas College has made a commitment to improving itself with reviews and evaluation of college planning as it spans the activities of the institution. LPC's future will be shaped by increased access to data, increased numbers of fulltime faculty to assist in college planning and improvement, and increased awareness of its changing student body as it relates to evaluation, planning, and improvement college wide.

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STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Student learning outcomes have marked Las Positas College's path long before they became a focus of the accreditation process. The path has had some rocky patches, but the faculty of the college have not only been committed to the importance of outcomes; they have continued to develop and implement programs that infuse outcomes based learning at every juncture. One of these programs is our College Foundation Semester.

The College Foundation Semester (CFS) at Las Positas College is a learning community. The program has its roots in The Digital Bridge Academy (DBA) which began at Cabrillo College's Watsonville Center campus and serves a predominately Latino population. College Foundation Semester students are under-prepared, under-represented, and considered unlikely to succeed in college. Often at risk for financial or social problems, students find in CFS a path to a hope for a college education and a fulfilling career. For each of the faculty and staff involved in the program, one word comes to mind when describing this program: transformative—not only in terms of what happens to students, but also to the faculty themselves.

The program at Las Positas College began in 2005, after two faculty attended a two-week workshop headed by Diego James Navarro, the founder of the Digital Bridge Academy. During the intensive training, faculty played the role of the students attending their first two weeks of the program. In fall 2005, these faculty actually taught the class, Foundations/Learning Success (GNST 100), at Las Positas College. The program is an interdisciplinary and holistic approach to learning that includes courses in math, English, computer information systems, and psychology-counseling.

Since 2005, more faculty have attended the training, and three have become master teachers who are able to train others. Presently, the college has trained two counselors, two mathematics instructors, one English instructor, and one computer instructor. Other faculty and student services representatives, who have not yet received the formal training, are nonetheless committed to the program's philosophy and goals.

In fall 2008, the College Foundation Semester entered its third year. During the fall, the group of faculty and staff met once a week to discuss the progress of their students. There are now two cohorts of students: one of the cohorts is for athletes, and the Athletic Director works in conjunction with CFS to recruit eligible athletes.

The development of Student Learning Outcomes is one of the commitments threaded throughout the standards. Both the college's principles and the ACCJC/WASC standards insist that the institution consciously and robustly demonstrate the effectiveness of its effort to produce and support student learning by developing an SLO cycle.

Affective learning outcomes at the core of the program were cited in the model program, the Digital Bridge Academy, and the CFS includes them in each of its course syllabi. Examples of these are:

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- Students will attend every class.
- Students will come to class on time.
- Students are prepared for class and complete homework on time.
- Students pay attention in class, stay focused and do not distract others from doing their work.
- Students can define disruptive behavior.
- Students will make and keep agreements.
- Students will respect instructors and each other.
- Students will fully participate in activities.

In addition to the above, each class has its own set of learning outcomes.

Las Positas College has been diligent in ensuring that student success at all levels is included within its outcomes processes and assessments. The College Foundation Semester is an example of the college's commitment to providing basic skills for all eligible students and for providing exceptional faculty and staff committed to the student learning outcomes so vital to the program.

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THEME 4

ORGANIZATION

Las Positas College has in place the organizational structure to develop, implement, and review programs, curricula, and services that promote student learning. Following the shared governance model, faculty, classified staff, students, and administrators play different, yet equally important, roles in the decision-making processes on campus. The college's commitment to prioritizing student needs in all decision making characterizes these processes. As Las Positas College continues its exploration into the intentional organizational use of student learning throughout the institution, there will be extended opportunity to evaluate our organizational structure by how well it supports learning.

The committee structure on campus offers all constituent groups (students, faculty, staff and administrators) opportunities to participate in the institution's governance. Decisions at the committee level are made in accordance with the college's mission statement, values statement, and guiding principles. One of the best examples of the organizational theme can be found in the Facilities Committee. With the passage of the municipal bond, known as Measure B, came the means with which to upgrade many buildings and classrooms on campus. The Facilities Committee receives requests from the Academic Services program review, the Student Services program review, the institutional planning for new and renovated buildings, and from the educational master plan.

With this input, the committee has worked diligently to ensure that all facilities projects are planned in the best interests of students and designed to enhance students' learning. Evidence of this was a recent decision to reallocate Measure B funds to a renovation project centered on the needs of our students who are taking science and science/lab classes. In addition, the committee agreed that all classrooms in any of our new buildings must be "smart" classrooms with state-of-the-art technology that supports innovative teaching and makes instruction more accessible to students.

Student learning has also been supported and enhanced with the Facilities Committee's commitment to LEEDS standards. The emphasis on sustainability assures students that the campus is committed to a learning environment that supports environmental efforts that will ultimately reduce the college's energy expenses through solar panels installed in the college's parking facility, as well as energy-efficient cooling systems.

As the campus community grows, the Health & Safety Committee works to ensure that Las Positas College remains a place where students are and feel safe. Emergency call boxes are in convenient places around campus, escort service is provided if a student requests it, and emergencies are handled by campus security staff in a timely, organized, and efficient manner. In service to the health of the entire community, revision of the current smoking policy will confine smoking to the parking lots, away from the walkways through campus, beginning in spring 2009.

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To better serve our students' needs and support their learning, Academic Services was reorganized approximately three years ago. The process of realigning the divisions included participation of every constituent on campus. Focus groups, working teams, and college-wide meetings were held to collect the broadest amount of input possible. The reorganization resulted in a more equal division of responsibilities for administrators and their staffs, helped us improve productivity, and enhanced our curriculum.

Las Positas College has an organizational structure in place that provides students and campus staff with the open and inclusionary communication and decision-making processes that support student learning. As the college vision takes us to deepening understandings of how learning is occurring, the campus will be better prepared to evaluate its structure as a learning, student-centered institution.

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THEME V

DIALOGUE

As a college, we are exploring a variety of methods and opportunities for dialogue. These have included innovations ranging from web streaming out of the Office of the President to focus groups charged with the evaluation of dialogue opportunities on campus. As LPC explores the surprises that come with the dialogue experience, we persist in finding additional opportunities to develop this theme campus wide.

The institutional commitment to open dialogue may best be illustrated by examining discussions held in monthly all-college Town meetings, division meetings, and informal discussion groups. Faculty and staff organize their schedules so that they can participate in the Town meetings on the first Wednesday of each month. These meetings provide opportunities for members of the campus community to discuss student success and reflect on organizational challenges. The September 2007 Town meeting was devoted to discussing the traits, competencies, and challenges facing the incoming LPC president. In other months, meetings have been held to discuss important issues facing the college including the budget, consideration of a compressed academic calendar, and updates on campus facilities. In short, Town meetings serve as an opportunity to dialogue openly and honestly and use dialogue to guide institutional change.

Monthly division meetings are held the third Wednesday of each month. These are an opportunity for faculty members to meet with colleagues in their division and address the business of the institution. At division meetings, new curricula from various disciplines are introduced, reviewed, and approved by the division's faculty. This encourages dialogue between divisions and helps faculty keep current with the content of courses that are outside their own areas. In addition, faculty have the opportunity to share their concerns with their colleagues in a safe, relaxed atmosphere. As busy as faculty are with the work of their own disciplines, the monthly meetings allow them to reconnect a larger field of instruction at the college. The division meetings also give the division deans the opportunity to discuss the campus' administrative issues with the faculty.

In addition to the formal, standardized meetings, the president of Las Positas College has instituted more informal opportunities for meaningful dialogue, feedback and reflection. When she began her tenure in spring 2008, the president instituted Listening Tours during which the campus community could discuss issues that were important to students and staff. These were informal gatherings to which all were invited. She has also asked for feedback, anonymously or otherwise, about the institution's successes and areas for improvement. The president is continuing this trend by having monthly "Yak N Saks" on different days and times to continue to dialogue with as many members of the college community as possible.

Finally, to encourage dialogue with the broader community, the president has instituted a President's Advisory Council comprised of members of the larger community, including elected officials, business people, representatives from the faith communities, and other interested parties. In their monthly meetings, they address emerging trends in the community, ways the college can meet the expanding needs of all the different segments of the community, and ways to best serve the community.

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The college will continue on its pathway to dialogue and will integrate reflection and committed follow up to dialogue as well. Las Positas College will move forward with its promise to listen and learn, and to make an astonishing difference as a result.

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THEME VI

INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRITY

The college strives for honesty and truthfulness in all of its self-assessments. This accreditation self-study is evidence of the intention of Las Positas College to demonstrate the integrity that it expects of its students, faculty, employees, and administrators.

During this accreditation cycle, a faculty accreditation chair took the helm for the writing of the self-study. In spring of 2007, Las Positas College established a steering committee to facilitate the accreditation process. A faculty member and administrator, along with the Accreditation Liaison Officer, were selected to work collaboratively as co-chairs. These candidates were approved by their constituency groups. The steering committee worked together to find co-chairs, one classified and one faculty, to head each of the standards groups in the self-study, taking into account prospective co-chairs' experience, constituency representation, gender, and ethnicity. Each standard was also assigned a resource support team, comprised of administrators selected on the basis of expertise, as well as committee and processes participation. Student representatives were assigned through the Associated Students of Las Positas College.

The Las Positas College Accreditation Team represented a variety of constituencies, providing the foundation for college-wide participation and collaboration in the self-study process. Over summer 2007, the steering committee and the technical support team began work preparing for the year ahead, creating, as an example, the Las Positas College Document Repository. This online repository would serve as the data base, available college-wide, of all documents needed as evidence for the self-study and a Wiki site for accreditation, which would serve as the college-wide discussion board for drafts of the self-study. This provided universal access to the document and a chance for everyone to comment on the draft reports and review the comments of others, creating dialogue across all constituencies. These two pieces of the process ensured transparency of the process for all internal stakeholders throughout the writing of the self-study.

In addition to the college-wide accreditation self-study, various entities on campus conduct their own program reviews and self-studies within self-determined time frames. Academic Services conducts its program review with a primary objective to assure the quality of the educational program as one that fosters student learning and reflects student needs. Academic Services Program Review connects to all college planning processes and helps maintain institutional integrity through its several purposes:

- To evaluate how well an instructional program functions in relation to student learning objectives, the mission of the college, the college's institutional goals and priorities, and the needs of the of the community and the external stakeholders according to the educational master plan and Student Learning Outcomes;
- To strengthen the planning, integration, development, and implementation of educational programs in accordance with the overall college educational master plan;
- To strengthen outreach and articulation through Student Learning Outcomes and the educational master plan.

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Student Services also conducts periodic division-wide program review with the intention to promote truthfulness, to demonstrate honesty in its services and among its staff members, and to showcase and increase regard for equity and diversity on campus. Each program that is housed in the student services segment of the college conducts a self-study. These results are then published for the campus-wide community on the intranet.

Planning documents such as the educational master plan, information on the progress of Measure B, and a variety of other materials that are important to the community are mailed out periodically to the community service area, and they include specific information and updates on college programs, planning, and procedures. This ensures that external stakeholders are kept aware of the activities that take place for the college. Another way that external stakeholders are kept informed about campus planning and activities with regard to equity and diversity is through the college website. The website contains specific information on college activities, a word of welcome and introduction from the college president, and links to the accreditation wiki, campus initiatives such as the Student Success Initiative (also known as the Basic Skills Initiative), and other planning documents which can be accessed by both internal and external stakeholders.

Las Positas College works on demonstrating to its internal and external community a sense of institutional integrity and of performance to the college's potential. The paths the college has followed to bring it this far include creating and implementing clear and consistent processes and procedures, involving all constituents in developing and demonstrating the college mission, and evaluating how our demonstrations of integrity are perceived by the community at large. We will continue to follow paths that unite the college community's rich stores of knowledge, experience, and skills with the values it holds as an institution.