



Achieving the Dream™

2020

LEAH MEYER
AUSTIN AWARD



LORAIN COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Achieving the Dream's **Leah Meyer Austin Award** is the highest honor awarded to colleges in the Achieving the Dream National Network. The award recognizes institutional strength, aligned policies and procedures, a student-focused culture, notable increases in student outcomes and reduction of equity gaps.

LCCC gave me the opportunity to work toward something I really want to do. I've gained so much, and now I'm helping others achieve the same success.

—Maria Bonilla, SAIL student

OVERVIEW

Lorain County Community College (LCCC), one of two winners of the 2020 Leah Meyer Austin Award, undertook a process of improvement that lowered barriers to student success, elevated completion outcomes, and transformed the college culture. The change began when LCCC joined the Achieving the Dream Network in 2011 and adopted a "culture of care" to more proactively guide students on their journey to degrees. Faculty, staff, and institutional researchers probed into students' first-year experiences and dove deeply into disaggregated data, exposing more of what they didn't know: Students were getting hung up on completing gateway English and math courses and on even finishing their first year. More significantly, the college saw that equity gaps were falling starkly along racial/ethnic, income, and gender lines. To focus on equity and help students complete their degrees in the shortest time possible, faculty and staff redesigned developmental education, introduced case management advising, designed academic and career pathways, and implemented other proven interventions. Today, the culture of caring has led to a holistic overlay of internal and external services as well as academic and nonacademic supports to guide students. As a result:

- The three-year graduation rate increased from 8 percent in 2011 to 30 percent in 2019.
- Eighty percent of students who completed gateway English, gateway math, and 15 college-credit hours in the first year earned an LCCC credential or bachelor's degree within six years.
- Equity gaps for gateway English course completions narrowed between 2011 and 2019.



“By joining Achieving the Dream, we were able to invest in nurturing a culture where every student’s dream matters; where advancing equity and opportunity for all students permeates the entire campus.”

—Marcia Ballinger, Ph.D., President, Lorain County Community College

SNAPSHOT

In Fall 2018, according to the U.S. Department of Education Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), LCCC’s total enrollment was 10,644 students, of whom 26 percent attended full time, 61 percent were female, 72 percent were White, 11 percent were Hispanic, and 9 percent were Black/African American. The college’s data show that among the 1,071 first-time entering students, 59 percent were Pell eligible, 35 percent were first generation, 65 percent entered straight from high school, and 60 percent began attending full time.

CHALLENGES

Informed by their understanding of disaggregated data and what their students say, LCCC made increasing equitable outcomes a priority. The equity and student success challenges LCCC is addressing include:

- removing barriers to student success;
- ensuring that students have access to effective resources;
- promoting the community’s commitment to equity; and
- improving upward socioeconomic mobility and, ultimately, eradicating poverty.

In 2015, LCCC created an equity scorecard using disaggregated data on key metrics of student progression. It charts the student journey from initial contact with the college through completion and transfer or entry into the workforce. Presenting the data in a transparent way revealed that the college had progressed in some performance areas, but not all, says Jonathan Dryden, Ph.D., Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs and University Partnership. “That really helped us say, okay, we have some work to do. That got us focused on pursuing an equity agenda.”

SOLUTIONS

Working with Achieving the Dream coaches and attending training seminars and idea exchanges, such as Achieving the Dream’s annual national convening, DREAM, reshaped the mindset of LCCC’s faculty and staff. They better understand data, use metrics to assess outcomes, and listen to students’ views. This has enabled the college to address barriers to success and set closing equity gaps as a clear priority.

In order to innovate and improve equity outcomes on a regular basis, the college relies on three key strategic practices:

- promoting professional development;
- fostering innovation and scaling what works; and
- applying technology solutions.

Learning and Leading through Professional Development

LCCC’s professional development offerings since 2016 have focused on increasing awareness of equity issues, exploring how those issues influence the student experience, and providing strategies to address them. The professional development programs are designed to provide college staff and faculty with an understanding of social, racial, and economic justice issues.

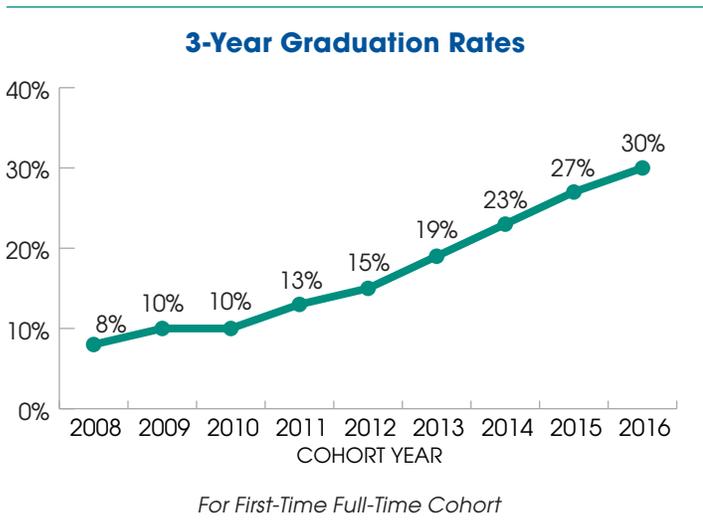
Over the past two years, the college has offered 90 different opportunities for equity-focused professional development, including presentations by nationally known experts at special events and convocations.

Fostering Innovation and Scaling Successes for Maximum Impact

LCCC's student support and academic divisions collect student feedback formally and informally, leading the college to create innovative programs that respond to student needs and to find the resources to bring them to scale. These include:

Students Accelerated in Learning program (SAIL).

Introduced in 2015 as part of an Ohio-sponsored demonstration project, SAIL is modeled after the successful Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) piloted at the City University of New York. SAIL provides academic and financial support to help students earn their associate degree within three years. Financial supports include gap tuition scholarships, textbook vouchers, and monthly grocery and gas gift cards. Academic and career supports feature high-touch academic advising, personalized career advising, priority registration, workshops, and boot camps that meet students' needs. When SAIL participants doubled the average percentage of completed credentials, "it became a moral imperative" to scale it to benefit all eligible students, says Marisa Vernon White, Vice President for Enrollment Management and Student Services. "SAIL has proven to be a game changer for students," says Ballinger, and the college has reallocated resources to allow its expansion.



The Advocacy and Resource Center (ARC) was created in response to students struggling with food insecurities, housing challenges, lack of reliable transportation, and other nonacademic obstacles. Newly opened in Fall 2019, ARC connects a wraparound network of campus and community resources and allows proactive outreach

to at-risk students before a crisis happens. One of ARC's goals is to break down stigmas around seeking help and normalize access to support.

Mentoring programs. Based on student focus group data and the results of the National Assessment of Collegiate Campus Climates, LCCC piloted a new outreach program called Mentoring Vibrant People of Color. The volunteer mentors receive monthly training and communicate with mentees frequently, sending motivational messages, tips and tricks, useful information about upcoming events, and reminders to engage with mentors.

Early College High School is a dual enrollment program the college created in 2003 with local school districts, foundations, and community partners to foster a more educated workforce and to increase the number of first-generation college graduates. The program allows students to enroll as high school freshmen and spend all four years on campus to earn free college credits. They also can access college student support services. Most students graduate with both their high school diploma and associate degree by the time they are 18 years old. Since 2003, more than 500 students from Lorain, Elyria, and around the county have earned more than 30,000 college credits, which totals a cost savings of more than \$7 million for local families. "To me, that speaks volumes about what this college means to the high school graduates of this community," says Ballinger. "It means great hope for the future."

Applying Technology Solutions to Expand Student Services and Support

Over the past year, LCCC has marshaled a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach to technology to expand its commitment to student success and deepen the engagement of those working with students. The college has leveraged both existing technology and new tools to ensure that it is reaching out frequently and consistently to find and remove barriers that might arise along the student journey. For example, the college uses text messages to nudge students, adaptive technology to improve skills, and a technology platform to personalize advising. Over 8,000 students are receiving nudges, which already have had an impact on semester-to-semester persistence. With each solution, cross-functional teams worked to ensure successful launch and application of the technology. Becoming skilled in the use of technology has been a part of the Achieving the Dream cultural transformation.

RESULTS

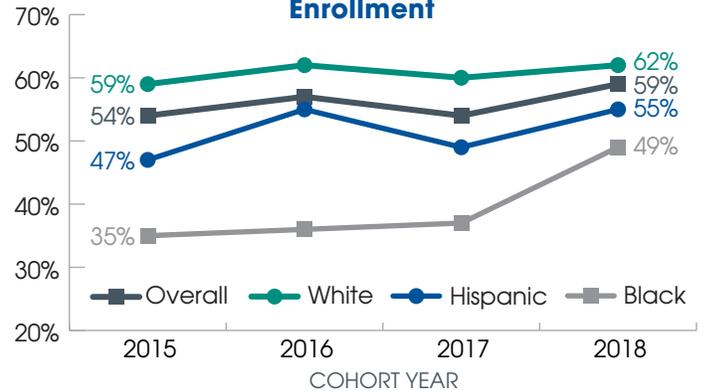
LCCC has made a commitment to equity, embracing the belief that “every student’s dream matters.” Faculty, staff, and leaders listen to students and make a point of incorporating the “student voice” in their planning, evaluation, and communications. They have ramped up seamless, holistic wraparound supports that help students stay in college. In addition, they have redesigned programs so that students complete their degrees in the shortest time while being guided to careers that pay family-sustaining wages.

LCCC’s student success work, launched through Achieving the Dream, is getting results.

- The three-year graduation rate has more than tripled from 8 percent for the 2008 cohort to 30 percent with the 2016 cohort.
- Gateway English completion increased overall and the college is narrowing equity gaps between White, Hispanic, and Black students. See chart, “Gateway English Completion within the First Year of Enrollment.”
- SAIL serves a more diverse cohort of students: All are Pell eligible and 45 percent are students of color. The average three-year graduation rate of the four cohorts is 40 percent.
- ARC has connected 622 student and community members to supports including help with housing, utility assistance, transportation; childcare, legal services, mental health, and personal counseling. In its first month, ARC served more individuals than were previously served in a three-month window.

Other impacts include accelerating students through developmental education and increasing the pace at which students are earning college-level credit.

Gateway English Completion within First Year of Enrollment



NEXT STEPS

LCCC has launched Vision 2025: 10,000 Degrees of Impact, a strategic plan representing the college’s continued commitment to student success and regional economic prosperity. Resulting from an extensive, inclusive process of engaging internal and external stakeholders, Vision 2025 aims to generate 10,000 degrees in the next five years by focusing on five areas: students, success, future, work, and community. It is LCCC’s “dream for a vibrant community where all students achieve academic and career success; industry talent needs are met and businesses start, locate, and grow; and all people connect and prosper.”

“Our student success journey, guided by Achieving the Dream, has taught us to challenge ourselves, our policies, and our practices with one question always in mind, ‘does this foster success for students?’”

—Jonathan Dryden, Ph.D., Provost/Vice President, Academic Affairs and University Partnership



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