

How to Grow LCC

Internal factors are part of the problem

Lane Community College is undergoing another of the budget crises that have affected five out of six fiscal years. While it is true that the first two were precipitated by the sudden reduction in state funding during Oregon's budget crisis, the college would have the public believe that all the blame lies on external factors and that it has acted prudently in the best interests of students. It's not quite that simple.

In the middle of its last fiscal year (FY06, ending June 30, 2006), LCC was surprised to discover that its budget was falling millions of dollars in the red. FY06 ate up much of LCC's cash cushion and FY07 was balanced through the elimination of dozens of employees who provided support services. FY08's budget, now being developed, appears to need about \$3 million in fresh cuts.

LCC's problem has been made worse by the state's latest policy, termed "equity," under which total tax revenue, local and state, is being made roughly equal per student across Oregon. If you're "rich" in local property taxes, you'll get less from Salem. It's the same calculation they use for K-12.

This means that no college can spend substantially more per student than other colleges. LCC recently gave its faculty raises to bring them close to the top range of faculties in Oregon. It also has an unusually large proportion of faculty on full-time status. A full-time instructor costs about twice as much as a comparable part-time instructor per class. LCC has a high cost structure.

Discussions aimed at fixing the budget have focused on cuts in expenses. Further cuts are likely to impact enrollment, which leads to revenue losses. The easiest solution is just the reverse. There are many classes where direct costs are far below direct revenues. Significant growth in these areas could lead Lane back to solvency.

There are many ways for LCC to grow, but right now I'll only discuss one. Lane has two satellite campuses (Florence and Cottage Grove) and seven Community Learning Centers (CLCs) at area high schools. It has never done much with them and has decided to do still less. It should instead do more than ever.

LCC argues that there hasn't been enough demand, but in fact there haven't been enough classes. Students won't take a few classes at a CLC and the rest at the main campus. It doesn't make economic sense. But the advantages of doing 100 percent at a CLC are immense. For an Elmira student, for instance, the cost of commuting to the main campus for a full-time load could be equivalent to about \$40/credit. Since total tuition is only about \$70/credit, the benefits to such students would be huge.

There are significant social considerations. Classes at CLCs would increase the number of students who could walk, bike or take public transportation to classes. The remainder would have much shorter commutes in their cars. And of course, educating more students is exactly the sort of thing Lane is supposed to be doing.

Finally, the college's finances would improve. These classes would be simple, involving little overhead, and would be taught by part-timers. The benefits would phase in over a period of years, but they would contribute to a permanent budget solution.

Unfortunately, there is also the option of self-delusion. This has been the preferred technique for years. Since state cash is not for current instructional expenses but comes in subsequent years as "reimbursement," it's possible to pretend that the current budget is balanced when FTE enrollment is lost and the damage to state reimbursement doesn't show up until later.

This leads to a death spiral. The time has come for LCC instead to discard the illusions, accept whatever short-term pain is required and begin to grow back into financial health.



Rob Spooner of Florence is a former candidate for the LCC Board. He is co-publisher of Oregon Coast and Northwest Travel magazines.

Not that he cares.

If he did, he might actually take the advice of his military commanders, who argued in 2003 that the Rumsfeld plan of war was undermanned. Now that it's too late, he takes the cautionary 2003 advice over the vehement 2007 advice, a sure sign of the megalomania of an Adolf Hitler and other delusional commanders-in-chief who lost wars they shouldn't have started. For those types, receiving authoritative advice is simply a preliminary for adolescent disobedience, the one thing Bush has always done well.

But for those of us who have always suspected psychosis, Bush's speech on Wednesday served as sad confirmation. His last-ditch attempt at redemption will require more sacrifice, more maiming, more killing and more killed. From his viewpoint, his historical legacy is worth more lives. Of course. Psychotics do think that way. Now we face two more years of this sad little man taking matters into his own little hands. If Pelosi and Reid and other Democrats do not see that as intolerable, we are, indeed, a defeated nation. Not militarily, as that's already happened. But ethically, perhaps there are a few scraps left. We could start by impeaching him. The Founding Fathers would approve.

Tom Erwin
Eugene

SIX-MINUTE WONDER

Zamma Zamma Zoom, the new advertising ditty from LTD, apparently is the sound

drawing as therapy by harvey dickson



our tax money makes while being squandered by our lovely transit district. Those special buses weren't cheap, nor were the revisions to Franklin Boulevard, and now it appears they also have an overly large advertising budget. I know a lot of business owners who would love to be able to run TV ads on such an epic scale but the cost is proportionate, read that prohibitive.

All this to save a whopping six minutes on a 22-minute run from station to station (which they still are unable to accomplish). For what? Are we trying to cut ride time or increase capacity? Wouldn't additional regular buses on express routes have cured either ill? Does anyone actually believe bus riders will arrive at their destinations early because of this and somehow make an extra contribution to society? More likely they'll sleep in a bonus snooze cycle, then ride the new buses/route for free — or should I say cour-

NOTICE TO PARENTS

school's open!

Visit your neighborhood school – and more!

Learn about Eugene School District 4J schools. Start by visiting your neighborhood school. With the district's school choice policy, parents may send their children to any school within the district, provided there is space available. All 4J schools focus on nurturing the success of each child.

You can enroll in your neighborhood school at any time. To enroll in another district school, the school choice period is from NOW until March 2 for the 2007–08 school year. The 4J Schools Guide — available at any school, at the 4J Education Center or at www.4j.lane.edu — offers an overview of each school.

Schools throughout the district will be open for visits:

Mon. Jan. 22 – Fri. Jan. 26
Mon. Feb. 12 – Fri. Feb. 16

Please phone ahead or visit www.4j.lane.edu, as each school offers different activities and times when parents can visit.

District-wide Information Meetings

Meetings at the 4J Education Center, 200 N. Monroe, will provide general information about the school application and enrollment process. Spanish translation will be provided.

Thurs. Jan. 18: 7 – 8 pm
Sat. Jan. 20: 9 – 10 am
Sat. Feb. 10: 9 – 10 am

The Application Process

To enroll your child in a school other than your neighborhood school, follow this process:

- Pick up an application at any school, at the 4J Education Center, 200 N. Monroe, or at www.4j.lane.edu.
- Return the application no later than March 2 to the 4J Education Center.

School's open – and you're welcome to visit.



More information is available at

Eugene School District 4J

200 N. Monroe Street Eugene, OR 97402 • 687-3481 TDD: 687-3447 • www.4j.lane.edu

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