

# Lorain County Community College, an Achieving the Dream case study

## Video transcript

For nearly six decades Lorain County Community College has fulfilled its promise to provide educational opportunities, designed to help students find success in life, to get students to achieve their dreams.

Our core belief at Lorain County Community College is that every student's dream matters.

But what do those dreams, look like.

For some, it's earning a degree for a higher paying job and more rewarding career.

For others, it's a rigorous education to become the first in their family to graduate college.

And for many, it means a flexible education that works within the demands of family, life and career.

Lorain County Community College allowed me to open up and allowed me to speak.

Amy Dickerson, she was my sociology teacher, and I remember me being in her classroom and I was just talking to the other students in a class and giving them my story.

And she looked at me and she said Nikita, I would really like for you to come to the faculty meeting.

And from that moment forward, I have had so much support with Lorain Community College that I cannot explain that equity team has been beautiful to me.

Beautiful.

Lorain Community College has been beautiful and generous to me they are a second home for me, they are my family.

And while the intent for all students to succeed as existed since the institution was founded in 1963.

It wasn't until the college joined, Achieving the Dream that they realised that there was room to dramatically improve on this goal.

While we were making progress, and increasing student completions, through our work with Achieving the Dream, we were able to peel back the data, and discovered that this wasn't true for all of our students.

In fact, many of our students of colour were not succeeding, and we needed to own that reality, the trends that the data revealed opened up conversations about how we could improve, so that we could meet the needs of our most at risk students.

Well we know from, from the research and also from our own data that students are much more likely to succeed if we can get them through their, what we call gateway courses, college level math and

college level English but what we saw in our data was that students were never making it out of developmental education and this was particularly true for our students of colour, and our, our, our low income students.

So what we found was that co-requisite remediation, which is when a student is enrolled in a college level class but also enrolled in the support class to help them with some of the basic skills that they may be challenged with. What we found is that students enrolled in that program, were much more likely to succeed.

And it had a particularly profound impact on our students of colour and our low income students.

And at the same time these courses were being redesigned the college created a guided pathways model that maps every student's academic plan from their first class, all the way to graduation.

Through our work with Achieving the Dream, our institution, experienced a mind shift and a culture change.

No longer could we function as an institution that asked our students college ready.

We truly needed to turn ourselves inside out and asked the question of ourselves, are we, as a college student ready, and are we ready to meet every student, wherever they are in order to get them to the finish line.

So for us the guided pathways movement was really important in terms of finding how our students were moving through our institution and really clearing the pathway for them to actually take the classes that they needed that apply towards their degree without wasting any time or any credit, and also allowing us to look at where they were falling behind, and where were the gaps in the last momentum framework that we can really address so that coupled with the culture of care that we built through our caseload management model and helping our advisors really become holistic in the way that they work with students.

All of that has really been a game changer for us.

But getting underserved students, on a clear academic pathway was only the first step.

In the fall semester we dove deep into data from our USC Race and Equity Center's National Assessment of Collegiate Campus Climates.

In that survey, we found that while we did quite well in terms of our students experience on campus.

We did find some opportunities by which we could look more deeply.

One is our students' sense of belongingness on our campus and how they matter on our campus climate, whether that's in the classroom or in other spaces on our campus.

The other thing is the racial literacy and learning.

How do our students understand race.

How do they understand it from their own perspective, and others, we found that there was opportunities for us to dig deeper.

And that's why we know that it's going to take a deep commitment for our college to commit to this equity work in order to advance student success at Lorain County Community College.

So we decided to embed the student voice within every agenda, which is monthly for the equity for students' team.

Everyone has a story to tell.

And I have a picture in my office and that picture reminds me every day.

It says, do not judge me by the chapter that you walked in on.

So, it is about sharing stories so that individuals have especially students a sense of belonging.

Once we started looking at everything through an equity lens.

It looked different.

We saw the inequities, and we worked to address them throughout the college.

And as we dug deeper, we realised that we needed to look at our students much more holistically, so that we could remove barriers, if we truly wanted them to be successful.

And that's how our culture of care has emerged.

The culture of care.

It's a phrase repeated often in Lorain County Community College by faculty staff and students.

It's the idea that caring about the whole student is critical to helping them succeed.

It means not ignoring challenges students face at home, things like food insecurity, childcare struggles, domestic abuse and mental health.

So to bring awareness to services and how to access them Lorain County Community College created the Ark in 2018 as a central hub for students to find the help they need.

If it wasn't for all the amazing programs at LCCC like Women's Link or the Ark.

I would not have made it this far, there was a time when my car was stolen.

I was in the middle of trying to end a very bad domestic violence situation.

I had to do an emergency move.

If it wasn't for putting me in touch with all the right people and helping me, I would not have accomplished what I've accomplished.

Collectively the changes Lorain County Community Colleges made during the past decade, have made a difference.

And that difference is being recognised nationally.

Achieving the Dream named LCCC a Leader College in 2015, and a 2018 LCCC received the Excellence and Student Success Award from the American Association of Community Colleges.

In 2019, LCCC was named one of the top 150 community colleges in the country by the Aspen Institute, as well as a Leader College of Distinction by Achieving the Dream.

And most recently in 2020, Achieving the Dream awarded the college with the Leah Meyer Austin Award for sustained improvements in student success.

I think it starts with, do you believe every student should succeed and deserves a fair opportunity and Lorain believes that.

To me that's the culture and the mind-set that all students regardless of their background, their income, their race or ethnicity can succeed.

I am so proud of how far Lorain County Community College has come during the past decade.

It's humbling to lead a community college, where our faculty and staff, demonstrate this unprecedented level of care and compassion for our students.

We really are helping to make every student's dream real, and that ripple effect throughout the community is remarkable to see.