

STANDARD NINE

Institutional Integrity



Introduction

Lane Community College strives to adhere to high ethical standards in its representation to its constituencies and the public; in its teaching, scholarship, and service; in its treatment of its students, faculty, and staff; and in its relationships with regulatory and accrediting agencies. By law, board and college policies conform to all Oregon Revised Statutes, which provide the foundation for the institution's integrity (9.A). Lane endeavors to adhere to the provisions of Institutional Integrity outlined in Policy 9.1.

Lane has evolved in the last 16 years into a value-driven institution that puts learning at the center of its work. In 1988, the Board of Education adopted nine Unifying Principles, including respect for the individual, inclusiveness, and providing quality learning experiences. In the 1990s, many college initiatives, including the college's Restructuring Project, relied on these principles to guide decisions. The 1995 Strategic Planning Team decided to adopt six core values. These core values guide all planning, decision-making, and day-to-day activities at the college:

- Learning
- Diversity
- Innovation
- Collaboration
- Integrity
- Accessibility.

The core values of the Strategic Plan which both reflected and built upon the Unifying Principles, are perhaps the elements most familiar to all staff and students at the college. The mission, vision, and goals of the college are directly aligned with them, and they provide common points of reference for individual work in the context of collectively held ideals of practice and conduct. Throughout this self-study, in addition to the mission and goals required by the Commission's standards, alignment of college work with the core values is also assessed.

Lane has been successful in using its core values to drive some of its best work, of which many at the college are proud. The values also offer a mirror by which the college may reflect on any shortcomings.

Subscription to High Ethical Standards

Through its Oregon statutes, policies and procedures, the college guides its governing board members, administrators, faculty, and staff to maintain high ethical standards in the management and operations and in all of its dealings with students, the public, organizations, and external agencies (9.A.1). This issue is addressed in a number of policies and procedures on record and in practice. Oregon law and board policies set the framework for the college's operational policies and procedures for the learning environment, non-discrimination, faculty and staff treatment, student rights and responsibility, and privacy rights.

The Oregon Revised Statutes (ORS) provide the guiding document and directive under which the college operates as a public agency in Oregon. All board policies and the College Online Policy and Procedure (COPPS) manual adhere to ORS. In addition, board and COPPS policies are guided explicitly by the *Oregon Government Standards and Practices Laws: a Guide for Public Officials*. This is a manual on government ethics produced by the Oregon Government Standards and Practices Commission, a seven-member appointed body confirmed by the Oregon Senate.

In accordance with the ORS, the board must act ethically and professionally, and with due respect to confidentiality when appropriate. Board members affirm that they abide by the code of conduct of the college. To ensure adherence to its own policies, board member performance is evaluated annually; administrators, faculty, and staff have an opportunity for input relevant to how effectively board members are meeting these standards.

Lane's board policies for Treatment of Learners and Treatment of Staff provide overarching guidelines for behavior by the board, administrators, faculty and staff in their daily interactions with students and each other (Board Policies A.020 and A.030 respectively). The Treatment of Learners policy requires the college, among other matters, to be welcoming to and accepting of learners; to provide clear

expectations of learners' rights and responsibilities; and to provide for learners' safety, privacy and security. The Treatment of Staff policy ensures, among other matters, that personnel rules are clear; that processes are in place for redress of grievances; that staff are free to express ethical dissent; that they operate in a collaborative and participative environment; and that results are a measure of staff success.

The effectiveness of policies regarding treatment of learners and students is included in the Board Monitoring Reports. Student complaints are tracked and provide data about students' own perception of their treatment; the formal student complaint process offers the college an opportunity to fully investigate and record such complaints and develop improvement plans when necessary.

Board Policy B.040 lays responsibility for the quality and integrity of the institution upon the board. An essential aspect of institutional integrity lies in sustaining alignment between the college's mission and vision—i.e., the college's public declarations of its own institutional intentions—and its practices. In 2003-04, the board reviewed and approved the vision, mission, core values and Strategic Plan of the college to ensure that they guide the operation of the college; this occurs regularly. The board also evaluates the extent to which the college fulfills its mission, and is responsible for stewardship of resources. Monitoring Reports inform the board of important progress and challenges in this area.

In addition to the college board's ethical responsibilities to the institution, the president has executive responsibility and oversight in this regard; the president must assure that every activity, decision, or organizational circumstance is lawful, prudent, and in accordance with commonly accepted business and professional ethics (Board Policy A.010). The president is also responsible for assuring that procedures and decisions are safe, dignified, unintrusive and confidential (Board Policy A.020). To ensure inclusion of as many points of view as possible, the president is obliged to inform and support the board by providing wide-ranging information about issues at hand.

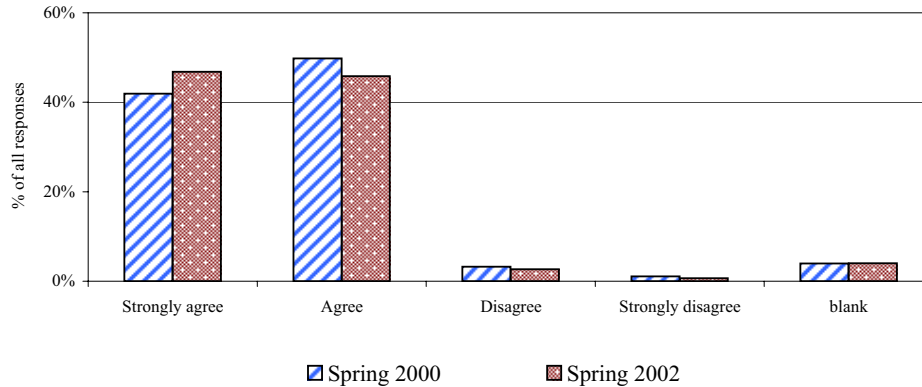


Figure 9-1: Lane's environment is welcoming and accepting to all students (Source: ACT Student Opinion Survey—Additional Questions, Spring 2002).

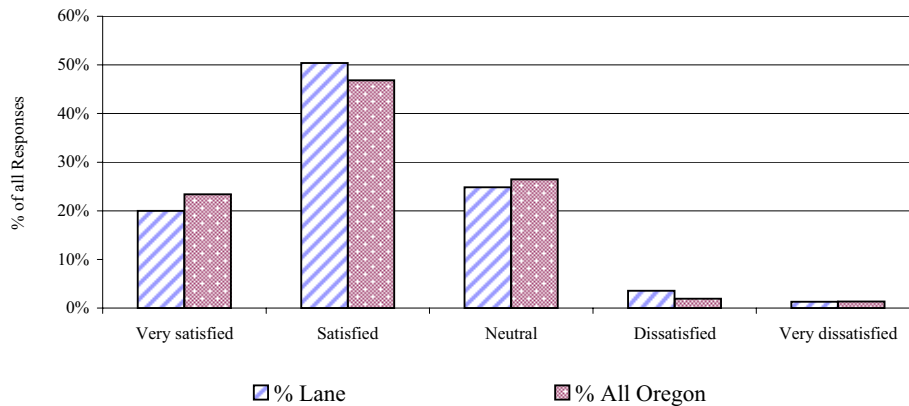


Figure 9-2: Satisfaction with ethnic/racial harmony at Lane (Source: ACT Student Opinion Survey, Spring 2002).

The Learning Environment

Lane is committed to providing an atmosphere conducive to learning and free from discrimination, harassment, and retaliation. The college is committed to equal opportunity in education and employment. Its core value of diversity requires all staff to:

- welcome, value and promote diversity among staff, students and our community;
- cultivate a respectful, inclusive and accessible working and learning environment (Figure 9-1);
- work effectively in various cultural contexts to serve the educational and linguistic needs of a diverse community (Figure 9-2);
- develop capacity to understand issues of difference, power and privilege.

The stated mission of Lane's Human Resources office of Affirmative Action, Diversity, and Equal Opportunity "is to ensure equal opportunity and promote diversity among the staff and students, and within the college community as consistent with applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations, and to provide a working and learning environment that is free from discrimination, harassment and retaliation."

Maintaining the health and well-being of all students and employees is an essential aspect of safety; Lane makes efforts to improve the health and well-being of every employee through its Employee Wellness Program. The college has experienced challenges with respect to the effects of its buildings' indoor environmental quality on the health and safety of staff and students. (See Standard 8 for an extended discussion of the college's response to these challenges.)

Lane's core values of diversity and adherence to non-discrimination also provide the basis for its accommodations for people with disabilities. The college adheres to the Americans with Disabilities Act (3.B.1, 3.D.2, see Standard 3; 8.A.5, see Standard 8), and has developed policies and complaint procedures to address issues when they arise.

Non-Discrimination

Board policy promotes a safe and non-discriminatory learning environment for students, faculty and staff. The policy affirms Lane's commitment to equal opportunity in education and employment.

In June 2004, the board significantly revised Policy D.070, which protects students from discrimination. The policy states, in part:

Under no circumstances shall an applicant who is otherwise qualified be denied admission or given a preference for admission to the college based on an individual's race, color, national origin, sex, age, marital status, familial relationship, sexual orientation, pregnancy, disability, religion, expunged juvenile record, or veterans' status.

Faculty, too, are protected from discrimination by college policy and by the faculty contract. In Article 7 of the collectively bargained agreement between the LCCEA and the college, faculty agree to adhere to the principles of free choice and refrain from discrimination against any employee because of age, race, religion, sex, physical limitations, marital status, sexual orientation, or national origin.

Classified staff are protected from discrimination by policy and by Article 5 of the LCCEF contract, which prohibits discrimination based on race, sex, age, creed, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, or political affiliation.

Harassment is prohibited by board policy and college policy; policies are in place to address racial/ethnic and sexual harassment. Informal and formal complaint processes are in place to respond to incidents as they arise.

Board policy guides the ethical behavior of management employees as well. According to Article 3.1 of the Management Employees Working Conditions document, "It is the

responsibility of management employees to perform their duties as outlined in a college-approved job description, to work in support of the goals and objectives of the college, to administer and follow the policies and procedures adopted by the administration and/or the Board of Education."

Faculty Treatment

In May 1998, the college president, Lane Community College Education Association (LCCEA) president, Lane Community College Employee Federation (LCCEF) president, and Management Steering Committee chair agreed to and signed a set of labor relations principles, which include the principle that "[m]anagement acknowledges and respects the role of unions in representing the interests of employees . . . [and] will interact with each other and build relationships based upon trust, honesty, openness and mutual respect."

The Work Roles and Relationships Council developed a series of documents that articulated in clear terms a set of principles to guide behavior among and between employee groups across campus. This document reflected a movement to a more self-directed and collaborative working culture. Since then, the college has tried to develop a more collaborative and team-based approach to work among faculty, classified staff, and administrators and managers. The council itself was suspended, but this work provided one basis for improvement of working relationships.

Classified Staff Treatment

Lane has raised its expectations for treatment and inclusion of classified staff as team members essential to the learning environment. Classified staff are formally involved in governance work of the college, and the college has made resource commitments to ensure their participation. To reflect this fact, the college has added a standard element—Standard 6.F: Classified Staff Role in Governance (6.F, see Standard 6).

Article 12.7.2 of the LCCEF contract addresses respectful behavior between management and staff. By policy, the president ensures fair treatment of employees, overseeing the development of personnel policies that clarify personnel rules for staff, provide for effective

handling and redress of grievances, and protect against wrongful conditions.

Student Rights and Responsibilities

In addition to the Treatment of Learners policy, COPPS policies define the role of the college in students' lives. The college maintains a neutral viewpoint on student clubs that it allows to use college facilities, allowing freedom of association and expression for these extracurricular activities. According to COPPS, the purpose of Lane Community College is to transmit knowledge, pursue truth, support student development and contribute to the community which the college serves. Minimum standards for academic freedom and conduct are outlined in the Student Code of Conduct. Students and staff are required to exercise their academic freedom responsibly.

The catalog is recognized as an implied contract between students and faculty, and this document, along with syllabi, guide behavior and expectations with respect to plagiarism and grades. There have been very few examples of plagiarism rising to the institutional level, a testament to the functioning of procedures at the classroom level between faculty and students; appropriate procedures are in place for plagiarism problems when they do arise.

The administration does not change grades awarded by faculty; the Academic Council is the only body which is authorized to do so.

Official policies for addressing student complaints provide uniform guidance for all complaint procedures. At hearings, it is expected that all parties suspend judgement fully, investigate the issue at hand, provide due process, and support the complainant.

Privacy

Since access to student and employee information is a regular and necessary part of many Lane employees' work, maintaining the letter and spirit of privacy laws and policies is essential to the college's integrity. By board policy, COPPS policy, and Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) guidelines, Lane employees and students have the same rights of privacy as any other citizen. Lane maintains a FERPA webpage to clarify important issues about the act

for employees.

The faculty contract calls on the college to respect the privacy of faculty members, including respect for the privacy of faculty mailboxes, offices, email, phones, computers, and personal material.

For students, faculty and staff, the use of Banner has provided improved privacy and security. Instead of Social Security numbers, the college uses "L" numbers—identifying numbers randomly assigned—which deter the misuse of personal information routinely used in the process of conducting college business.

Review of Policies

Lane regularly evaluates and revises, as necessary, its policies, procedures and publications to ensure continuing integrity throughout the institution (9.A.2). Policies and procedures are evaluated and revised as a part of the college's normal operations and as part of the board's continual development. The president directly addresses board policy by submitting monitoring data which offer the occasion for policy review; the president is also required to advise the board if it is not in compliance with its own policies; the board also monitors its own performance (Board Policy B.110). In July 2004, the board completed its comprehensive review of board policies, making changes as needed. Board Policy B.130 requires that the board follow an agenda that reviews all policies and continually improves board performance. A three-year cycle of policy review is in place. Board policy also provides a recursive mechanism to consider new issues in relation to policies that have already been established (A.090).

A procedure is in place for reviewing and revising COPPS policies and procedures annually to ensure that the information is current and that all links and references are correct. This procedure is overseen by the senior administrator in charge of the policy domain each year (e.g., the vice president for instruction and student services for instructional policies).

Formal standing committees and councils review and evaluate their policies periodically. Faculty Council has evaluated their policies and procedures for the last two years. All publications

are reviewed by appropriate staff across campus; the schedule and course descriptions are reviewed by faculty each year.

The Hiring Process Team has undertaken a comprehensive review of hiring training, processes and policies. In May 2003, they made many recommendations to improve alignment of the college's hiring practices with its vision, mission and core values, with particular attention paid to diversity. Many of those recommendations have been implemented.

Accurate Representation

The college represents itself accurately and consistently to its constituencies, the public, and prospective students through its catalogs, publications, and official statements (9.A.3). According to the department of Marketing and Public Relations, Lane has a comprehensive graphic identity in order to create a high-quality and consistent image of the college. To ensure that publications are professionally designed, present clear and accurate information, contain correct grammar, punctuation and spelling, present a consistent image of the college, and follow college and federal guidelines, all display advertising and marketing publications intended for off-campus use must be approved by the college's marketing coordinator.

The college works to ensure that all communication from the college presents Lane positively and accurately. The Marketing and Public Relations Department, which has won numerous awards, including a first place for Lane's class schedule in 2003, prepares guidelines and style guides to ensure uniform representation. (See also Policy 3.1.)

As part of its "Creating Our Respectful Environment" (CORE) initiative, the college posted signs in English and in Spanish, reminding all students, staff, and visitors that everyone at Lane is entitled to respect and freedom from harassment. The college is making efforts to post more signs around campus in both English and Spanish.

Conflict of Interest

Lane's policies define and prohibit conflict of interest on the part of the governing board members, administrators, faculty and staff (9.A.4).

The definition and prohibition of conflict of interest at Lane conforms to the Oregon Government Standards and Practices Commission manual on government ethics and to the ORS definition, whereby any action, decision or recommendation by a person acting in an official capacity which would have the effect of private pecuniary benefit or detriment of the person or person's relative or any business with which the person or a relative of the person is associated, is prohibited. (The policy makes some provision for exceptions.)

Board Policy B.160 directs board members to represent unconflicted loyalty to the interests of the citizens of the district. Policy D080, which has recently been reviewed and revised by the board, mandates that employees avoid conflict of interest. COPPS policy prohibits management employees from hiring or supervising a member of their family. In 2003, the board and ET held training sessions on conflict of interest and ethics.

Recently, the college made it clear that even personal use of college-owned cell phones could constitute inappropriate pecuniary benefit, and such uses were deemed impermissible. Because of concerns about academic freedom and free speech, employees are allowed use of Internet and email for personal use which is covered by college policy.

A new policy guiding Ethical Conduct of All Employees has had a first reading by the board in July and will be approved in September.

Although the college has hiring policies and procedures in place for contracted staff which aim both to ensure that the most qualified person for the job is hired and also to be in alignment with the college's Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity guidelines, practice has sometimes contradicted these policies and procedures for non-contracted staff. Hiring for non-contracted and non-recurring staff is much more informal; often no search occurs. Managers have been at their discretion to hire anyone they wish for short-term hiring. This policy has had the potential to raise issues of conflict of interest. The Hiring Practices Improvement Team has developed new policy, effective Fall 2004, to address this issue. The practice of developing pools of candidates

available for non-contracted work is being encouraged.

Free Pursuit and Dissemination of Knowledge

Lane's policies and practices demonstrate its commitment to free pursuit and dissemination of knowledge consistent with the institution's mission and goals (9.A.5). One aspect of such pursuit of knowledge is the ability to freely express one's opinions and ethical dissent. Board policy prohibits discrimination against staff members for expressing such dissent. Lane also conforms to Oregon "whistleblower" laws, protecting employees from retaliation in the case of discovering of wrongdoing by the college.

COPPS also has a policy covering Freedom of Inquiry and Expression, which acknowledges the indispensable character of such freedom for students to pursue their educational and vocational goals. The policy acknowledges that in order to provide conditions that are conducive to the transmission of knowledge, the search for truth and the development of the student, the college must commit to the principles of democratic freedom for itself and others. Those few times when individuals have challenged freedom of inquiry and expression, the college has consistently supported academic freedom.

Article 15.2 of the collectively bargained faculty contract also protects academic freedom in the classroom. It outlines the responsibility for protecting freedom in the classroom in discussion and presentation of the subject matter: "The professional freedom of faculty includes the right to explore and discuss controversial issues and divergent points of view, including evaluating, criticizing, and advocating their point of view concerning the policies and programs of the college." (4.B.7, see Standard 4.)

The college has developed a policy on curriculum equity which strongly encourages instructors to establish curriculum equity by portraying women and men from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds in a wide range of roles, including content by and about culturally and ethnically diverse people whenever feasible, and inviting culturally and ethnically diverse persons as guest speakers, among other things. This policy is

intended to guide faculty in their efforts to infuse diversity into curriculum in all disciplines, but it is not intended to restrict faculty's academic freedom, and makes no such provisions.

Analysis and Appraisal:

The college has undergone significant changes in the last ten years with respect to issues of ethics and integrity. While the college had policies in place regarding ethical behavior of managers, faculty, and staff in 1994, there was an implicit assumption that such policies had no "teeth" and that there were no consequences for obvious ethical transgression. The culture is very different at Lane now, and consequences for such transgressions are evident. Unethical behavior is a job performance issue for all employees, and, as such, subject to progressive discipline, including dismissal.

The openness of the budget process and information about it also illustrate a positive change in institutional integrity at the college. Ten years ago, budget information was considered "privileged" by the previous Executive Team. The administration was reluctant to publicize budget or financial information when it might reflect negatively on its administration of college affairs. Currently, the Budget Development web pages maintained by College Finance publicize all financial information, including criteria for cuts, etc. While many complain that they are unable to properly analyze the complex documents, the open access to raw data represents a significant movement forward.

Diversity is a core value of the college, yet ensuring that all embrace it is a challenge. In Spring 2003, a spate of racial incidents threatened to erode the college climate significantly, a circumstance which policies alone could not address. President Spilde responded by sending a memo to the entire college community and convening an all-college gathering. Several hundred members of the college came to the gathering, filling Forum Building Room 307. The president publicly acknowledged and condemned the activities, and offered support to those in the communities of color who were wounded by the incidents. She also immediately convened a Response Team to investigate ways to address the

problem. The Team came up with a Zero Tolerance policy and a number of other recommendations to the college to improve the college climate.

The president received more than fifty emails in reaction to the incidents and the college's efforts in their wake, including some from communities affected. While there was deep concern about the incidents and the deep-rooted problem they reflected, the overwhelming majority of responses to the gathering and the Response Team's recommendations was positive.

While these changes have been felt across the college, there are still challenges in developing a common understanding of institutional integrity. During the self-study review process, in which seven members from all employee groups gathered and read the first draft of the self-study, individual stories about ethical transgressions and perceptions of a lack of integrity emerged.

These stories led the standards team and the administration to reflect on a shortcoming of the college: As stated in the introduction, the core values of the college are generally well understood by the campus community, especially those of learning, diversity, and innovation. However, while "integrity" is a core value, it may also be the value least commonly understood and most subject to misinterpretation. There are clear, well-defined policies in place and procedures to follow for redress when necessary. But developing trust among all college constituents takes longer than making improvements.

Strengths:

- The college places a high value on ethical treatment of learners and staff.
- Since 1994, Lane has developed significantly in its value-orientation; in its openness and inclusiveness; and in its responsiveness to problems when they arise.
- Lane provides procedures for redress of wrongs; advocates and contact people for each policy are in place.
- Freedom of inquiry and expression are strongly supported in and out of the classroom.

- Policies and procedures are clear, well-defined, publicized on the web, and grounded in Oregon law. They are regularly evaluated for integrity and changes are announced.
- When approved in September, the board policy on Ethical Conduct of All Employees will provide a unified statement on ethical conduct to the college community.
- The budget process is open. Transparency of the budget to non-specialists is improving.
- In their daily work, dedication to the college mission, and adherence to core values, policies and procedures, the college community cultivates an environment of respect, fairness, honesty and openness.
- The college works towards fulfilling its duty as a public institution to steward the resources invested by the community.
- Ethical expectations of students are clearly outlined; the college is consistent in its student disciplinary practices.

Challenges:

- Personnel policies are located on COPPS, but are not together in an obvious and centralized place on the website for ready and easy comparison.
- Information regarding ethical behavior and integrity is not easy to find on the current Lane website using intuitive search terms and is not commonly located in a compendium.
- Some staff have not understood that Oregon Statute and Board Policy A.030 protects "whistleblowers" from retaliation by the college.
- As the college moves more toward values of collaboration and teamwork, there have been some isolated concerns that definitions about what constitutes "supervision" are less than clear.
- While many policies and procedures are clear, published, and readily available, departmental policies, charters and handbooks present a challenge to consistency of rules and expectations across the college; the decentralized character of such documents have advantages as well as these inherent disadvantages.
- Clarifying the distinction between personal ethics and morality and institutional integrity is an area for organizational development.

- There is a process for faculty to provide feedback on policies by contract. However, the process for review by all employees could be more clear.

Improvement Plans:

- The college will collect board policies, COPPS policies, and other policies in a centralized compendium on its website with intuitive search terms for the most effective use by the college community. The president will announce this compendium to the college community in September.
- The college will devise a clear COPPS policy to outline protections against retaliation for whistleblowers; this will elaborate on and clarify Board Policy A.030, which implicitly protects whistleblowers but which will be clarified in laypersons' terms.
- As part of its ongoing negotiations and governance activities, the administration, managers, and faculty and classified staff representatives will review the issue of how team-based work impacts supervisory roles and expectations.
- The college will make it clear that all handbooks and departmental policies will align with college policies and agreements. It will develop a policy which guides readers of specialized handbooks to college documents for clarification.
- Lane's core values provide focal points for the ethical development of the entire college community. For the past two years, the college has used the core values of learning and diversity as themes for its all-college Spring Conferences, and has been highly successful in developing a common understanding of the importance of these values to all who work at Lane. Since integrity is also a core value, the college will consider integrity as a topic for in-service activities.
- The college will develop a plan to improve the process by which employees provide feedback regarding policy changes.

