



President's Update | July 28, 2026

ESTEEMED LCC FACULTY AND STAFF,

As we enter Fiscal Year 2027, I want to take a moment to reflect on and celebrate what we have accomplished together and share how our budget investments will position Lamar Community College (LCC) for continued growth and impact.

A budget is much more than a financial document. It is a statement of our values and priorities. It reflects what matters most to us as an institution and where we choose to invest our resources to advance student success, strengthen our communities, and support our employees. This past year has been one of remarkable progress. Despite serving one of Colorado's most rural and geographically isolated regions, LCC continues to demonstrate that geography does not determine destiny. Through innovation, partnership, revenue diversification, disciplined stewardship, and an unwavering commitment to our mission, we have expanded opportunities for students while strengthening our institution's long-term sustainability.

A Year of Growth and Achievement

Together, we have achieved extraordinary results. **Enrollment increased each semester throughout the year**, with summer enrollment at census reflecting a 26% increase in FTE compared to the previous year. Our workforce programs continue to expand in response to employer demand. We launched the **College's first bachelor's degree** through the Colorado Community College System (CCCS) consortium. We developed new training opportunities in Heavy Equipment Operations, Plumbing, Water Quality, Field Crop Scout, Massage Therapy, and Sterile Environment Processing. Our healthcare programs continue to set the standard for excellence, achieving NCLEX pass rates ranging from 93% to 100% and job placement rates between 90% and 100% within six months of graduation.

The Equine Business Management Program continues to prepare students for successful careers in the equine industry through hands-on learning, industry certifications, and 100% internship participation. **More than 90% of graduates secure full-time employment** within six months, with students gaining experience through partnerships with leading organizations and serving clients from across Colorado and neighboring states. The program plays an important role in supporting the region's more than \$500 million agricultural economy through

strong industry partnerships and workforce development. An example of the program's strong reputation is the demand for our colt-starting training. Horse owners from Colorado, New Mexico, Kansas, Texas, and Oklahoma entrust our students with starting their colts. During the Spring 2026 semester, **the program required 18 colts for student training and received 45 applications.**

We built **new stalls** for our horses and rodeo programs and purchased a **new trailer.** We added lighting to the outdoor facilities and added a dedicated assistant coach to our rodeo program.

The Cosmetology program continues to make strong progress in preparing students for licensure. This year, **14 students have successfully passed their state board examinations** on their first attempt, including 7 Cosmetology, 2 Barber, and 5 Nail Technician students. To further support student success, the program developed a comprehensive, step-by-step **practical exam study guide and expanded board-preparation resources** by sharing the guide and inviting previous graduates who have not yet earned licensure to participate in board-preparation classes. Currently, 23 graduates (10 Cosmetology, 7 Barber, and 6 Nail Technician) are eligible to take their state board examinations and have committed to completing in the near future. Additional students completing the summer semester will soon join this cohort.

LCC serves a student population that is 56% first-generation, 54% Pell-eligible, and 40% Hispanic or Latinx. And our outcomes **continue to exceed state and national benchmarks.** This year:

- Students of color achieved a 63.4% fall-to-fall retention rate, exceeding institutional and national averages.
- Pell-eligible students achieved the highest on-campus retention rate at 64%.
- Adult learner enrollment increased 33% in the fall and 40% in the spring, compared with a 3% increase statewide.

We also continued to lead with innovation. The first cohort of our newly launched ASAP project achieved impressive retention, 94% credit completion, and 90% of students remain on track to graduate. Additionally, LCC launched Colorado's **first Rural Adult High School Diploma Program** (the 2nd HS Diploma pathway in the system) within the community college system, providing new opportunities for adult learners seeking to advance their education and careers. 44 adults have enrolled, 14 have completed, and 24 are completing this summer. We secured the **Kansas Border-State Tuition**, resulting in a **29% increase in Kansas enrollment** in Fall 2025 and an additional 7% increase in Spring 2026.

The College was also awarded a **\$249,000 Perkins Innovations Grant**, which enabled us to purchase new industry-standard welding equipment for our concurrent enrollment partner schools in Holly, Springfield, Kit Carson, and the LCC welding shop. This initiative will expand

access to our welding certificate programs at **4 new high schools**, where students have the opportunity to earn 2 welding certificates before graduating high school and complete the AAS in Welding with one more year at LCC.

These accomplishments are possible because of the dedication, innovation, and commitment of our faculty and staff.

Investing in Student Success

One of our most important FY2027 investments is strengthening student success and enrollment management. **The newly established Vice President for Student Services and Success position, led by Dr. Formon Thompson**, will ensure that every student experiences a seamless pathway from recruitment and enrollment through graduation. Students thrive when institutions intentionally connect outreach, onboarding, advising, academic support, career planning, and completion strategies. This leadership role will help us build upon our strong momentum while creating a more coordinated and student-centered experience.

The division of Students Services and Success includes Admission & Recruitment, Advising, Student Success Center & Programs (Cultivates@LCC, ASAP, COSI Achieve, Aspira/Title V), Accessibility Services, Testing, Melissa's Gift Food Pantries, Counseling and Behavioral Health student services, Student Code of Conduct, Financial Aid, Housing & Food Services, Student Life, and dotted lines to student accounts and Concurrent Enrollment.

In addition, **Gabriel Benabides is now serving as Director of Enrollment, Advising, and Retention**. This reclassification reflects a significant expansion in leadership responsibilities and institutional impact. This role will assume ownership and coordination of recruitment, enrollment, advising, and retention functions to enhance the College's operational effectiveness and advance its strategic priorities. It will also supervise three staff members in the division. The position coordinates our enrollment and student success strategies, strengthening cross-departmental collaboration and advancing institutional goals.

In addition, this year we will be adding the **Office of Career and Workforce Development** under Academic Affairs, focused on helping LCC develop and implement a **Career First Culture** on campus where **every student clearly understands the pathway from enrollment to employment** and receives support for participating in work-based learning and internship opportunities.

Strengthening Academic Programs Through New Faculty Investments

As part of our FY2027 budget, we are investing in additional positions in several high-demand workforce areas. New faculty hires in the Trades, Agriculture, and Nursing will help us meet growing student demand, expand program capacity, strengthen employer partnerships, and ensure students will receive the hands-on, industry-relevant training needed for success.

Another significant investment for FY2027 is the creation of a **Dean of Integrated Health position**. **Dr. Morgan Clark** has been selected to serve in this capacity, reporting to Kelly Emick, VP of Academics. Healthcare remains one of the most critical workforce needs across

Southeast Colorado and throughout rural America. As we prepare to launch the new healthcare degrees, we recognize the need for focused leadership to coordinate program expansion, accreditation, employer partnerships, clinical placements, faculty collaboration, grant implementation, and student support services. The Dean of Integrated Health will provide strategic leadership across our growing portfolio of healthcare and allied health programs, including Behavioral Health, Exercise Science, Nursing, EMS, Water Quality, Sterile Environment, and soon, our evening nursing program as we advance rural healthcare in our region. This role will help position LCC as a regional leader in rural healthcare workforce development and expand access to high-demand healthcare careers. Most importantly, this investment directly supports our mission to address critical workforce shortages in our communities while creating life-changing career opportunities for students.

Transforming Learning Environments Through Facility Improvements

The physical environment where students learn matters. This year, we will continue the renovations and improvements to several areas, including Bowman, TBH Dorm, and parking lots. These upgrades are designed to modernize instructional and living spaces, enhance student learning experiences, improve functionality, and create environments that support the future needs of our academic and workforce programs. These investments reflect the quality, innovation, and excellence we strive to provide every day.

Continuing Our Commitment to Employees

Student success begins with employee success. Over the past year, we have continued to make significant investments in our employees through salary equity adjustments, market-based compensation reviews, professional development opportunities, tuition reimbursement, and strategic staffing enhancements, strengthening our ability to serve students.

Since FY2024, **100% of our positions have benefited from a salary equity adjustment, a comprehensive market benchmark review, or a salary compression adjustment**, demonstrating our commitment to maintaining competitive compensation and recognizing the value of our employees. As part of our FY2027 investment, 17 employees received salary adjustments above the annual across-the-board increase. We are proud to report that all traditional full-time exempt employees at LCC **now earn at least \$43,155 annually**, exceeding the Colorado family-sustaining wage benchmark for our region. This milestone reflects our deliberate commitment to investing in our employees and ensuring they receive competitive, sustainable compensation.

While we celebrate this achievement, we recognize our work is not finished. As the College continues to strengthen its financial position, we remain committed to making ongoing investments in employee compensation, recognizing that attracting, retaining, and rewarding exceptional talent is essential to advancing student success and fulfilling our mission. In addition, we will continue to invest in our workforce by providing tuition reimbursement for FT employees pursuing additional education and credentials during FY27. These investments reflect our belief that supporting and developing our employees is essential to attracting and retaining exceptional talent and, ultimately, advancing student success.

A Future Filled with Opportunity

When we look at the accomplishments of this past year, we see far more than statistics and reports. We see adults earning credentials they once believed were out of reach. We see first-generation students changing the trajectory of their families. We see employers finding talent, communities growing stronger, athletic teams winning championships, and employees making an extraordinary difference every day. Strong outcomes require strong stewardship. Since 2023 to FY26:

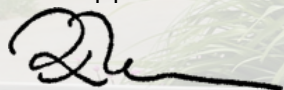
- General Fund balances increased 95%.
- Auxiliary Fund balances increased 38%.
- A \$1.2 million energy-efficiency loan balance was paid off five years early.
- LCC achieved the **second-highest** Composite Financial Index in CCCS with a score of 7.8.

This year, we realized over \$19 million in campus infrastructure, facilities improvements, modernized student learning environments, and capital improvement projects. These investments position the College for long-term sustainability and growth.

Because of your hard work, LCC enters FY2027 from a position of strength. Thank you for your dedication, resilience, innovation, and commitment to our students. Together, we continue to prove that small rural colleges can create extraordinary impact through collaboration, innovation, and an unwavering focus on student success.

The future of LCC is bright, and I am grateful to be building it alongside each of you.

With appreciation,



Dr. Rosana Reyes
President

UPDATES

- We are seeing a full year of positive enrollment growth compared to last year. Compared to Spring 2025, Spring 2026 enrollment **increased by 6%** in FTE and 4% in headcount. This positive momentum has continued into the summer term, with Summer 2026 census enrollment reflecting a **26% increase in FTE** over the previous year.
- The College has been selected as one of only two CCCS institutions to participate in the **Colorado Work-Integrated Learning (CO-WIL) Consortium**. This initiative expands career-connected learning opportunities for students. Through a partnership with Riipen, LCC will integrate **paid real-world, employer-sponsored projects into academic programs, providing students with valuable hands-on experience** while strengthening workforce connections. Running through June 2029, the initiative also provides faculty and student stipends, supports curriculum innovation, and reinforces LCC's commitment to

preparing graduates for high-demand careers through experiential learning.

- The College secured **over \$460,000 in funding for COSI Achieve**. COSI Achieve is a student success initiative of the Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative (COSI) through the Colorado Department of Higher Education that combines financial assistance with comprehensive wraparound support services to help students enroll, persist, and complete a certificate or degree.
- Since May 2026, the College has secured several donations, grants, and scholarships to directly support students' financial need, totaling **over \$176,000**.
- LCC is proud to partner with **High Plains Community Health Center to provide convenient on-campus health services** for students, employees, and community members beginning August 29, 2026, in the Wellness Center. This collaboration expands access to essential health resources, supporting student success, employee well-being, and the overall health of our community while reinforcing LCC's commitment to reducing barriers to persistence and completion. To celebrate the partnership, High Plains Community Health Center will host a Welcome Back Bash BBQ during the Welcome Back Week in August.
- Following a student vote, the student body approved a \$3-per-credit-hour fee, capped at 12 credit hours, to provide all enrolled students with **full access to the LCC Fitness Center beginning in Fall 2026**. This initiative expands access to wellness resources and supports the College's commitment to student health, well-being, and success.
- Our facility team has successfully expanded our **freezer capacity** in partnership with Sodexo to accommodate increased need for refrigerated food to meet the needs of our growing residential population.
- The College continues to implement **Pageup, a new recruitment and hiring system** as part of the CCCS initiative across all 13 colleges. The College has transitioned all recruitment and hiring activities into the new platform to promote consistency, compliance, and a more efficient hiring process. Hiring managers are actively utilizing the system to manage job postings, review applicants, advance candidates, coordinate interviews, and approve employment offers. We appreciate the continued collaboration and flexibility of our campus community as we work together to ensure a successful implementation.
- City officials recently informed us that the Escondido Park Soccer Field will not be ready for competition this summer due to ongoing concerns about field conditions. We are grateful to the Lamar School District for partnering with us by making its stadium available for our home soccer matches, ensuring our student-athletes have an appropriate competition venue for the season. Our teams will continue to use the Escondido Practice Field for training while the City works to address the issues and restore the competition field.