I served as a member of the Learning Council in 2014-2015 and as the chair of the Learning council for three years: 2015-2018. Annual work plans and annual reports on Learning Council accomplishments were submitted to the College Council and are posted on the webpage. Annual reports on indicators set by the IEC were also provided annually and on request.

Paul Jarrell has asked that I use my perceptions as feedback to the following question: *"How effective has LC been with regard to the criteria outlined in BP325?"*.

Self-assessment of Learning Council effectiveness per indicators in BP 325 is not documented as an explicit indicator for Learning Council scope of work. This is important to mention because the content of this report should only be regarded as retrospective reflections of my experience. I will do my best to speak strictly to my experiences on the Learning Council; however, I concurrently served on a number of leadership groups and my recollections may be conflating other experiences within and around governance at Lane.

I will be using the prompts used in the [2018-2019 Governance Review Blog](#) to guide the requested Learning Council self-assessment. I will insert "work of the Learning Council" for "governance system" within each prompt as my best attempt to respond to indicators for board principles. I encourage others to read our annual reports, as these are more comprehensive with respect to work performed and recommendations.

This self-assessment does not reflect the collective thinking of the Learning Council during my appointment. As an individual, I support a shared governance model at Lane and have tremendous respect for the volunteer members in governance who want to develop a culture and climate at Lane that meaningfully supports our students and each other. The majority of my reflections speak to barriers, but I do not feel shared governance is the barrier to creating learning centered systems and effective decision-making.

Clarity reflection: "Is the work of Learning Council clear and easily understandable?

We frequently used our charter to guide our scope and role within governance. The charter delineates indicates Learning Council develops and evaluates policy in "instruction", "instructional support", and" learning support". We experienced a general lack of clarity and dissonance around how "learning support" and "instruction" are distinguished from "teaching and learning". We engaged in lengthy conversations around how Lane should be developing its Learning Plan with respect to the co-curricular and extracurricular learning experiences with little shared agreement within the council, which was further challenged by changes in institutional leadership and

strategic plans. There was often lack of clarity between the scope and role of the Learning Council and Faculty Council.

We worked to provide additional clarity to the role of a Learning Plan by codifying Learning Plan principles that explicitly connected instruction and instructional support to broader constructions of teaching and learning in an effort to align the scope and role of Learning Plan development to the institution's mission and values. These were difficult and important conversations, as elevating teaching and learning as a focus of the Learning Plan was perceived by some as stratifying the work of faculty toward student success as more important or valued than the work of other councils, staff, and non-academic programming (e.g. continuing education).

The Learning Council did develop clearer principles of the "why" behind a Learning plan, yet this did not translate to a shared understanding at the college as to "why" Lane needs a learning plan. I see this as a symptom of stakeholders not seeing or experiencing plans connecting to operationalized priorities or coherence in shared outcomes. I feel the concurrent receipt of recommendations issued by NWCCU and resultant focus on Core Theme development compromised understanding of how a Learning Plan would be used to set institutional priorities and strategies specific to instruction. Throughout my tenure, institutional plans and strategic initiatives were set in motion without a Learning Plan, and there was no history of developing, implementing, and assessing the effectiveness of a Learning Plan as far back as 2006. The attempts to define a Learning Plan often resulted in divergent and competing interpretations (e.g., Is it an Academic Master Plan? Will it make the "learning" students experience in student government or clubs visible as learning? Will it conflict or supersede the SAC plan? etc.)

There was no structural mechanism to coordinate planning with other councils or to see how/if the plans were used to set operational and resource priorities. Other councils (e.g. Technology, Facilities) communicated expectations to work from a Learning Plan to guide their work, yet there was little guidance or shared understanding of how the Learning Plan would be situated and utilized in institutional plans. As the institution developed additional ad hoc bodies, such as the IEC, and continued with Achieving the Dream and a Guided Pathways exploration, this further conflated the role of the Learning Plan, and its institutional value, validity, and utility across the college and college leadership.

There was little clarity in policy oversight and development. The Learning Council repeatedly raised barriers to the executive team and College Council including: 1) no centralized policy index, 2) no means to determine who at Lane revised a policy and if that occurred with council knowledge, 3) internal disagreement about what should be Learning Council policy and what is procedure. The Learning Council did work on

reviewing all policy/procedures and made progress through 2017 (see [Tracking Document](#))

Wide and explicit communication reflection: "Does the work of the Learning Council support information sharing broadly across stakeholders?"

The Learning Council regularly reviewed, approved, and posted minutes on the website. During the Learning Plan development process, I met with each of the councils to get information about what was needed in a Learning Plan. We held campus conversations and developed visual aids to help inform the college about how a Learning Plan would (presumably) be situated within the colleges strategic planning and implementation. I made attempts to collaborate and seek direction from college leadership.

I believe the college community at large is completely unaware of the Learning Council and why such a council is needed at Lane. I feel this sentiment and lack of value and awareness within the college's stakeholders is a shared experience in all the councils with the exception of Faculty Council. I do not believe that stakeholders, in the broadest sense, see the councils as meaningful policy and planning bodies.

Effectiveness reflection: "Is the work of the Learning Council effective in leading the creation, evaluation and revision of academic plans and policies that prioritize student success? Does our current governance system assure that decisions are made at the appropriate level, by the appropriate stakeholders with the appropriate expertise?"

I feel the Learning Council was somewhat effective in elevating "teaching and learning" as an important component of student success. Difficult conversations within the council allowed us to consider our identity as an institution of higher education and our responsibility to understand the needs of students and best practices for quality education and a quality instructional environment.

I experienced very little meaningful decision-making as a council member. We made decisions about language and held good discussions, yet I do not feel our work led to improving the direction and work at the college. I do feel that the act of holding these conversations and working toward an ideal to the best of our ability was effective in developing personal leadership skills and institutional fluency.

We did not create a learning plan, nor did we have a learning plan to evaluate. Even the prompt for this question is evidence of conflating the role of governance, as it cites "academic plans", and yet there is no institutional definition of an academic plan, and there is no charter language in any council that sets the expectation that councils will measure their effectiveness based on an academic plan.

We received little to no feedback from College Council on our work plans or annual work reports. We received no communication from College Council on the scope of their work and opportunities to collaborate. When all council meetings were held, we reported our work and challenges, yet never received a substantive report back. It was difficult to sustain energy in plan development and general council work when requests for feedback were unanswered.

Efficiency and timeliness Reflection: "Is the work of the Learning Council efficient in using employee time? Are the process and outcomes effective? Does the Learning Council use processes that allow employees and students to participate and contribute meaningfully?"

I consistently sent out an agenda and prior minutes in advance of meetings and tracked action items according to our work plan. I started meetings on time and ended on time. We aimed to use Roberts Rules in decision-making and at times needed redirection to maintain decorum practices consistent with conducting a governance meeting.

We were inconsistent in having a quorum, which significantly affected decision-making. Council members were asked to confirm ability to attend in advance, with fluctuating consistency in members meeting attendance commitments. There were several years where appointees attended 1 or 2 meetings a year. We did form work groups that made commitments to one another, but these commitments were not consistently honored, which resulted in stalled work. Scheduling barriers, leadership barriers, and the voluntary nature of council work are all factors that challenge efficiencies.

Interpersonal dynamics challenged effectiveness at times. I made my best effort to keep the scope of discussion to the agenda, but this proved challenging on more than one occasion. There is value in having difficult conversations, as there is value in seeking solutions. It was difficult to move conversations forward within the council and as the chair without advertently or inadvertently silencing conversations. At times, members used their position as a means to be heard, and to air grievances, or to challenge others. This can be part of any leadership body and can be a means to disrupt the status quo and provoke change. It can also create a climate where others feel unwelcomed, dismissed, or disrespected. I view the latter as a symptom of frustration about personal and/or institutional burnout, and it manifests as a negative effect on efficiency and timeliness.

Students had limited expertise in broad constructs such as learning plan and academic policy development and often brought in issues relevant to their personal student grievances. I feel we allowed time and space for these student conversations,

and worked hard to avoid provoking adversarial stances. Student attendance was marginal and I could have worked to be more effective in helping students feel and be engaged outside of attending a formal meeting.

Processes that encourage employee and student participation in problem solving and decision making reflection: "Does the Learning Council encourage a broad range of employee and student involvement? Do you see governance processes as inclusive or exclusive? What would encourage you to participate in governance at Lane?"

I feel that the voluntary nature of the work, a mismatch of accountability within the membership, the absence of any institutional Learning Plan over ten years created a situation where there was a dearth of deliverables that one would expect from a college governance committee. It is difficult to recruit members for voluntary work when there is no tangible reference to what that council has been able to produce in support of a shared vision. It is not clear to me how the representative groups outside of LCCEA recruit and select its members based on the needs of the council. At times appointees report they have been told that they are there to represent the union and its interests, which may result in intentional or unintentional exclusion of prospective members.

Processes that assure that decisions are made at the appropriate level, by the appropriate group with the needed expertise reflection:

My experience as a council member and chair was a learn-as-you go. I was offered council and mentorship by the previous chair and did engage in some self-study about governance to help develop my skills as chair within that context. I agree that the Learning Council should have a strong faculty membership roster, both in breadth and depth. It was helpful to have LCCEA appointees on the council, particularly to prevent policy-making discussions that are the responsibility of Faculty Council (e.g., grading policy, instructor hours on campus). It was helpful to have a Faculty co-chair on the Learning Council, as it allowed for collaboration, and provided an opportunity to share our work in Faculty Council discussions.

Recognition of the support needed for employees and students to participate and contribute meaningfully reflection:

I offered public acknowledgement and appreciation of the work of our council members and I was offered the same by members and leadership. I recognize that volunteers should feel authentic appreciation for the time and care they put into their service work.

There was limited resource support for the work of the Learning Council. We did receive some administrative support in developing the Learning Plan Conversation Kit. Jennifer Steele in her planning role collaborated to develop forums and visual materials to help with increasing college awareness of the Learning Plan and was responsive to

feedback from the council. Other administrative work was largely the role of the chair and compensated with a $1500 annual stipend.

In any volunteer organization, you need to rely on the energy of those in your committee. Lane was in a state of significant leadership change and the general working conditions (e.g., instability, threats of program cuts, fluctuating support from managers for staff to engage, labor disputes, a demanding academic calendar) add to feelings of frustration and burnout. Fostering engagement takes resources, and as chair, there was a limit on what I was able to provide to improve the meaningfulness of the work and meet my primary faculty role and coordinator commitments.

As I think about what could be done differently, I feel people will meaningfully contribute in the future if: 1) there is a shared vision and goal(s), 2) there are opportunities to take action, 3) multiple points of view are respectfully heard and considered, 4) decision-making processes are clear, and 5) people can see evidence of their efforts in the work of the college.

Christina Howard

January 17, 2019