



Welcome to Spring Semester, 2025. I'm Pamela Ralston, and I am honored to serve as President of this outstanding college. To those of you who are joining us for your first Opening Day, we're thrilled to have you here. Later in the program, we will be introducing new permanent classified professionals and managers who have joined the college since August. As we do in winter, we've been working to enroll, re-enroll, and guide students into courses. Over this past week, we've been involved in professional development to help us become better in the classroom, in the services we provide, and in offering the best educational environment for all students.

LEARN, ENGAGE, SHARE, INNOVATE!

Focused Flex:
**Regular Substantive
Interaction (RSI) @ LMC**

*Sponsored by:
Distance Education Team*

74
**Flex Week
Sessions!**

I want to offer thanks and appreciation to all of you who have led Flex Workshops, attended them, and worked to prepare for this important upcoming semester. The Focused Flex Workshop on Regular and Substantive Interaction was excellent, as were all the other learning opportunities.



I hope you were able to spend time reconnecting with colleagues and enjoying the breakfast refreshments. Let's thank the folks who have made today's meeting possible—Jennifer Adams, Facilities folks, and the IT team. Let's also thank the people who will be here after we break for the rest of our workday. Custodial, Facilities and Grounds staff play integral roles in helping us serve students and our community. I hope you enjoyed breakfast. Coffee and drinks will be available for you throughout the morning, so please enjoy!

Welcome Back from Sabbatical!



The Experience/Adriana Ivanoff

Morgan Lynn
English Professor

And in the spirit of returning to campus and fresh starts, let's celebrate some of our colleagues and congratulate them on recent returns and stepping into new roles.

Join me in welcoming English Faculty member Morgan Lynn back from a wonderful semester of sabbatical. We're excited to learn from her research.

Employee Recognitions

*To those of you joining our campus community
or taking on a new role at the College...*

CONGRATULATIONS

and

WELCOME TO THE LMC FAMILY!!!

Interim/Temporary Roles



Irma Gregory
Senior Administrative Assistant –
Office of Student Services



Imelda Lares
Lead Admissions &
Records Assistant



Cynthia Perez-Nicholas
Academic/Student Services
Manager – Transfer &
Career Services



Richard Stanfield
Program Coordinator –
Welcome & Outreach Services

We want to recognize our colleagues who held a new interim or temporary role since Fall Opening Day. When your name is called, please stand (if you're able) and wave:

- IRMA GREGORY
- IMELDA LARES
- CYNTHIA PEREZ-NICHOLAS
- RICHARD STANFIELD

New Permanent Roles & Assignments at LMC



A'kilah Smith
Vice President of Instruction

Next, we will recognize our colleague who has taken on a new permanent role at LMC. Dr. A'kilah Smith, please stand and be recognized as our now permanent Vice President for Instruction.

New Permanent Classified Professionals & Managers



Aaron Clay
Equipment Maintenance
Worker



Jazmin Morales
Program Coordinator
-- Outreach



Matthew "Moots" Muterspaugh
Dean of the Brentwood Center &
Distance Education



Joseph Velazquez
Custodian II

Now, we are excited to congratulate and welcome those classified professionals and managers who have been hired into their first permanent roles at LMC. When your name is called, please come forward to receive a token to mark becoming a permanent member of the LMC community:

- AARON CLAY
- JAZMIN MORALES
- MATTHEW "MOOTS" MUTERSPAUGH
- JOSEPH VELASQUEZ

Please join me in wishing these colleagues great success in their next chapters at Los Medanos College, which as you well know, is celebrating 50 years of serving our students and community.



We've gathered some of our history, our present, and our future in a video I'd like to share with you now.

Knowing One Another in Community

Nick Garcia, Drama Professor

Spring 2025

Opening Day ~ All-College Meeting

A number of things are present in those photographs and memories, but perhaps the most present is a sense of community. And to continue to work on the health and connection, the sense of being seen and supported, we have Nick Garcia, our colleague from the Drama department with us today to lead us in an activity.



Panels 1 and 2 of Bay Miwok Mural by Drew Valencia, Kashia Pomo Artist, and LMC students, 2025

Welcome, Nick. As Nick sets up, I'd like to share two panels of the incredible Bay Miwok Mural that Drew Valencia, Kashia Pomo Artist, and LMC students completed as a project funded by an EEO District Grant. Thanks to Eric Sanchez, Lindsay Litowitz, and Max Trujillo who helped to bring into being. We'll be installing the entire piece later this spring, so stay tuned.

Activity Questions:

- **Who is a hero, mentor, or teacher who has had the biggest impact on your life, and why?**
- **What is your favorite moment from LMC, and why?**



Welcome, Nick. As Nick sets up, I'd like to share two panels of the incredible Bay Miwok Mural that Drew Valencia, Kashia Pomo Artist, and LMC students completed as a project funded by an EEO District Grant. Thanks to Eric Sanchez, Lindsay Litowitz, and Max Trujillo who helped to bring into being. We'll be installing the entire piece later this spring, so stay tuned.



Last September, 4CD had the incredible opportunity to send a delegation, including members from each of our three campuses, to Ghana for the All-African Diaspora Educators Summit, sponsored by A2MEND. This journey was not just a trip but a profound experience—a chance to reconnect with ancestral roots, engage with educators and students from across California, and bring back wisdom, insight, and renewed purpose and commitment to our community here at LMC.

Today, we are honored to have three members of the Los Medanos College delegation here to share their reflections, stories, and the lessons they’ve brought back to us.

First, I’m delighted to introduce Dr. Terence Elliott, a professor of Ethnic Studies and Black Studies and a dedicated partner in advancing equity. Many of you may know Terence as someone who has served in various capacities at all 3 of our campuses over the years, making a lasting impact wherever he goes.

Next, we have Latasha Martin, a shining example of student excellence. Latasha is an Umoja Scholar, set to transfer to UC Davis this year. She is majoring in Psychology and Sociology.

And finally, we welcome Theodora Adkins, a business professor and long-time social justice warrior. Theodora has dedicated her career to advocacy and fighting for justice within and beyond the classroom.

Please join me in welcoming them to the stage as they share their reflections on this powerful journey.



Please join me in a huge round of applause for Theo and Terrence for serving our students as guides for the trip to Ghana, without you, the trip wouldn't have been possible. And a separate round of thanks and joy to Latasha and Theo for preparing the incredible slideshow and video of your experience and finding a way to bring Mekhia Millington into our time together. The ADES trip and the call to action to become officially recognized as a Black Serving Institution are examples of the kind of intentional community building work that makes belonging. We're grateful to you.



I've been awash this week with conflicting emotions. I spent Monday at the Pittsburg Rally and March honoring Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and my cup was full, and then I returned home to the news of Executive Orders from the Trump Administration that threatened to drain me. I've spent the week watching you all prepare for the incredible work you do serving students and our college, and in that space, I return to Dr. King, whose vision of the beloved community offers us a powerful reminder of the transformative potential of how we come together for justice.

Beloved Community

The aftermath of nonviolence is the creation of the beloved community. The aftermath of nonviolence is redemption. The aftermath of nonviolence is reconciliation. The aftermath of violence are emptiness and bitterness. This is the thing I'm concerned about. Let us fight passionately and unrelentingly for the goals of justice and peace.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, "The Birth of a New Nation," 1957.

In a sermon delivered after returning from Ghana in 1957, he declared that: "The aftermath of nonviolence is the creation of the beloved community. The aftermath of nonviolence is redemption. The aftermath of nonviolence is reconciliation." The beloved community he describes speaks to the enduring strength of justice pursued with compassion. This week, I needed reminding that seeking justice is an active, passionate commitment to creating a world where equity and understanding prevail, not like the aftermath of violence, as Dr. King warns, that leaves only "emptiness and bitterness," perpetuating cycles of harm and division. His call to "fight passionately and unrelentingly for the goals of justice and peace" challenges us to channel our energy into building the beloved community, ensuring that our efforts today lay the foundation for a more just and compassionate tomorrow.

A Culture of Belonging

“I dreamed about a culture of belonging. I still dream that dream. I contemplate what our lives would be like if we knew how to cultivate awareness, to live mindfully, peacefully; if we learned habits of being that would bring us closer together, that would help us build beloved community.”

bell hooks, Belonging: A Culture of Place

One of my favorite thinkers, bell hooks, writes in Belonging: A Culture of Place about how she dreamed of a culture of belonging, a place where “if we knew how to cultivate awareness, to live mindfully, peacefully; if we learned habits of being that would bring us closer together, that would help us build beloved community.”

Beloved Community

Beloved community is formed not by the eradication of difference but by its affirmation, by each of us claiming the identities and cultural legacies that shape who we are and how we live in the world.

bell hooks, Killing Rage: Ending Racism

And she explains in Killing Rage: Ending Racism that the “Beloved community is formed not by the eradication of difference but by its affirmation, by each of us claiming the identities and cultural legacies that shape who we are and how we live in the world.” In hooks’s understanding of the beloved community lies a deep commitment to belonging, to ensuring that each of us feel at home in the community we enter and support.



That sense of belonging in community can be tenuous. The actions of the new administration's numerous Executive Orders create the threat of harm, of removal, of erasure. The first Executive Order titled "Protecting the American People Against Invasion" targets immigrants in the US, calling for massive dehumanizing deportations and attempting to end Constitutionally-protected birthright citizenship. A second Executive Order targets transgender, nonbinary, and intersex people, titled "Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government," and ends federal anti-discrimination protections for trans people, erases intersex people, and mandates that government identification documents reflect a narrow and exclusionary definition of "biological reality" rather than self-determined gender identity. These orders are designed to destabilize groups of people, to create in-groups and out-groups, and to create fear among the more vulnerable of the groups. I feel personally shaken by these actions, and in my role as a college president, I feel empowered to stand up against such attempts to scapegoat, threaten and dehumanize the people we serve.

Policy and Legislation Policy as Protection

- 4CD Board Resolution 1-S: Reaffirming Support of Contra Costa Community College District Students and Employees in Defense of Diversity and Inclusion in the Contra Costa Community College District
- 4CD Student Services Procedures 3026: Student Records and Directory Information
- Senate Bill 54, the "California Values Act," 2017
- Assembly Bill 21, "Public Postsecondary Education: Access to Higher Education for Every Student," 2017
- Family Educational Right to Privacy Act, Federal Legislation
- The Fourth and Fourteenth Amendments of the U.S. Constitution

This week I shared a memo with you that addressed how Los Medanos College, the 4CD District, and the State of California are prepared to respond to those threats. I want to reinforce our roles and responsibilities if any effort to enforce any actions against immigrants occurs on our college sites. Two state laws, SB 54 and AB 21 restrict us from using resources to further immigration enforcement efforts, as does federal legislation, the Family Educational Right to Privacy Act. Our District Governing Board passed Resolution 1-S in 2017 that reaffirms our values and makes it explicitly clear that we are resolved to: “[...] to promote an atmosphere of respect for all students and employees and denounce and address hate speech directed at students and/or employees, including immigrants, people of color, Muslims, individuals with disabilities, LGBTQ+ individuals, and members of other protected groups.” And that 4CD is committed to “support community education and professional development to foster an inclusive learning environment focused on eliminating bias and discrimination and highlighting existing resources for reporting and responding to bias or hate incidents. And finally, the Board itself “[...] recognizes its responsibility to advocate for educational opportunities for all students in the community college system, regardless of immigration status, at the federal, state, and local levels and will do so accordingly.”

Opening Day
All-College Meeting
Spring 2025

As college employees, you are not permitted to share student or employee information even to someone who appears to be a law enforcement officer. If you're approached, please direct any officer to me directly or to our Police Services department, who will connect with me. If someone tells you they have an official document and that you must comply, direct them to me and to Police Services. I will work with the District and our General Counsel to ensure that we follow the law and verify any attempt to subpoena or arrest someone, if legitimate. Together, we will follow our policies that are designed to protect people's Constitutional rights.

After we finish here today, please reread the Guidance that I shared with you and contact me or your manager if you have questions. On each of the tables, we've provided cards that delineate our rights that can be handed to an immigration officer to remind them of the law. These are available for students, staff, and community members across campus in multiple languages. In February, we will host a College Assembly to offer support and training about our rights and responsibilities.

Our Mission

Los Medanos College provides our community with equitable access to educational opportunities and support services that empower students to achieve their academic and career goals in a diverse and inclusive learning environment.

At the heart of our mission at Los Medanos College lies a profound commitment to fostering an environment where every person feels a sense of belonging.

Belonging—A Sociological Definition

A sense of belonging—the subjective feeling of deep connection with social groups, physical places, and individual and collective experiences—is a fundamental human need that predicts numerous mental, physical, social, economic, and behavioural outcomes.

K. Allen, et al., *Belonging: A Review of Conceptual Issues, an Integrative Framework, and Directions for Future Research*. 2021

A sense of belonging is the subjective feeling of deep connection with social groups, physical places, and individual and collective experiences. It is not merely a lofty ideal—it is a fundamental human need, one that significantly influences mental, physical, social, economic, and behavioral outcomes.

Creating a Culture of Belonging

"In a nutshell, belonging is where intentional diversity, equity, and inclusion collide. When our policies, programs, and practices consider the unique needs, desires, and experiences of our people and we take into account the individual, we bolster a sense of belonging."

Chelsea Williams, quoted in "The Importance of Belonging..."

Today, I want to talk about how we must strengthen this vital connection and create a space where everyone—students, faculty, staff, and beyond—feels deeply valued and connected.

Components of Belonging

- Being Seen
- Being Kept Safe
- Being Supported



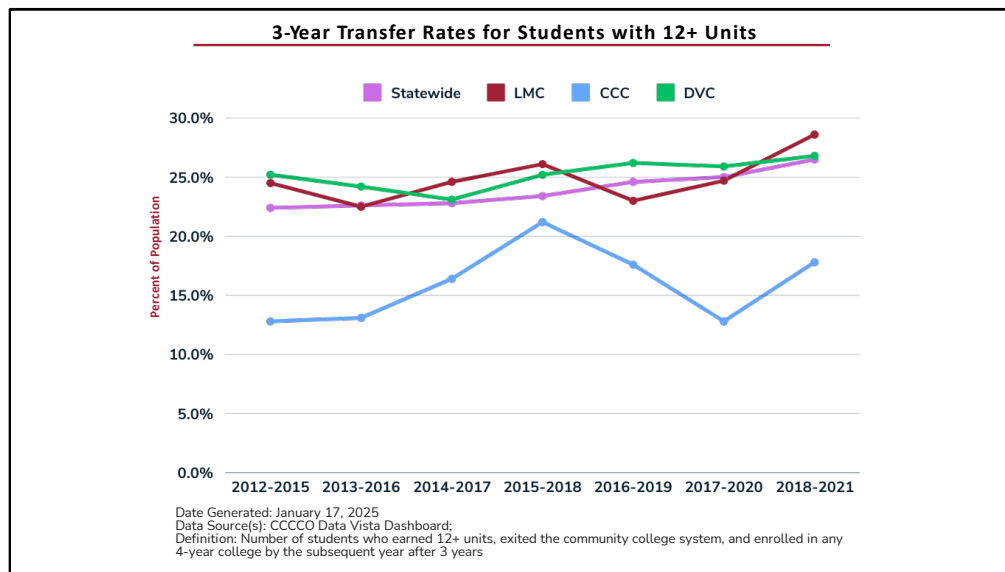
I have some data to share with you that reveals what belonging and connection can do for student success. As I do so, I'd like you to think about three key factors that help create the kind of belonging we're talking about: Being Seen, Being Safe, and Being Supported.

Being Seen—working to know more about the people you are working with, teaching and serving, so they have a sense of truly being seen for who they are.

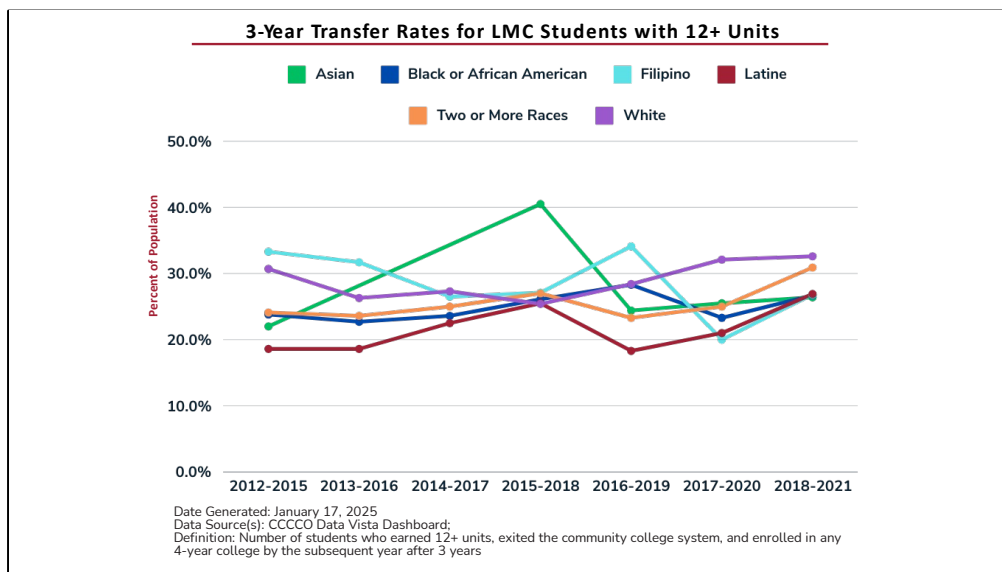
Being Safe—creating and sustaining an environment where people feel protected and where they can voice experiences and opinions without fear.

Being Supported—providing encouragement and access to resources and support to learn and achieve in the classroom and across the college.

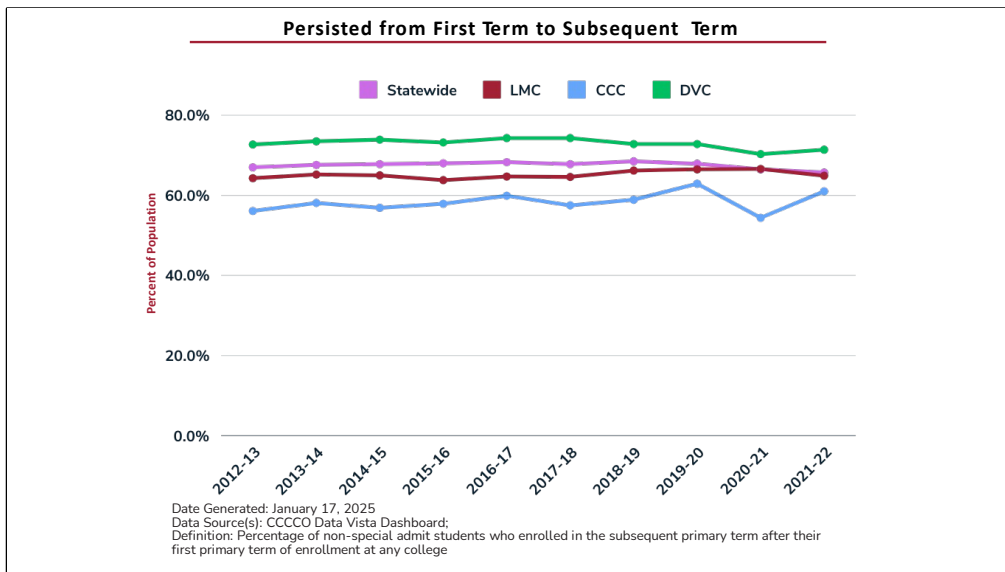
Please think about those concepts in terms of your own experiences on campus and how they apply for our students and for us.



We've begun the work of reviewing our current Student Equity Achievement Plan outcomes and preparing for the next planning effort. One of the key pieces of data is how well LMC does in supporting students' efforts to transfer. The current definition for transfer in the Student Equity and Achievement Plan considers students in the cohort if they have earned 12+ units. Using this definition, LMC performs above the State average consistently, and in the most recent data year outperforms all the other colleges in our District as 28.6% of students who complete 12+units transfer to a 4-year college within 3 years.

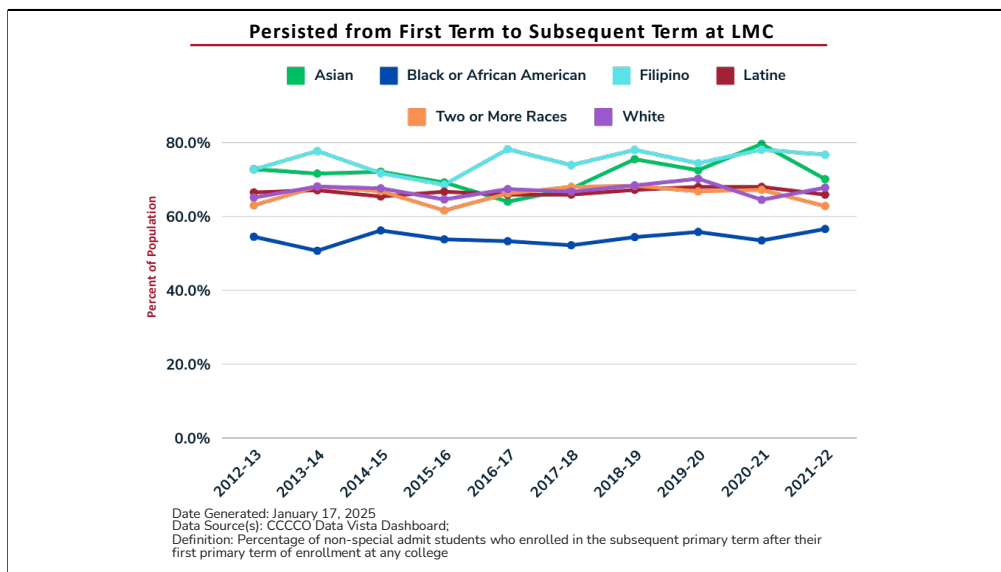


Moreover, many equity gaps have narrowed or nearly disappeared for this metric over the past decade. In fact, for race/ethnicity, we have no statistical equity gap for transfer in our most recent data year. In many ways, these improving outcomes show that when students feel a sense of belonging within our community, they're more likely to succeed.



The picture is different when we consider metrics at the very beginning of our students' journeys.

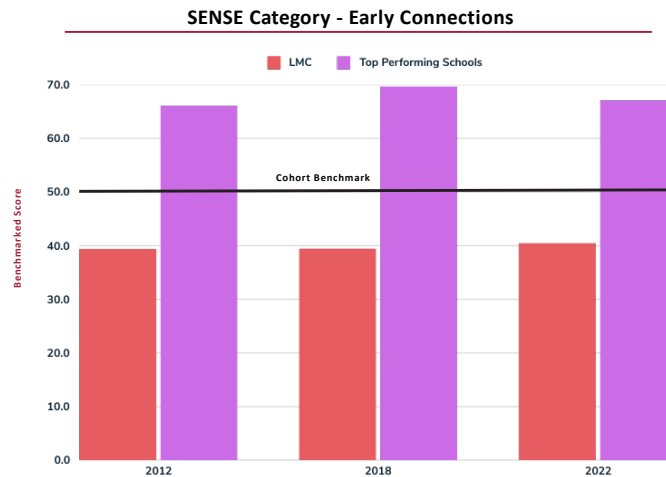
For example, our first to second term persistence rates consistently fall below the state average and significantly lag behind our sister school at DVC.



Additionally, we see more persistent equity gaps in 1st to 2nd term persistence that do not appear to be narrowing. For the past 12 years, LMC has conducted two important, nationally normed student surveys, that are designed to assess how engaged students are with aspects of the college and their learning, in other words, the surveys assess specific components of belonging in an academic environment. We are in the midst of conducting these surveys again, and we'll have new data results later this year.



I'd like to share some of the data we currently have from both the Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE) and the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), both of which help community colleges improve student outcomes. SENSE focuses on students in their first semester, while CCSSE focuses on students' experience as they progress into later terms.

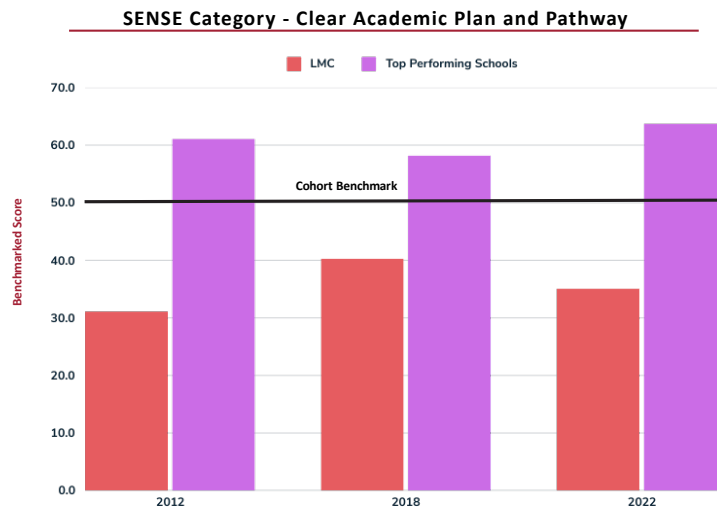


Date Generated: January 17, 2025
Data Source(s): SENSE Results <https://www.losmedanos.edu/planning/survey.aspx>
Definition: Survey targeted to new entering students in Fall semester

This narrative is supported by our major survey data as well.

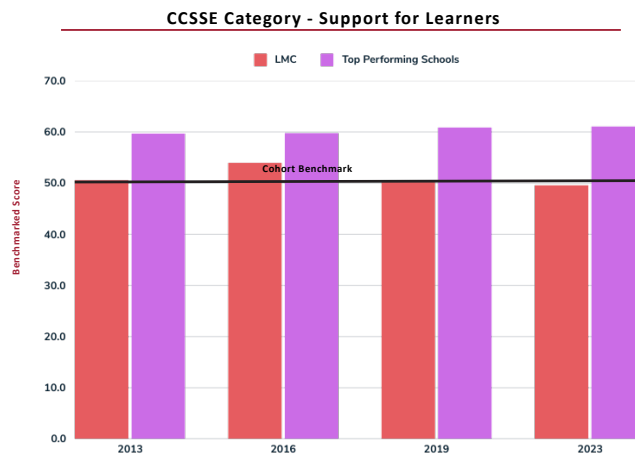
For example, in SENSE which targets students in their first semesters and asks about early experiences at the college, LMC has consistently scored below benchmark in Early Connections as well as Clear Academic Planning and Pathway.

This demonstrates the difficulty students have early on in their time with us making connections with us and getting the direction they need.



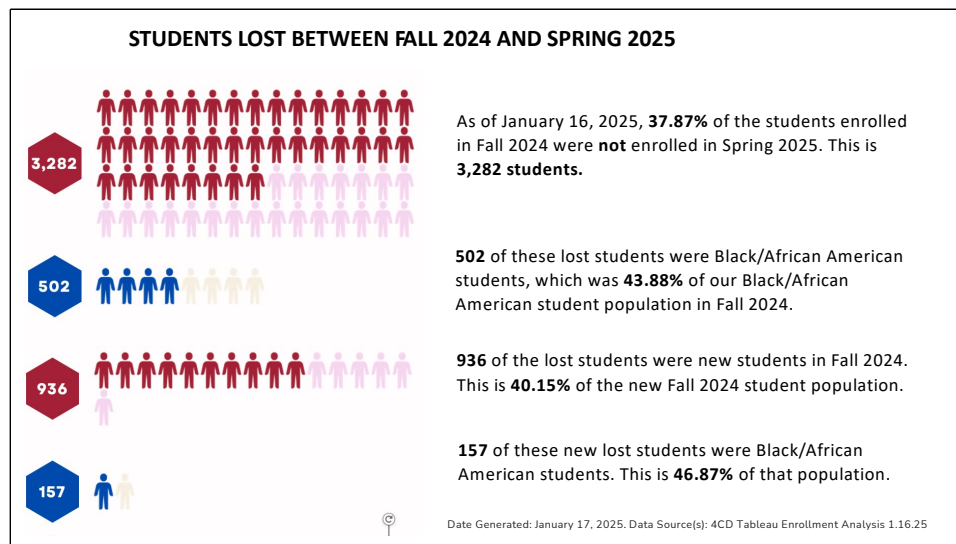
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Definition: Survey targeted to new entering students in Fall semester

This demonstrates the difficulty students have early on in their time with us making connections with us and getting the direction they need.



Date Generated: January 17, 2025
Data Source(s): CCSSE Results <https://www.losmedanos.edu/planning/survey.aspx>
Definition: Survey targeted to continuing students in Spring semester

In contrast, the CCSSE survey that focuses on continuing students and asks them questions about time beyond their first term at the college, reveals that LMC consistently scores near, at or above benchmark in support for learnings. LMC students who succeed, who survive their first semester, continue on to achieve their goals of certificates, degrees and transferring on to four-year institutions.



These early engagement and persistence gaps have a major impact on who our student body is from term to term.

For example, 37.87% of all the students enrolled this Fall 2024 are not currently enrolled this Spring 2025. This is a loss of 3,282 unique students.

These losses are even more dramatic with our Black African American student population. 502 Black/African American students who were enrolled in Fall 2024 are not enrolled in Spring 2025.

Among these losses, 936 of the lost students were new students at the college in Fall 2024, 157 of them being Black/African American. This comprised a loss of 40.15% and 46.87% respectively of these new student populations from Fall 2024 to Spring 2025.

We cannot lose that many people and chalk it up to some kind of normal understanding of college-going challenges that people face. We are called to do more, to create deeper connection and learning. And we are the “they” who can make the kinds of changes that will change someone’s first semester from becoming lost, to becoming found, here at LMC.

Dr. King's "The Purpose of Education"

“Education has a two-fold function to perform in the life of [people] and in society: the one is utility and the other is culture. Education must enable a [person] to become more efficient, to achieve with increasing facility the legitimate goals of [their] life.”

What I love about community colleges, and LMC in particular, is the role we play in our community, and the very promise we embody. We accept 100% of the people who apply to us; we don't use tools to weed out folks like the ACT or SAT exams or grade point averages. We welcome in everyone, because public education is at the heart of our democracy. Dr. King shared in Morehouse College's student paper, the *Maroon Tiger*, that “Education has a two-fold function to perform in the life of [people] and in society: the one is utility and the other is culture. Education must enable a [person] to become more efficient, to achieve with increasing facility the legitimate goals of [their] life.”

Dr. King's "The Purpose of Education"

"To save [people] from the morass of propaganda, in my opinion, is one of the chief aims of education. Education must enable one to sift and weigh evidence, to discern the true from the false, the real from the unreal, and the facts from the fiction."

And he adds a what feels like a prophetic goal for today:
"To save [people] from the morass of propaganda, in my opinion, is one of the chief aims of education. Education must enable one to sift and weigh evidence, to discern the true from the false, the real from the unreal, and the facts from the fiction."



As we work with the results of the Fall 2024 SENSE and Spring 2025 CCSSE surveys, we will recommit to creating the components of belonging here, seeing students for who they are, making them safe as learners and people, and supporting their whole beings in achieving and thriving.



And one of the ways you can do that in this difficult time, is to join us as we welcome students onto our campuses next week. You can sign up to help students find their way and answering questions on your way out today as well as participate in Mustang Days on both campuses. Thank you for your time today and for all you do. You are the heart of this college, and we need you, now more than ever.



Sources

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