

Four Decades of

INNOVATION:

Impact of the League for Innovation

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Throughout 2008, the League for Innovation in the Community College will celebrate its 40th anniversary as one of the oldest and most significant organizations in the community college world. Created in 1968, when community colleges were being established at the rate of one per week, the League became a beacon for cutting-edge ideas that would influence the community college movement over the next four decades. Through its projects, programs, and practices, the League has reflected the major issues community colleges face and has had considerable impact on those issues.



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The League has prevailed in part because of the characteristics that distinguish it from other educational organizations. Most are designed to represent the interests of targeted groups with competing agendas or to champion a specific discipline or educational program; some are designed to serve political purposes. The League champions and advocates a process or an idea—innovation—that gives it the latitude to explore many opportunities. The League is free from the usual limitations placed on organizations but is anchored in the compelling and creative notion of innovation.

Politics have been eliminated in the selection of board members because the Board operates as a continuous body—a factor that sometimes creates havoc with other educational organizations. There are 19 League Representatives,

appointed by their CEOs to work with the League office to carry out the work of the League. This group operates as a continuous body of institutional leaders. The League Board and the League Representatives provide continuity of leadership. They also create community and connection among the League governance, which enables them to carry out the priorities of the League.

Though League Board colleges are a small group of institutions, the goal has always been to serve and lead for all community and technical colleges. To that end, the Board created the League Alliance, a consortium of more than 850 colleges in 13 countries that provides a formal structure for sharing ideas, experiences, programs, and practices. The League is positioned, because of its resources and its commitment to innovation, to take the first step in trying out new ideas, programs, and practices. It shares these efforts with the larger field of community colleges through international conferences, publications, or joint projects and alliances with other institutions.

As an organization committed to innovation, organized for the continuity of leadership and priorities, and committed to sharing with and serving all community colleges, the League has had considerable impact on the community college movement during the first four decades of its existence. Since its beginning, the League has sponsored more than 200 conferences, seminars, summits, and other regional or national gatherings, and published more than 170 books, monographs, reports, and occasional papers, as well as 11 years of *Learning Abstracts*, 21 years of *Leadership Abstracts*, and two years of *Innovation Showcase*. The League has also addressed major issues facing community colleges through national projects and initiatives, partnering with sister higher education associations, corporate partners, service foundations, and federal governmental agencies. Approximately 130 League projects and initiatives have been funded with a total of more than \$50 million. The nature of the League's impact is outlined in six primary areas:

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Instructional Design

The League's early leadership focused on improving the instructional process through behavioral objectives and audio-tutorial approaches. The first League project involved 21 teachers developing objectives for English composition courses, drafting course syllabi and lesson plans, and launching a cooperative project on the evaluation and scoring of written work. The League's first book—*Toward Increased Efficiency in Community/Junior College Courses: An Exploratory Study* by Arthur Berchin, published in 1972—focused on improving instruction. Projects from 1968 through the 1970s focused on a variety of subjects: a systems approach to instruction in general education for career students, instruction in community colleges with high minority enrollments, and improved instruction in biology, physics, energy education, and allied health. The Health Instruction Exchange, funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, developed self-instruction materials for allied health programs and citizen health consumers. Participants developed 593 packages field-tested by more than 3,500 participants; following careful peer review, field testing, and revision, more than 330 learning units were distributed to community colleges nationwide.

Meeting more recent needs for faculty professional development focused on teaching and learning, the League's Learning Exchange Networks—developed by Humber College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning, Johnson County Community College, and Dallas County Community College District—is a six-module course for new and veteran faculty. The Getting Results modules, produced by WGBH-Boston in association with the League

and with funding from the National Science Foundation, provide multimedia, Web-based options for faculty development.

Leadership Development

The League's early work also focused on leadership development, initially through summer leadership conferences for presidents, division chairs, student personnel staff, and educational managers. In 1980, in cooperation with the American Association for Women in Community Colleges, the League launched "Leaders for the '80s" with support from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education. Based at the Maricopa Community College District, this project evolved into the National Institute for Leadership Development (NILD), which aimed to increase the number of women holding community college presidencies. More than 4,000 women have participated in NILD leadership programs, and the number of women community college presidents has increased from about 50 in 1980 to more than 300 today.

In the 1980s, the League also launched its Expanding Leadership Diversity program, funded by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, to increase the number of minority leaders in community colleges. The Executive Leadership Institute (ELI) was formed in the 1980s to prepare experienced leaders for the presidency, and 43 percent of ELI graduates have become community college presidents. To support these projects and to identify and prepare future community college leaders, the League launched the Leadership 2000 conference, now represented as part of its annual Innovations conference, and the monthly publication *Leadership Abstracts*. Now in its 21st year, *Leadership Abstracts* is the League's longest-running periodical.

Workforce Development

The League's interest in community colleges' corporate relationships grew rapidly in the 1980s with advances in technology and technology education.

The organization's current workforce development focus stems from the 1990 formation of the Business and Industry Services Network (BISNET) to facilitate the exchange of information about workforce training among member institutions. Two years later, at the League-sponsored Community College Business and Industry Forum, representatives of 23 corporations urged the League to lead a national effort to help community colleges serve the training needs of business, industry, government, and labor. In a comprehensive national study, the League found that 96 percent of responding community colleges offered workforce training for employees of business, industry, government, and labor. The League's Workforce Initiative was born and continues to be an umbrella for a wide-ranging set of projects that help community colleges understand and address issues involved in ensuring a globally competitive workforce.

Today, that commitment continues. The College and Career Transitions Initiative (CCTI) is a five-year initiative funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education and is the latest major development in this arena. CCTI has strengthened the role of community and technical colleges by easing student transitions between secondary schools, postsecondary education, and employment and by improving academic performance at the secondary and postsecondary levels.

Information Technology

The League's leadership in instructional technology began in 1971 with workshops integrating the computer into instruction and administration. In 1980, it continued with an instructional computing project funded by the National Science Foundation to develop materials and instruction methods to train science and social science community college instructors in computer-assisted and -managed instruction. In 1985, the League, in partnership with leading computer and computer-related corporations and with support



League for Innovation in the Community College Board Member Colleges and CEOs

Martha A. (Marty) Smith, president, Anne Arundel Community College, Arnold, Md.

P. Anthony Zeiss, president, Central Piedmont Community College, Charlotte, N.C.

Jerry Sue Thornton, president, Cuyahoga Community College, Cleveland

Wright Lassiter, chancellor, Dallas County Community College District, Dallas

Jean Goodnow, president, Delta College, University Center, Mo.

Martha J. Kanter, chancellor, Foothill-De Anza Community College District, Los Altos Hills, Calif.

John Davies, president, Humber College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning, Toronto

Terry Calaway, president, Johnson County Community College, Overland Park, Kan.

Mick Starcevich, president, Kirkwood Community College, Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Mary Spilde, president, Lane Community College, Eugene, Ore.

Rufus Gasper, chancellor, Maricopa Community College District, Phoenix

Eduardo J. Padrón, president, Miami Dade College, Miami

R. Thomas Flynn, president, Monroe Community College, Rochester, N.Y.

Vernon O. Crawley, president, Moraine Valley Community College, Palos Hills, Ill.

Constance M. Carroll, chancellor, San Diego Community College District, San Diego

Jackson Sasser, president, Santa Fe Community College, Gainesville, Fla.

Charles Mitchell, chancellor, Seattle Community College District, Seattle

Steven Lee Johnson, president, Sinclair Community College, Dayton, Ohio

Zelema Harris, chancellor, St. Louis Community College, St. Louis, Mo.

from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education, launched "The Community College and the Computer." The five-year project designed and developed computer applications for improving student learning and institutional management, developed guidelines and other information on computers and community colleges, and sponsored what would become the League's annual Conference on Information Technology. Technology proj-

ects since the early 1980s have focused on IT in the community college, including assessment, instruction, curriculum, student tracking, administrative support systems, instructor training, strategic planning, use of the Internet in community college and K-12 learning, asynchronous learning networks, and Web site development.

The League also has connected the community college with technology corporations, ensuring that the com-



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community college voice is included in conversations about product development and services for postsecondary education. The League launched its corporate partner program in 1997, combining partnership programs in the League's Information Technology Initiative and Workforce Initiative. Today, the program has more than 160 corporate partners who exhibit at League conferences, participate in League projects and publications, and work with staff and members to form community college focus groups and advisory councils for their organizations.

Learning College

In the early 1990s, community colleges, building on student-centered and teaching-centered values, began to add learning-centered values to their missions and program statements. Many community colleges embraced the concept of the Learning College, which places learning first and provides educational experiences for learners any way, anyplace, anytime. The League launched its *Learning Abstracts* series in 1998 to foster continuing conversations on the Learning College movement

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and to chronicle the work of colleges focused on becoming more learning-centered institutions. In January 2000, the League received a grant to fund the Learning College Project. It used the money to create a network of 12 Vanguard Learning Colleges that would be a basis for model programs and best practices. Complementing the Learning College Project, the 21st Century Learning Outcomes Project, funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts, brought together 16 institutions to increase community colleges' capacity to define and document student achievement of learning outcomes. Colleges participating in these projects identified the inter-college networks as one of the most important benefits of participating. Today, the League continues to expand the network through the Learning Col-

lege Summit, an annual working retreat for colleges committed to strengthening the institutional focus on learning.

Diversity and Inclusion

Fully supporting the open door of democracy's college, the League has long valued diversity and inclusion. This is reflected in projects ranging from the creation of the National Institute for Leadership Development, Expanding Leadership Diversity, and Executive Leadership Institute to publications and projects on the digital divide and the launch of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion stream at the annual Innovations conference. Although based in the United States, the League is an international organization with members in 13 countries. In this international role, the League provides opportunities for exchange of ideas, challenges, and solutions among community colleges, colleges of applied arts and technology, further education institutions, regional education and training centers, polytechnics, and similar educational organizations around the world.

40 and Forward

As the League celebrates 40 years of innovation, it's a time to pause and reflect; it's a time of gratitude and recognition. We recognize the significant impact that community and technical colleges have had on our country and beyond, and we are humbled by the countless leaders and tireless champions who have helped the League play an important role in the community college movement for the past four decades. And it's a time to look to the future, exploring approaches to catalyze the community college movement through innovation, experimentation, and institutional transformation. The League is committed to another 40 years of innovation and to serving community colleges for decades to come.

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