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Featured American Executive Spotlights

Los Angeles City College: An Oasis of Learning

Written by Meghan Flynn
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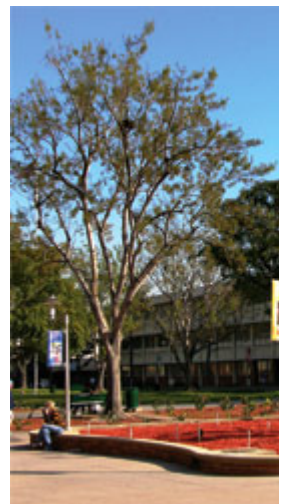
This year marks the 80th anniversary of **Los Angeles City College (LACC)**, one of the largest community colleges in the state of California and the Los Angeles Community College District. But according to Dr. Jamillah Moore, president, the school will be quietly commemorating the event this year and planning for a larger celebration in 2010 when, hopefully, the state's budget situation will be more settled.

"We are dealing with a moving target: our budget from the state was late and, as you might expect, dramatically smaller than we need," said Moore, who took on the role of president last summer. "We've had to increase our fees and make some tough decisions, so we decided to take this school year to adjust and get our bearings."



Set on 49 acres in the heart of Hollywood, LACC was the original location for the University of California Los Angeles before it moved to Westwood, Calif. LACC was founded as the Los Angeles Junior College in 1929 by the Los Angeles Board of Education and offered only first-semester courses to more than 1,300 students taught by roughly 54 faculty. The first associate in arts degrees were conferred June 19, 1931.

The school is nestled between Korea Town and Little Armenia and is one of the most diverse community colleges in the state. As many as 54% of



With the dedication of 1 board of trustees, this continues to grow. Dr.

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LACC's students are immigrants, and about half are first-generation college students. Twelve percent are African American, 23% are Asian, 42% are Latino, 21% are white, and the rest is a hodge-podge of biracial and other ethnicities. Additionally, students are divided evenly by age in four categories: under 19 years of age, between 20 and 24, between 25 and 34, and more than 35 years old. The variations, Moore said, make this an extremely vibrant place to work.

The site's long, rich tradition of quality and accessible education explains why LACC is known as an urban oasis of learning. Moore said she aims to strengthen the institution's mission to educate minds, open hearts, and celebrate community despite the mounting challenges this school and so many other community colleges face nationwide.

A committed team

LACC's mission has always been to offer life-long learning opportunities and provide programs, coursework, support, and guidance to develop and sustain a community of learners with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for optimal growth and achievement in their personal and professional lives. Moore explained that LACC's curriculum is designed to facilitate transfer to a four-year university or provide students with workforce training and certification.

"The second half of our mission has expanded considerably in the last year or so with the Obama administration's commitment to investing in our country's network of community colleges to become the front line of economic development," said Moore.

She added that community colleges as a whole have always done more with less, and LACC is no exception. Community colleges in California are reimbursed the least by the state of any other educational system: Moore said LACC gets roughly \$5,000 per student compared to \$8,000 that the K through 12 system and the California State University system receive and the \$13,000 the University of California system receives. And that's when times are good.



Dr. Jamillah Moore, president

When times are as challenging as they are now, however, community colleges see a dramatic increase in demand. Next year, LACC will see the highest enrollment in its 80-year history with 18,000 new students coming to class this fall; that's an increase of 22% over last year. Moore said the increase is due to two primary factors: people looking for education to help them change to a more stable career in light of the recession, and more parents who had planned to finance a four-year degree for their high school graduates with stock revenues looking to take advantage of a few years without the \$40,000 tuition.

For Moore, however, coping with the challenge of limited resources and increasing demand brings out the best of her organization. LACC has a wide variety of local partners ranging from other educational institutions, corporations, and industry groups that provide opportunities for internships and employment as well as monetary and equipment support. She also highlighted the dedication and commitment of LACC's employees and board.

"We have an extremely dedicated faculty, many of whom have been here for 15, 20, or 30 years, and they aren't in this industry for the money. They are our walking institutional memory—a wealth of information for my team and myself as we navigate these challenging times," she said. "And our board of directors trustees are a dynamic team that works hard to give us the flexibility and support to fulfill our mission. The commitment level is so high here, it's not really that surprising we can do so much with so little."

Continued growth

In spite of the challenges, Moore and her team have big plans for the future of LACC. Last year, the school opened its new library and child development center and most recently opened a state-of-the-art science and technology building center, which will house the school's popular nursing and dental technology certificate programs.

The \$4.1 million facility represents the end of funds from Propositions A and AA, which were passed a few years ago, and the beginning of the \$300 million Measure J. Monies from there will fund the next three projects Moore and her team have planned: a health, fitness and PE center; a student union; and a student services center, in addition to infrastructural upgrades across the campus.

"We'll be building well into 2013 and improving this oasis of learning for the next generation thanks to that funding," said Moore.

The team at LACC is also pursuing a number of grants to expand its curriculum offerings. Moore cited the Department of Labor's Recovery Act grants, which are grants of up to \$500 million designed to provide students with training and certification for jobs in renewable energy. The school is also involved in the Pathways out of Poverty program and is pursuing grants ranging from \$50 million to \$100 million to help LACC develop programs integrating training and supportive services that target specific populations and help people escape the cycle of poverty.

All of that requires a lot of hard work, but Moore is confident in her team and all the faculty and staff at LACC. "There is excitement, then anxiety, and then excitement again, but this is the best job I've ever had because we are also getting to see how our work is making lives better for our students, their families, and the community," concluded Moore.

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