

LTCC engages locals to pave future path

By Kathryn Reed

Build dorms. Be a cultural center. Become a destination college. Be an economic engine for the community. Provide students with the skills local businesses need. Keep classes for lifelong learners.

Those are some of the overriding themes that emerged from a daylong visioning session at Lake Tahoe Community College.

More than 90 people spent the better part of Sept. 20 addressing six main issues. Nearly half in attendance work at the college, with the remainder being community members, K-12 representatives from both sides of the state line, agency folks, and businesspeople. The emphasis was to find out what they want the South Lake Tahoe institution to look like in 2020. The attendees were divided into groups and then reconvened in the afternoon to go over what each had come up with.

First the participants individually answered questions and then discussed them as a group before presenting responses to everyone.



Virginia Boyar, LTCC dean of Career and Technical

Education, leads one of the groups Sept. 20 in coming up ideas for the college's future. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Questions were:

- What role does LTCC have in the community? And what does the community need LTCC to become?
- Who are the students of LTCC? Who should we be serving that we are currently not reaching? What does the student body of LTCC look like in 2020?
- What are the educational programs that LTCC should offer? What signature programs should LTCC be known for? What are the workforce training needs of this community? What are other community needs that LTCC can help address?
- What does the learning environment of the college look like in 2020? What technology should the college have to support the educational programs laid out?
- What does the LTCC campus look like in 2020? What new buildings does it have? What is housed in those buildings?
- What are sources of revenue for the college? What are the opportunities that the college needs to be aware of? In what ways is the community willing to work together with the college to make this vision a reality?

“Overall it was very rewarding to see all the energy in the small group sessions. People truly have a vision of what they believe Lake Tahoe Community College should look like in 2020,” LTCC President Kindred Murillo told *Lake Tahoe News* after the day was over. “We accomplished what we set out to do which was to learn how people see the college in the future. The faculty, staff, and board of trustees will work very hard to make Lake Tahoe Community College that ‘center of the arts,

cultural, and educational activity' for the south Tahoe basin."

Friday's community message will be massaged in the coming months, with the plan for a more defined vision to be unveiled June 7 when the college celebrates its 40th anniversary.

Murillo started the day by saying the reason for the visioning was primarily for the students. Then she added, "If we don't know where we are going, how do we get there?"

She went into detail about the changing demographics of the college – a good thing, she said, because it's starting to better mirror what the community looks like.

Murillo touched on how the state funds community colleges and how many of the classes people like to take – arts and physical education – aren't reimbursable by the state so they can't be offered in the way people have been used to. The lifelong learners are not part of the state's plan anymore – in many ways Sacramento has removed the community part of community college.

But LTCC is striving to find a way to retain that community element.

Certificate, associate of arts or even bachelor degrees in disciplines that lead to jobs in Tahoe was an overriding theme in groups. Expanding the fire academy into an AA and incorporating it into a larger public safety program has been talked about on campus. Creating programs involving environmental sciences, snowsports, hotel and restaurant management, and forestry were broached in the visioning workshop.

Some people foresee the bulk of classes being offered online in the future, while others aren't sure the traditional teacher-classroom will go away.

LTCC staff members are in different places when it comes to what the future will look like. Some were shocked to learn how technologically evolved K-12 is on the South Shore.

“Some of the best teaching I see is a teacher going from an interactive white board to YouTube to slides to a child’s presentation,” Lisa Noonan, superintendent of Douglas County School District, said. “They’ve used six or seven different devices by the end of class.”

Lake Tahoe Unified Superintendent Jim Tarwater said how students in second grade are learning how to do PowerPoints.

In a different group, it was agreed that standing at the front of a classroom lecturing ad nauseam is not going to work with the students entering college today. Simple things like having round tables instead of traditional individual desks was suggested.

More than once it was suggested that any new building should meet LEED certification to be environmentally the best it can be.

Student safety, improved parking, providing technical language classes for English learners, allowing corporations to have naming rights to buildings or facilities to raise money, being the thread that binds the community – those were just a few of the suggestions or areas to focus on that came out of the visioning session.