

Focus Group Summary Analysis

During the fall of 2021, Lake Land College conducted a total of 48 focus groups with students, faculty and staff, the Board of Trustees, and community members to obtain input to identify and develop goals and objectives for the new strategic planning cycle beginning in FY23. These focus groups were held on campus and in various community locations throughout Lake Land's district. The Strategic Planning Committee developed a facilitator's guide for facilitators to follow while leading the focus groups. Facilitators were asked to concentrate group discussions on one of the following five issues impacting higher education: economic/financial, social, academics and technology, workforce, and collaboration. A total of 533 stakeholders attended the 48 focus groups. Table 1 provides a breakdown of the number of focus groups by topic area along with the total number of participants by topic.

Table 1: Strategic Plan Focus Groups Fall 2021		
Topic	Number of Focus Groups	Number of Participants
Demographics	1	9
Social	9	91
Collaboration	7	91
Workforce	11	110
Academics & Technology	12	142
Economics/Financial	8	90
Total	48	533

Focus group facilitators identified participants to attend their focus group sessions and sent them the Trend Analysis Executive Summary for them to review prior to the focus group meeting. The Trend Analysis Executive Summary highlights the prominent ideas and issues identified through the research detailed in the Trend Analysis Report. Each of the key takeaways are linked to the full section in the report where the research is presented. This provided participants with the opportunity to review pertinent highlights and/or the full detailed reports of specific topics prior to the focus groups.

Facilitators opened the focus group discussions using three questions to generate discussions. These questions included: 1) What are your initial thoughts on the associated challenges with this topic? 2) How do these challenges impact Lake Land College today? 3) How will these challenges impact Lake Land College in the future? Once discussions were completed, facilitators asked participants to identify the three to five essential issues or actions discussed that Lake Land should address or undertake in the next five years to face these challenges and ensure Lake Land continues to provide students the best opportunities for success.

Summary Analysis of Feedback

Using the issues and ideas raised through the focus group discussions, a summary of the emerging themes related to proposed essential issues and actions that Lake Land should address over the next five years are provided below. These themes are organized by issues and actions for students, for faculty and staff, and for the College overall.

Student Focused Issues and Actions

- I. Student Success.
 - a. Increase mental health services for students.
 - i. Increase mental health-awareness and provision.
 - ii. Provide a full time clinical therapist on staff.
 - iii. Find strategies to reduce feelings of social isolation.
 - b. Provide mentor programs—peer to peer—sophomore with freshmen.
 - c. Provide more social supports.
 - d. Provide learning communities.
 - e. Provide support wrap around services for students.
 - f. Teach coping and time management skills.
 - g. Promote personal connections between students and staff/faculty.
 - h. Increase and/or encourage higher levels of student engagement.
 - i. Within the classroom.
 - ii. Extracurricular activities.
- II. Academic Courses.
 - a. Provide flexible Course Scheduling and Delivery Methods.

- i. Provide a variety of course options including face-to-face, online and Hy-Flex.
 - ii. Provide flexible course schedules with varying times and dates to fit schedules for students.
 - iii. Provide options for block schedules.
 - b. Promote interpersonal communication and soft/essential skills across all classes.
 - c. Assess students' computer skills.
- III. Technology.
 - a. Provide updated and current technology for students.
 - b. Conduct detailed assessment of student computer skills as they enroll in college.
 - c. Provide training on new technology for students.
 - d. Offer mandatory training to students on how to take an online class.
 - i. Provide strategies for being successful in an online course.
 - ii. Provide strategies to help students with discipline in online courses.
 - iii. Test students to see if they are a good fit for online courses.

Faculty & Staff Focused Issues and Actions

- IV. Programs/Training.
 - a. Keep up with new technology (training and programs need to do this).
 - b. Expand curriculum in programs.
 - i. Include soft (essential) and interpersonal skills in programs.
 - ii. Expand curriculum in technology programs.
 - iii. Expand curriculum in IT programs.
 - iv. Include skills for remote work.
 - c. Provide technology support to faculty, staff, and students.
 - d. Expand short-term trainings, certificates, and credentials.
 - e. Provide faculty training for course development.
 - f. Provide interpersonal training for college staff.
 - g. Build summer programs to showcase manufacturing career opportunities.
 - h. Create a short-term, incentivized program for child care providers.
 - i. Maintain trained staff to utilize current technology and multiple modalities.
 - j. Provide comprehensive staff training on any new technology.

- k. Increase connections and engagement between faculty and students.
- l. Keep students engaged—especially online students.
- m. Provide faculty and staff with clear expectations for handling social and mental issues with students.
- n. Listen to student feedback.
- o. Connect programs with financial outcomes.
- p. Connect courses with skill sets.

College Level Focused Issues and Actions

- V. Partnerships & Collaboration.
 - a. Business and Industry, Employers.
 - i. Expand opportunities for student internships, apprenticeships, on the job training, job shadowing, and job placement.
 - 1. Develop an apprenticeship network.
 - 2. Integrate apprenticeships/internships/on the job training into more programs across the college.
 - 3. Develop more program internships and sponsors with business and industry.
 - 4. Look for sponsors outside of district with a presence in the district (e.g., Google, Amazon, etc.).
 - ii. Provide and expand short term certificates/trainings/programs.
 - iii. Identify vocational skills needed by area employers.
 - iv. Expand corporate level partnerships like John Deere.
 - v. Meet the employers' needs (i.e., short term training to reduce time from work, flexibility on training—times and frequency offered).
 - vi. Work with more employers to provide employer paid trainings or classes paid by employers.
 - vii. Provide more vocational training.
 - viii. Offer competency/skill based credentials.
 - ix. Provide upskilling/reskilling training for district business employees.
 - x. Partner more with Industry on campaigns and marketing plans.

- xi. Expand partnerships with industry to provide training schedules and programs that offer the flexibility to meet worker and business needs.
- xii. Identify ways to keep students and workers in the district.
- xiii. Provide assistance to businesses with tuition reimbursement programs.

b. K-12 education

- i. Expand dual credit for smaller school districts in the area.
- ii. Expand dual credit to include more CTE focused courses.
- iii. Enhance dual credit advisement so students don't take unnecessary credits.
- iv. Develop a strong collaborative partnership LIFT of Mattoon.
- v. Provide high school to college transitional courses.
- vi. Share technology and software utilized among high schools and Lake Land. Should transitional courses be offered to get them used to different technology and software?
- vii. Provide more options for remedial high school math.
- viii. Educate high school counselors.
 - 1. Provide information about careers with short term training options.
 - 2. Share information about Lake Land's resources.
- ix. Utilize high school programs and clubs (e.g., FFA, honor society, etc.) to promote academic and extracurricular programs at Lake Land.
- x. Identify the roadblocks to higher education for local high school students.

- c. Build stronger relationships with district communities, cities, and towns.
- d. Build stronger collaborations within the college across departments and divisions.

VI. Marketing

- a. Market the benefits, value and relevance of education.
- b. Market salary differentials among HS diploma, certificates, associate, and bachelor's degrees.
- c. Link specific jobs to specific degrees.
- d. Market how Lake Land will contribute to success.

- e. Share more information on scholarships and financial aid.
- f. Share more communication about college programs and services.
- g. Share more information about resources available at Lake Land for students.
- h. Share Lake Land's value with PARENTS and potential students.
- i. Provide more information on technology available to students.
- j. Promote advantages of community colleges.
- k. Promote the technology and academics the college offers.
- l. Provide greater outreach to the Hispanic community.
- m. Develop demographic specific marketing initiatives or messages.
- n. Choose "super star" programs and use high quality video to spotlight programs, faculty, and earning potential with a Lake Land degree.
- o. Increase Laker presence at community events.
- p. Market short term certificates.
 - i. Provide information related to direct connection to employment and salary.
 - ii. Promote promising careers that need little education/training and provide the education or training for these careers as well as salary information.
- q. Market STEM programs to women.

VII. Enrollment

- a. Identify and implement outcomes based initiatives to address enrollment challenges.
- b. Provide technology for students in need.
- c. Renew high school visits for recruiting—maybe start younger—junior high.
 - i. Invite faculty.
 - ii. Invite alumni.
 - iii. Invite representatives from business and industry.
 - iv. Invite current students.

VIII. Funding/Economics

- a. Seek more grants.
- b. Get creative with revenue sources.
- c. Find more ways for college to be affordable for more students.
- d. Pursue fair and equitable government funding.

- e. Address the employee wage compression issue.
- f. Identify strategies to utilize resources more efficiently.
- g. Invest in instructional technology.
- h. Improve and maintain college's technology infrastructure.
- i. Invest strategically in facilities that add value to instruction and curriculum.
- j. Invest in employee development.