2021–2022 Leading from the Middle Academy Evaluation

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Executive Summary

The primary goal of this evaluation report is to effectively communicate the value and impact of the LFM Academy to a diverse set of community college stakeholders and to provide valuable insights into the program's effectiveness. This report presents the findings from the 2021-2022 Leading from the Middle (LFM) Academy pilot evaluation, assessing the value of new program components and improvements in participants' leadership development and project application. The report is divided into five sections, each focusing on specific aspects of the academy. The key findings for each section are presented below.

Section 1: Effectiveness of the 2021-2022 LFM Academy Pilot

The pilot program demonstrated positive outcomes in various programmatic components. The virtual kick-off convening introduced participants successfully to LFM's history and team dynamics. The onboarding phase fostered team cohesion and project focus. In-person convenings allowed for deep learning, and new topics received positive feedback from both participants and coaches. The sustainability planning phase proved challenging due to varying interpretations, prompting the need for this component to address participants' well-being going forward. The end-of-the-academy virtual convening faced timing challenges that will also need to be addressed in future academies.

Section 2: Developing and Deepening Leadership Identity

Participants experienced a transformative shift in their self-perception as leaders through exposure to the LFM curriculum. They gained confidence in advocacy, identified their spheres of influence, and recognized their potential for positive change. Coaches observed significant personal growth in participants throughout the program, emphasizing the academy's role in nurturing confident, compassionate, and courageous leaders.

Section 3: Collaboration and Collective Learning

Collaboration and collective learning are critical for middle leadership. The academy's activities, grounded in andragogy, effectively facilitated learning among participants. Consultancies, gallery walks, role-alike conversations, speed dating, and team time promoted meaningful exchanges and project support. The in-person convenings' Brave Space facilitated deep reflection and difficult conversations, enhancing connections and networking opportunities.

Section 4: Utilization of Tools and Strategies for Equity-Centered Initiatives

The academy equipped participants with valuable tools and strategies for institutional transformation. Activities on engaging resistance, mapping, and planning, along with newly introduced concepts and tools provided insights for project implementation and stakeholder

engagement. Understanding organizational dynamics and participatory governance improved teams' decision-making and historical context awareness.

Section 5: Coaches' Continued Leadership Development

The coaching component profoundly impacted coaches' growth as leaders. Reflection reports highlighted themes of creating space, taking risks, finding a voice, and applying leadership styles. Moreover, coaches learning from one another through a community of practice meetings and interactions enriched their coaching practice and expertise.

Conclusion

The LFM Academy effectively equips middle leaders with essential skills, fostering confident, compassionate, and equity-focused leaders. Recommendations to enhance the academy's impact include refining onboarding, allocating sufficient time for content coverage, providing clear timelines, addressing participants' well-being, and staying responsive to emerging needs and challenges.

Overall, the 2021-2022 LFM Academy pilot successfully nurtured transformative leaders who can drive positive change within community colleges. Continued focus on effective program components and improvements will position the academy as a valuable asset in equipping middle leaders to champion equity and inclusion in their institutions.

Introduction

The RP Group's Leading from the Middle Academy (LFM) was founded by California community college practitioners in 2013 in response to a lack of leadership professional development programs focused on middle leaders in California community colleges (CCCs). Over the past 10 years, LFM has evolved into a comprehensive change-focused leadership development program that serves as a catalyst for transformative change in community colleges. LFM equips middle leaders with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to lead with intentionality, empathy, and a commitment to equity. By nurturing a community of empowered and equity-minded leaders, the academy creates more inclusive, equitable, and impactful learning environments for all students.

In light of the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the increased emphasis on social justice following the tragic deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and many others, middle leaders must enhance their skills and adopt new strategies to drive the transformation of their institutions into student-centered, equity-focused environments that foster student success both inside and outside the classroom. In 2020-2021, LFM undertook a strategic planning and program redesign process to ensure that the 2021-2022 academy continues to offer relevant leadership skills to middle leaders in community colleges.

The 2021-2022 LFM Academy served 11 college teams (see Appendix A for participating colleges), engaging 58 community college educators. Each team comprised mid-level practitioners from all parts of the college, representing leadership positions among administrators (13), classified professionals (15), faculty (21), and others (5), with one participant not providing an answer.

Before the 2021-2022 LFM Academy, the program was nine-months long and consisted of three two-and-a-half-day in-person convenings and team coaching at and in between convenings. In fall 2021, LFM participants began the 15-month academy with a virtual kick-off convening, followed by a virtual onboarding and the first of three two-and-a-half-day in-person convenings. Participants attended two additional in-person convenings in the spring and fall of 2022. They engaged in a virtual sustainability planning component before a final virtual end-of-the-convening event.

LFM's curricular content is grounded in the literature on effective professional development. The curriculum engages participants with individual and collective leadership development aspects, such as understanding the change process, planning, communicating, building coalitions, engaging resistance, and taking risks. As part of the curricular redesign, the team made equity and social justice explicit, whereas they were implicit in prior years. Moreover, the change process was augmented to include a systems change lens, and participants engaged in reflection on their spheres of influence. As part of LFM's experiential learning model, campus teams apply their knowledge by working on a project aligned with their college's strategic priorities and addressing institutional inequities, diversity, inclusion, and racial injustice.

Lastly, every team has a designated coach that leads the onboarding and sustainability planning components and provides support during and between convenings; they stay in touch with college teams through calls, emails, and campus visits. LFM coaches and facilitators (all program alums) support the learning process by bringing real-world experience that augments and contextualizes the LFM curriculum.

Of note, the embedded coaching role is designed to strengthen participants' experience and provide coaches with ongoing leadership development. Coaches can observe issues at another college and apply LFM strategies and skills in another setting. Supported by the LFM Director, coaches meet as a community of practice. This way, coaches' experience has become "LFM 2.0," allowing them to deepen their middle leadership skills.

Due to a lack of funding, coaches did not conduct campus visits during the 2021-2022 academy. Given how valuable coaches have found the site visits, they will be re-instated when possible.

Road Map to This Report

The purpose of this mixed-methods evaluation was to assess the overall effectiveness of the 2021-2022 LFM academy pilot. Additionally, we sought to understand the influence of the academy on participants' individual and collective leadership abilities, their application of concepts and tools to advance their team projects (see appendix A for project descriptions) focused on equity, diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism, and the impact of coaching on the leadership growth of program alums.

The report is structured into six sections:

1. **Effectiveness of the 2021-2022 LFM Academy Pilot**: This section evaluates the overall effectiveness of the pilot program.

2. **Developing and Deepening Leadership Identity**: This section explores the participants' perspectives on how the academy influenced their personal leadership growth. It also includes coaches' perceived impact on participants' leadership development.

3. **Collective Learning**: This section assesses the effectiveness of the activities and methods designed for college teams and individuals to learn from each other.

4. **Applying Tools and Strategies to Team Projects**: This section examines how participants applied the concepts and tools learned during the academy to their team projects.

5. **Coaches' Continued Leadership Development**: This section explores coaches' viewpoints on their own leadership development.

6. **Concluding Remarks**: This section offers final remarks and presents a set of recommendations aimed at improving the effectiveness and impact of LFM moving forward.

The sources for this report include various data collection methods. Firstly, daily reflection cards that were completed by all LFM participants at every convening and three surveys administered at the end of each convening. Two focus groups were conducted with a subset of five coaches, and end-of-the-year reflection reports were submitted by all 11 coaches from the 2021-2022 LFM Academy. Furthermore, the LFM team, which consisted of facilitators, coaches, and the LFM director, recorded their observations of participants' experiences through direct observation, along with engagement and interaction with participants. Photographs were also taken to document the physical environment, artifacts, and specific activities that took place during each convening. Lastly, teams were asked to create portfolios of their LFM experience, which included, videos, artifacts and reflections from the team members.

Section 1: Effectiveness of the 2021-2022 LFM Academy Pilot

The LFM team, consisting of facilitators, coaches, and the LFM director, conducted the pilot evaluation of the 2021-2022 LFM Academy, which spanned over a period of 15 months. It is important to note that participants did not have the opportunity to compare the redesigned academy to the previous version therefore their perspectives are not included in this section. In 2021-2022, a 15-month LFM Academy was piloted with the following components:

- Virtual kick-off convening (offered for the first time)

- Virtual onboarding phase (offered for the first time)

- Three two-and-a-half-day in-person convenings

- Virtual sustainability planning phase (offered for the first time)

- Virtual end-of-the-academy convening (offered for the first time)

- Coaching and facilitation

This section is organized by each of the components listed above.

Virtual Kick-Off Convening

The virtual academy kick-off convening sought to achieve several outcomes, which included familiarizing participants with the history of LFM, setting program expectations, introducing participants to other colleges in their academy cohort and the LFM team, and providing a warm welcome to the academy. The session covered the following:

- An overview of LFM's history and an explanation of the program's expectations.

- An opportunity for participants to get to know their LFM teammates, as well as the teams and coaches from other colleges.

- Dedicated time for each team to meet with their assigned coach.

The outcomes for the virtual academy kick-off convening included (1) familiarizing participants with the history of LFM, (2) setting the expectations of the program, (3) introducing participants to other colleges that would be part of their academy cohort and the LFM team, and (4) extending a warm welcome to the academy.

Participant engagement during the kick-off session and subsequent debriefing with the LFM team, validated that the virtual kick-off session successfully met its intended outcomes as described above. Furthermore, it was determined that the session was a valuable addition to the program. It was beneficial to gather all the college teams initially and introduce them to the LFM team that would support them throughout the academy. However, due to the virtual format, there was insufficient time to cover all the planned materials and activities. It is important to note that virtual events often require more time than initially anticipated. Regardless of the time constraints, the kick-off session had a good attendance rate, and participants appeared actively engaged, despite the need to rush through the materials and activities.

Onboarding Phase

In previous LFM evaluations, many participating LFM team members would arrive at the first in-person convening without knowing their teammates or the purpose of their involvement. As noted in LFM's 2019 evaluation report: "Over the years of LFM, some participants have described their presence as being "voluntold," in other words, being directed to "volunteer" for LFM by their colleges. They came without a clear understanding of their roles or their own leadership capacities." Moreover, many of these participants were even unaware of the project they would be working on, as the application and project description were submitted by someone outside the team often expressing a lack of ownership for the project. To address the issues mentioned above, the LFM team introduced an onboarding phase for the 2021-2022 LFM Academy, which was conducted virtually and led by LFM coaches. The expected outcomes of the onboarding phase included:

1. Teams established a relationship with their coach.

2. Team members became acquainted with one another and began to identify each other's strengths.

3. Participants started exploring their leadership identities.

4. Teams refined their projects, which would serve as a sandbox to apply skills and strategies learned throughout the Academy.

5. Ensured a smooth and effective start to the first in-person convening for all participants.

6. Completed a series of activities to prepare for the first in-person convening.

    a. The first iteration of their projects' "Why"; a 3-minute elevator speech.

b. Part I of a College History Map an activity designed to assist teams to understand their institution's history. The history map encourages teams to develop a shared analysis of the institution they are working to change considering historical, social, and political experiences through a broad lens. This activity can provide valuable insights to inform efforts related to equity, diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism reform.

The following data sources, coaches focus group findings, analysis of teams' portfolios, and participant observations during the first in-person convening corroborated that new onboarding phase met the intended outcomes listed above.

Feedback from coaches emphasized the importance of onboarding in facilitating team cohesion, clarifying project focus, and preparing for in-person convenings. It allowed teams to familiarize themselves with one another, the LFM curriculum delivered via Canvas, and the expectations of the LFM Academy, enabling them to hit the ground running at the first convening. One coach noted:

> *The new onboarding curriculum, and the chance for teams to meet and form prior to the first face-to-face convening was a real improvement. This was the first time that I have had a team at the first convening that already knew each other and had some coherence.*

Additionally, coaches mentioned specific activities, listed below, as valuable components of the onboarding curriculum:

- Team purpose activity

- Developing an elevator speech

- Leaders in your life activity

- Ongoing leadership self-assessment tool

Coaches found that these activities sparked conversations about leadership and helped participants explore their individual and collective leadership identities. The coaches felt that one article in particular, "Academic Leadership: Gatekeeping or Groundskeeping?" by Beronda L. Montgomery, was especially effective in generating discussion on the qualities of a good leader.

Through team coaching during onboarding teams refined their projects, which allowed them to clearly define their why. For example, Porterville shared in their portfolio:

> *Our team entered the 1st LFM Academy (February 24, 2022) with the idea of creating a Summer Bridge Boot Camp. This was the idea that arose during our meetings leading up to the 1st academy session as a project that connected to the Porterville College strategic priorities that advance equity, diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism work on our campus.*

The team from the Klamath Trinity Instructional Site refined their "why" by incorporating local data:

> *The Hoopa Valley Tribal reservation is in a very rural Northern California location. 37% of Hoopa residents live in poverty and nearly half (48%) of the children live in poverty. Low educational attainment is the major contributor to poverty- 41.8% of Hoopa residents have a high school education (29.9%) or less (11.9%). 39.6% of Hoopa residents have some college and only 16.8% have completed BA/BS Degrees compared to 29.8% of the county residents. The Klamath Trinity Instructional Site for College of the Redwoods is the only higher education institution within 65 miles. We assist our community by providing access to high quality college education, and student services. We are working to break the cycle of poverty that continues to impact children and families living on or near the reservation.*

From the initial implementation of the onboarding component, two important lessons were learned:

1. We were overly ambitious in terms of the amount of content coaches and participants were expected to complete within the three-month onboarding period.

2. It is necessary to streamline the onboarding curriculum and prioritize leadership development and team building.

   a. Each Canvas module should have a specific deliverable, such as the completion and submission of an elevator speech.

   b. Clear timelines and expectations should be provided to ensure the timely completion of tasks.

In-Person Convenings

A series of three two-and-a-half-day in-person convenings took place between February and October 2022 at the Kellogg West Conference Center in Pomona, CA. These in-person convenings have been part of the LFM academy design since its inception in 2013. The purpose of these gatherings is to provide community college practitioners with the opportunity to step away from their institutions and have a dedicated space for their teams to delve into the topics presented at each convening. Moreover, these gatherings have always been and in a retreat-like setting, allowing for reflection, deepening relationships within their teams, networking with colleagues from other colleges, and collective learning.

As part of the program redesign, the following new topics and activities were introduced; circles of influence, organizational charts and participatory governance documents iceberg activity related to institutional culture and college history map (these are discussed in detail on pg. 17). These new additions to the curriculum, along with existing activities and concepts generated enthusiasm and sparked meaningful discussions among the teams, contributing to their growth and development throughout the program. As one coach noted, "*I believe the changes to the*

curriculum were highly beneficial and came at the right time." The value of these in-person convenings continues to be immeasurable.

Sustainability Planning

The purpose of the sustainability planning phase was to allow the teams dedicated time with their coach to develop next steps for sustaining both their projects and themselves as middle leaders engaged in the challenging task of transforming their institutions and prepare for their culminating presentation of their LFM journey.

In the final reflection reports from the majority of coaches, sustainability planning was considered a promising component that required some rethinking regarding its focus. In their final coaching meetings with their teams, coaches observed that, as a first-time activity, this component did not prove effective for most teams. The challenge arose from the fact that the concept of how teams would sustain their projects varied greatly among different teams, making it difficult for the coaches to facilitate effectively.

Furthermore, the timing of the sustainability planning activity, which occurred after the final in-person convening and the end of the semester, was deemed less than optimal. As an alternative approach, several coaches suggested shifting the focus of this component towards addressing burnout, fatigue, mental health, and self-care for the teams.

End-of-the-Academy Virtual Convening

The goals of the End-of-the-Academy convening were twofold:

1. For teams to present their LFM journeys compiled in their team's portfolios, sharing the knowledge and skills they acquired throughout their participation in LFM.

2. To formally mark the end of the program.

Before the redesign, participants attended the final in-person convening and then went their separate ways.

Based on drop-in participant attendance, with some teams not attending at all due to commencement activities, coaches' and facilitators' observations, and the lack of time for each team that attended to present their final project gives us pause to rethink the timing of this final virtual gathering. One coach noted:

> *I really like a final virtual convening, but the timing on this turned out to be poor. More attention needs to be paid to the normal working calendar of the community college system. In the final weeks of a semester, the capacity of the group was greatly reduced, and I believe I saw this in the report out of other groups. A good lesson to learn.*

A second coach commented on the final presentation of each team's LFM journey:

> *Requiring the reflection and the use of the historical timeline for the project was well worth the effort.*

Coaching and Facilitation

Coaching at and between Convenings

In 2017, the program redesigned the coaching component to strengthen the experience for participants. Prior to 2017, a small number of coaches coached two to three colleges, providing limited support to teams via email and phone. Since that time, coaching has become a robust piece of LFM. In the 2021-2022 academy, each coach was assigned to support one team during and between convenings. Coaches join their assigned college teams during each convening, facilitating conversations, asking questions, and supporting planning activities. Between convenings, coaches meet virtually with their college teams at least once a month to keep the team on track with the application of activities covered at each convening on their team project and day-to-day work. Coaches also provide support through email and one or two in-person site visits.

Moreover, the majority of LFM coaches are former program alums. As middle leaders, they bring real-world experience that augments and contextualizes the LFM curriculum. In addition, participants who serve as coaches have an opportunity for their own ongoing leadership development (more details are found in section 5).

Facilitation

Until the 2021-2022 Academy, two alums from the early days of the Academy led the development and facilitation of the LFM curriculum. These individuals were responsible for shaping and overseeing the curriculum used in the Academy's in-person convenings. Although there were some attempts to develop new facilitators, they encountered resistance from individuals within the Academy.

Moreover, a significant step was taken to enhance collaboration and cross-functional cooperation, a meaningful departure from the silos that previously existed between facilitation and curriculum development, coaching, and evaluation. Coaches interested in facilitating or participating in evaluation efforts were invited and supported by the LFM director to take on these roles. This move is intended to break down barriers and encourage team members to contribute their diverse skills and perspectives to multiple areas of the Academy.

To further facilitate collaboration, the Academy established two dedicated workgroups. The first workgroup consisted of facilitators tasked with developing, strengthening, and updating the LFM curriculum. This team worked closely together to refine the educational content and delivery methods. The second workgroup consisted of LFM alums and current coaches tasked with designing the evaluation plan and instruments to ensure a comprehensive evaluation process.

Furthermore, opportunities were created for others to contribute to the curriculum and evaluation components, leveraging their expertise and experience as community college practitioners.

This shift resulted in a more inclusive and cohesive program that recognized and valued the contributions of every team member. Introducing the participatory agenda review process allowed for collaborative input from the entire team and fostered a shared vision for the Academy's development. A few coaches commented:

> *I appreciate our pre-convening agenda review calls. They really help us to prepare for the convening and to be able to support the structure and schedule for the convening.*
>
> *I found the coaches' meetings to go over curricular changes very helpful.*
>
> *Our curriculum discussions and invitation for feedback were helpful.*

The primary purpose of the evaluation was to assess the effectiveness of the new components of the program. Therefore, we did not have participants evaluate the effectiveness of coaches and facilitators this year. We will do so in subsequent years.

Section 2: Developing and Deepening Leadership Identity

From the inception of LFM, nurturing one's leadership identity has been a central objective for participants in the academy. Through ongoing observations and evaluations, it has become evident that participants' perceptions of themselves as leaders evolve through a combination of reflection, skill expansion, learning new strategies, and hands-on experience. They develop their ability to think systemically, collaborate effectively, and demonstrate courageous and compassionate leadership with a sense of urgency. As middle leaders acquire knowledge and apply skills and strategies, their confidence and sense of identity as leaders flourish. This results in genuine growth in leadership competencies. Section 2 is organized around two key topics: the personal growth of individuals as leaders and coaches' observations of individual leadership development.

Individuals' Personal Growth as Leaders

This section offers insights into individuals' personal growth as leaders, derived from the pre- and post-surveys conducted at the end of the first and third convenings, as well as observations of their growth recorded by the coaches in their end-of-the-year reflections report.

After the first convening (February 24-26, 2022), 58 LFM participants completed a pre-academy survey. One of the survey questions aimed to gain insights into participants' perceptions of their role as a leader/equity practitioner, as indicated in Table 1. Respondents were presented with the following statements: "being a leader on campus," "involvement in campus

change/improvements," "where are you in your equity journey?" and "experience being part of a leadership collective." They were then asked to rate their perceived position on each statement using a scale ranging from "seasoned leaders/equity practitioners" to "not a leader/equity practitioner."

Of note, by this time, participants had completed an onboarding process through which they met with their coaches and had some initial exposure to LFM and the curriculum for the academy. Prior to participating in the academy, respondents were more inclined to perceive themselves as novices in terms of their leadership role on campus, their progress on their equity journey, and their involvement in a leadership collective.

Participants completed an online post-survey at the end of the third convening, which took place in early October 2022. In the post-survey, participants were asked the same question as in the online pre-survey (administered at the first convening in February 2022) regarding their perception of their role as a leader/equity practitioner. The post-survey intended to gather participants' reflections and feedback on their leadership development throughout the academy. The number of survey respondents significantly decreased from 57 in the pre-survey to 33 in the post-survey. We believe this drop can be attributed to the timing of survey administration. The pre-survey was conducted at the start of the spring 2022 semester, while the post-survey occurred towards the end of the fall 2022 semester. The latter period is usually hectic for participants, with final exams and several holidays, which may have led to lower response rates.

Before participating in the academy, a significant percentage of respondents (19%) considered themselves to be novices or individuals who were starting their journey as leaders and equity practitioners. In contrast, a small percentage (4%) did not identify as leaders or equity practitioners in the pre-survey, compared to 3% and 0% in the post-survey. In contrast to their self-perceptions in the pre-survey, larger proportions of respondents indicated in the post-survey that they were growing in their experience as a leader or considered themselves to be seasoned leaders (see Table 1). The difference in participant ratings between the pre- and post-surveys suggests a notable shift in self-perception.

Furthermore, these respondents had a limited understanding of their impact, influence on campus, progress in promoting equity, and involvement in collective leadership efforts. The combination of self-identifying as novices and lacking awareness of their impact and involvement suggests that participants may have lacked confidence and a comprehensive understanding of their potential as agents of change. However, upon completing the academy, participants experienced a meaningful transformation in their views as leaders. They recognized personal growth and development, indicating a shift in their self-perception as capable leaders with the potential to make a difference.

Table 1. Pre- and Post-Survey Results: How do you view your role as a leader/equity practitioner?

	Not a Leader/Equity Practitioner		Novice-Just Beginning		Growing in Experience		Seasoned Leader/Equity Practitioner	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Being a leader on campus (N=33)	4%	0%	19%	3%	67%	76%	11%	21%
Involvement in campus change/improvements	2%	0%	11%	0%	72%	76%	16%	24%
Where are you on your equity journey?	2%	0%	21%	3%	61%	76%	16%	21%
Experience being part of a leadership collective	0%	3%	47%	3%	40%	75%	12%	19%

In an open-ended survey question on the post-survey, participants were given the opportunity to reflect on their growth as leaders throughout the LFM Academy. Participants noted increased confidence in their role as leaders on their respective campuses. They felt more assured in their ability to take on leadership responsibilities and navigate challenges. Moreover, they mentioned developing a deeper understanding of their spheres of influence and an enhanced leadership "tool box" as key areas of development throughout the LFM Academy. Three participants described their increased sense of confidence as follows:

> I feel more confident in my ability to advocate for what I think is right and issues at our institution that should be identified and corrected. I feel more confident in asking questions about current processes and barriers to change.

> I have grown tremendously as leader throughout this year. I feel my confidence has grown and I am being heard in my current role. I will forever be grateful in this experience and opportunity I was able to be a part of.

> By expanding my confidence and outreach to others in campus, I am more confident in talking to faculty about important issues. I am more confident taking risks.

One aspect of being an effective leader is recognizing one's ability to influence outcomes whether it is by having a formal leadership title or not. As one classified professional shared:

> I was able to re-examine where I have influence and [realized that] the circle is larger than I anticipated.

Three participants shared some examples of how the overall program has shaped them as leaders:

> I feel like I've learned how to better engage resistance, think about coalition building in a sustainable way, and really appreciate the power every person has as a leader in their own right. I have always tried to be a creative thinker to find other ways to create solutions, but LFM has helped me grow, experience, and practice these skills in an

inclusive and safe way . . . it's a wonderful culture to experience and feeling to come back to when we need to re-center.

The activities helped me develop my skills as a leader and active team member. I also appreciate the networking opportunities to learn from other campus leaders how they are addressing similar issues on their campus. I also feel more comfortable reaching out to colleagues that attended this assembly and utilizing their knowledge as questions arise after the academy.

The last year has been an important year in my leadership journey. . . . In my role as Guided Pathways lead, I encouraged our college to send a team to LFM to work on Student Success Teams. As a leader, I feel like this was an important decision for our team. The LFM experience has provided us with an opportunity to bond and create a plan to successfully launch Student Success Teams. . . I have finally realized how important the middle leaders are when there are leadership changes at the college.

Coaches' Observation of Individual Leadership Development

At the end of each academy, coaches must submit a reflections report, offering valuable insights and feedback on the growth and progress displayed by the participants during the program. Key findings from coaches' observations of leadership development within the teams they coached include:

1. **Recognizing Their Leadership Potential:** Several coaches commented that members of their team, primarily faculty, did not see themselves as leaders initially; however, over the course of the academy, they discovered their leadership capacity and experienced significant personal growth. Moreover, these participants developed a better understanding of how they can become leaders for equity on their campus.

2. **Increased Confidence:** Most coaches observed that participants who were not faculty or deans, were initially hesitant to use their voice and participate. Over the course of the academy these participants gained confidence and applied leadership principles effectively, using their voices and making themselves heard.

3. **Embracing their Leadership Roles:** Another widely shared observation was the struggle among some participants to fully embrace their leadership roles. However, the leadership development work changed their perspective, helping them recognize their existing leadership abilities in their individual roles.

The coaches' quotes below reinforce the findings described above.

One [team] member, who didn't see herself as a leader, soon understood how her efforts were functioning in a leadership capacity. She blossomed through the process.

We had a few faculty [on the team]. [They] contributed when asked to. I don't think either saw themselves as a leader. . . . I think the faculty members developed a better sense of how they can be leaders for equity on campus.

I think this team had a lot of personal growth specifically for members that were not faculty or deans. Having a voice and being asked to participate was initially overwhelming and they were hesitant, but after the first/second convening, I could see an increased confidence and the ability to apply the leadership principles to use their voice and be heard.

No one felt like they were a leader going in and they all struggled with accepting they were a leader throughout the process. . . . The leadership work changed them the most since they were already great at working as a team. It helped them see how they were leaders on their campus already. It even helped the administrator who has a leader title. More understanding about how they are all leaders in their individual roles. More skills and preparation for speaking to different groups on campus about their project.

Section 3: Collaboration and Collective Learning

Collaboration and learning with others are integral aspects of middle leadership. Middle leaders often face challenges that require collective efforts, and effective collaboration and coalition-building are essential for addressing these issues. The LFM program places a central focus on developing participants' ability to collaborate effectively and foster a collective learning environment.

The in-person convenings offer numerous activities designed to promote collaboration and collective learning among college teams. Based on participant daily reflection cards, participatory observations from facilitators and coaches during the convenings, and coaches' reflection reports, the activities and methods listed below have been identified as particularly effective. These strategies are grounded in adult learning theory, specifically andragogy, which prioritizes facilitating learning for self-directed adult learners.

- **Consultancies:** Participants engage in consultative discussions, seeking and providing advice and insights on specific challenges or projects.

- **Gallery walks:** Teams explore and learn from visual displays or exhibits showcasing different projects, ideas, or initiatives.

- **Role-alike conversations:** Individuals with similar roles or responsibilities engage in targeted discussions, share experiences, and exchange strategies.

- **Speed dating:** Participants rotate through brief one-on-one conversations, allowing for quick exchanges of knowledge and insights.

- **Making the case** (elevator speeches): Individuals present concise and compelling summaries of their projects or ideas, promoting discussion and feedback.

- **Team time:** Dedicated periods for teams to collaborate, reflect, and engage in focused discussions, facilitating collective learning.

At the end of each day during the in-person convenings, participants were encouraged to reflect on their biggest takeaways, which provided an opportunity for individuals to share key insights and highlights. Here are a few examples of participants' lessons learned and experiences as a result of participating in the activities described above:

I enjoyed the gallery walks and seeing/learning about other places and journeys. Mapping things out visually is helpful -- sometimes hard, but appreciate seeing all of our work.

Identifying who to make the case to and identifying who supports our general goal. This makes it easier to happen in real life!

Working together as a team, in person, on our project and getting to know the details raised more ideas.

Furthermore, participating in convenings held away from their college campuses offers a conducive setting for deep reflection and the creation of a Brave Space in which to have difficult conversations. It provides a space where participants can deepen their connections with their team members in ways they often don't at their institutions. Participants also engage with peers from other colleges, gaining a deeper understanding of their own perspectives and their college's position in the broader context. These face-to-face meetings create opportunities for networking and continued learning from one another. One coach expressed:

These connections and shared experiences with like-minded individuals help individuals feel grounded and provide valuable insights into their own progress and that of their institutions.

A few participants added:

We never talk about our college's history and we were allowed to express our frustrations with microaggressions in the term definition activity.

Working with other teams and colleges. See connections in values and goals. See other visions and other forms of courage. Establishing partnerships.

Loved the equity discussion, collaboration with colleagues, and getting to know one another.

Very glad we are together in-person and so thankful for focused times for impromptu discussions.

Section 4: Applying Tools and Strategies to Team Projects

Equity-centered reform efforts include planning, communication, engaging colleagues, utilizing relevant data, fostering collaboration within teams, and adapting these skills and strategies to the unique culture of participants' respective colleges. Consequently, participants in the program have ample opportunities to apply the leadership skills they acquire. This section illustrates how teams effectively employed various tools taught by the program to advance their equity-centered initiatives, beginning with two longstanding tools that have been used since LFM's inception, followed by tools that were introduced in the 2021-2022 academy.

Engaging Resistance

In any endeavor aimed at transforming institutions, resistance is an inevitable challenge that arises. LFM has consistently incorporated activities and readings on resistance as an integral part of the program. Moreover, this topic has consistently resonated with participants, providing them with valuable insights and strategies.

Throughout the second convening, participants were asked to reflect on how they would apply what they had learned about resistance via reflection cards and the survey administered at the end of each convening. The question sought to encourage participants to consider practical ways in which they could utilize their newfound knowledge and understanding of resistance within their institutional contexts. Several respondents shared the following:

> *The activities we completed during this academy really helped us identify resistance that we had not previously identified. The activities were very well structured to allow discussion and assessment of our projects. We are [definitely] able to use the information gathered to advance our projects and address resistance in advance.*

> *I feel I can use the strategies in my own [redacted] department to help facilitate the changes that come down from administration. We see multiple types of resistors in these situations and the strategies I learned will be invaluable.*

> *We need to get faculty involvement from the get-go to get ahead of the resistance (if/when it happens). We have also discussed rolling out our maps in phases so we can more easily engage with resistance as it comes from different areas instead of all at once. Being transparent is imperative in gaining approval and support from faculty.*

> *I will use this information for both the LFM project as well as work within my discipline.*

> *This will be helpful to allow us to navigate courageous conversations within areas that we have noticed or anticipate to be a challenge.*

Understanding the reasons behind resistance is crucial when engaging with individuals who are resistant to change. Two participants shared their reflections on the importance of approaching resisters with empathy:

> *I look forward to building trust using empathy and validation to help my colleagues embrace the paradigm of recognizing prior learning experiences.*

> *Reframing the way that I look at resistance/resistors by welcoming their feedback on concerns.*

Mapping and Planning Tools

The LFM Academy equips participants with a comprehensive set of graphic tools that form the foundation for a planning process. As teams progress through each of these tools, they engage in meaningful conversations and consider diverse perspectives, which enables them to map out the local culture, create effective communication and engagement plans, and strategically prepare for the implementation of their projects.

Here are some key tools covered in the program:

- **Team assessment tool:** This tool allows participants to identify their individual and team strengths, facilitating a better understanding of their collective capabilities.

- **Ecosystem map, spheres of influence, and iceberg:** These tools provide different perspectives on the college and its culture, enabling teams to gain insights into various aspects of their institutional environment.

- **Elevator speech and stakeholder map:** These tools help teams identify different audiences within the campus community and develop targeted messages to effectively reach them.

- **Logic model and momentum map:** These tools assist teams in organizing their work within a strategic timeframe and provide a structured approach to setting goals, defining interim steps, and identifying potential future actions.

During the in-person convenings, participants were encouraged to reflect on their biggest takeaways from each day, which provided an opportunity for individuals to share key insights and highlights. Here are a few examples of participants' lessons learned and experiences as a result of using the above tools:

> *Understanding the power of collaboration and leveraging different perspectives to drive positive change in our institution.*

> *Realizing the importance of mapping out our college's ecosystem and identifying key influencers to effectively implement our equity-centered initiatives.*

Learning how to craft an impactful elevator speech and develop a stakeholder map to effectively communicate our message and engage various campus audiences.

Appreciating the significance of creating a logic model and momentum map to set clear goals, define steps, and track progress in our project timeline.

Our intense team time was very productive today, we were able to identify CLEAR next steps through our mapping processes.

These reflections showcase the valuable insights gained by participants and highlight the practical applications of the tools and strategies taught during the program.

Three coaches added their perspectives on how their teams benefitted from using these tools:

The ecosystem mapping and the historical journey mapping allowed them to realize how their Admin was changing so frequently leaving them feeling unsupported. It also reinforced the role of middle leaders (self-identified) and the opportunity that the changing Admin presents for them to provide stability.

The [members of the team] are all strategic thinkers. They seemed to most enjoy mapping out the breadth of the project, the eco-system and stakeholder mapping [which led] up to the logic model. They also enjoyed identifying points of resistance, spheres of influence, as well as the momentum mapping. They referenced that during our conversations and were able to take their plan back to their college for discussions with key stakeholders.

The stakeholder map is a huge. Some of the people that are on the teams really have no idea outside their little group who is involved in decision-making or approval process or anything else in that regard. . . . We're doing this project that the team is saying, "Okay, I can get behind this. I can focus on this." But when their eyes are opened up to see how many people are actually involved in either using the project, or having some stake in how the project is run, or what needs to be incorporated into it, that just gets their leadership skills. They say, "Okay, whenever there's some sort of project that I need to do, I need to take into consideration all these other things that in the past would have never even occurred to me." And I think that's a huge step in their leadership development.

New Concepts and Tools Introduced at the 2021-2022 Academy

The LFM curriculum incorporated several new concepts and tools that aimed to enhance participants' understanding of their campus organization and decision-making processes that could impact their project implementation. These additions included the following:

1. **Circles of influence**: This concept helped participants identify the spheres of influence within their institution, enabling them to determine who and what can support or hinder their project's progress. By mapping out their circles of

influence, participants gained valuable insights into the stakeholders they needed to engage with and the strategies they could employ to navigate organizational dynamics effectively.

2. **Organizational charts and participatory governance documents**: Participants were introduced to the use of organization charts and participatory governance documents as tools to gain insight into the organizational structure of their campus and the individuals or groups involved in decision-making processes.

3. **Iceberg activity related to institutional culture**: Through this activity, participants explored both the visible and invisible aspects of their institutional culture, including norms and policies, which helped them understand the underlying dynamics that could influence their project's success.

4. **College history map**: This activity serves as a tool for teams to document their LFM experience, capturing artifacts and team reflections along the way. By creating a portfolio that spans across time, this activity allows teams to contextualize their work within a broader historical framework.

By actively engaging with these concepts and tools, our goal is for participants to gain the ability to assess the potential impact of organizational factors on their projects, both positive and negative. Additionally, we hope to empower participants to identify opportunities for leveraging their individual or collective influence to drive their initiatives forward. Below we describe participants' experiences with each of these concepts and tools.

Individual and Collective Influence

To assess the effectiveness of the newly added curricular topic, "circles of influence," participants were asked to reflect on how they could utilize their individual and collective influence to advance their projects in a survey administered at the end of Convening 2 that took place in June 2022.

Individual Influence

Out of the 23 responses received from participants, 13 (57%) shared specific ways in which they could personally contribute to furthering their projects. These responses are grouped into major themes and reflect the various strategies and actions undertaken by participants to drive their projects forward and maximize their impact within their respective spheres of influence. Some notable responses organized by theme include:

Personal Influence and Broader Impact: Participants realized the extent of their own influence and the potential for broader impact than initially anticipated. For example, one participant illustrated: *"I can mobilize individuals within my sphere of influence to actively contribute to our project's success."*

Collaboration and Teamwork: Participants noted that change requires collaboration and buy-in from all stakeholders and that middle leaders need to engage colleagues, staff, and other members of the educational community to support their initiatives and foster a collective commitment to change. One participant commented: **"***Collaborating with members of my team to generate momentum and garner support for the project.***"**

Focusing Efforts and Gradual Change: Participants recognized that creating change in community colleges is a gradual and deliberate process that requires focusing on specific priorities and initiatives. It involves dedicating sufficient time and resources to these targeted areas and implementing changes step by step over an extended period. Change does not happen overnight; rather, it evolves through a series of thoughtful and well-executed actions that build upon each other to bring about sustainable and meaningful transformation. One participant shared: **"***I will focus my efforts within my sphere of influence to enact gradual and continuous change.***"**

Communication and Networking: Participants emphasized that effective communication and networking are essential components of effective leadership. Together, communication and networking can help to lead with clarity, build strong relationships, and create an environment conducive to collaboration and innovation. As one participant noted: *"I need to establish direct communication with the Vice President of Student Services to build relationships and gain support from upper management for our project."*

These categories highlight the various ways in which participants effectively applied the leadership skills taught by the program to advance their equity-centered initiatives and create positive change within their institutions. In the words of one participant:

> *While our individual spheres of influence overlap a bit, we are all in different areas, so we each have unique connections we can use. Most of us understand the culture and politics of the college, so we can (somewhat) project where and what the resistance will be and how to address it. I think, as a team, we have the ability to work together in disparate groups and initiatives to get buy in for [our project]. I'm excited for what is to come.*

Collective Influence

Here are some noteworthy highlights from the same 13 respondents when asked about their collective influence as a team:

- Creating a well-defined action plan that provides a concrete solution to their problem, enabling them to effectively pitch their project and gain momentum with individuals they can influence.

- Integrating team members into key committees and departments that play a crucial role in implementing their project, thus positioning them to raise awareness and garner support from decision-makers involved in their efforts.

- Collaborating with team members in their respective areas, the team can collectively build momentum and engage more individuals in their project.

- Leveraging their sphere of influence, the team aims to bring stakeholders on board and secure their support.

- Identifying key individuals and groups with whom they can initiate conversations and take collective action.

- Sharing their project with their respective spheres of influence, maximizing their reach and impact.

- Targeting communication efforts toward specific individuals and groups, and involving them in early discussions about the project to foster engagement and buy-in.

- When engaging instructional faculty members, highlighting the project's benefits and provide necessary training to support their involvement.

These reflections highlight teams' recognition of their collective power and the strategic approaches they intend to employ to engage various stakeholders and facilitate project success.

Using Organization Charts and Participatory Governance Documents

To evaluate the effectiveness of activities aimed at improving participants' understanding of their campus organization and decision-making processes, participants were asked to reflect on whether these activities successfully enhanced their awareness and knowledge in this area. Of the 26 participants who responded to the survey question, an overwhelming majority (92%) strongly agreed or agreed that their engagement in these activities had provided them with a deeper understanding of their college's decision-making processes and structures (see Figure 1). Two participants described the following in an open-ended survey response:

> My biggest takeaway is that our campus needs to update our Organization Chart and Governance Chart. We identified that this can be a barrier for ideas to flourish if a person is not familiar with the campus structure.

> Understanding more about my institution's structure and who we need to get on board in order to be successful in our project.

Figure 1: Changes in participants' understanding/awareness of colleges' decision making processes and structures

"I have a better understanding of my college's decision-making processes and structures as a result of participating in LFM activities"
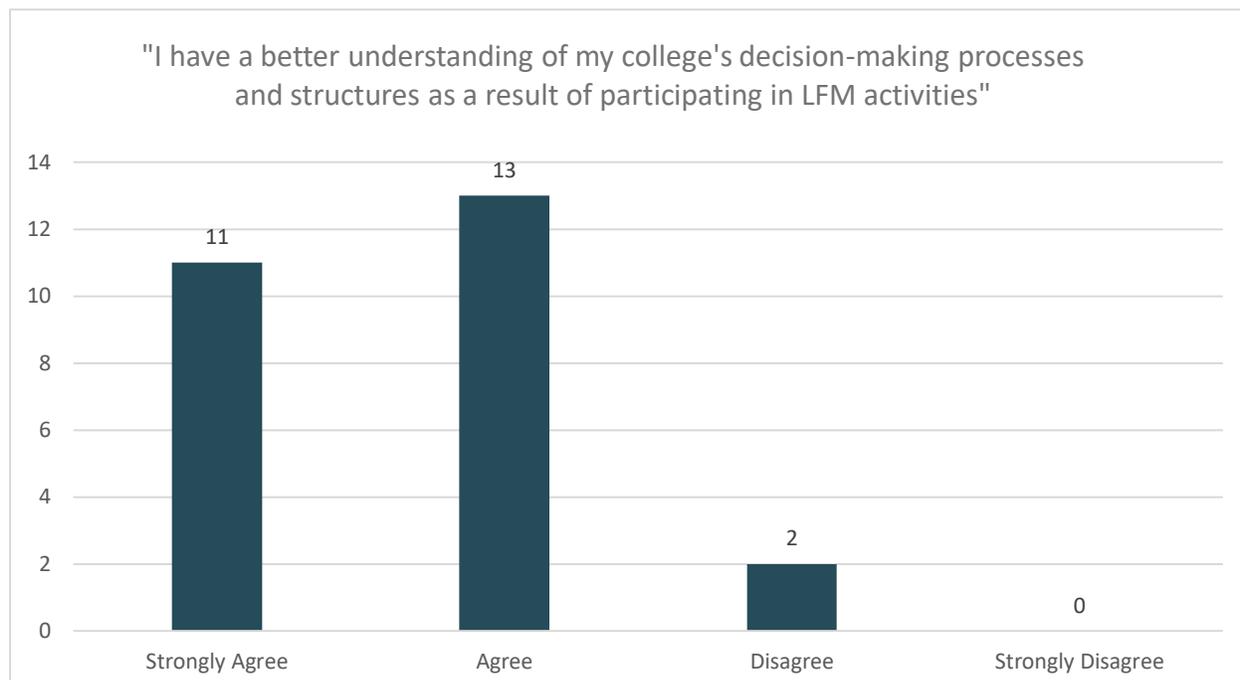
The coaches affirmed participants' perceptions, with one coach stating:

> We achieved significant success with the tools utilized to explore the structure of the institutions involved in this process, as well as the individual leadership skill assessments. These activities enabled team members to delve into the intricacies of their projects and find their voices on new and different topics. I was pleasantly surprised by the level of introspection displayed by the participants.

This feedback further supports the notion that the activities implemented effectively contributed to participants' enhanced awareness of and facilitated their growth in understanding the complexities of their college's organizational dynamics and decision-making processes.

College History Journey Maps

The college history journey is a portfolio that includes artifacts and team reflections. The template provided a way for teams to present highlights of their LFM participation. Constructing the journey map gave teams the opportunity to document their experiences as well as to compile a product they could share with colleagues at their own campus.

During the academy, college teams engaged in an activity that involved creating a history map of their college. The purpose of the history journey map was to provide the teams with a broader temporal context for their work. The map was designed to include the following components:

1. **Major historical and organizational milestones, experiences, and events:** Teams identified significant events and milestones that have shaped the history and development of their college.

2. **Experience with equity, diversity, inclusion, and antiracism:** Teams examined their college's journey and experiences related to equity, diversity, inclusion, and antiracism efforts.

3. **Related community events, issues, and dynamics:** Teams explored the broader community events, issues, and dynamics that have influenced their college's history.

By mapping the historical and contextual factors, teams reported being able to gain a deeper understanding of the institutional landscape and identify areas of focus for their equity-centered initiatives. Three participants stated the following:

We highlighted key milestones such as the establishment of our college, the expansion of academic programs, and major changes in leadership. These milestones allowed us to trace the development of our institution over time and understand the foundations on which we are building our equity initiatives.

In examining our college's experience with equity, diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism, we discovered both progress and challenges. We identified significant policy changes, initiatives, and moments of community activism that have shaped our college's journey toward a more inclusive and equitable environment.

Understanding the related community events, issues, and dynamics helped us see how external factors have influenced our college's approach to equity and diversity. We recognized the importance of community partnerships and the need to address broader social issues impacting our students' experiences.

The excerpts from the history journey map activity below illustrate how the maps provided teams with a comprehensive view of their college's past, enabling them to contextualize their current efforts and make informed decisions as they strive for meaningful change.

- Mount San Antonio College included recognition of the indigenous tribe that originally inhabited the land prior to their founding in 1945.

- The Klamath Trinity Instruction site referred to the first school on the Hoopa reservation in 1880, the founding of a boarding school in 1893, and the transition of that boarding school to a public school in 1924.

- Some colleges noted their founding in the early 20th century:

  o Fresno Junior College in 1910,

  o Modesto Junior College in 1921,

  o Pasadena City College in 1924,

- o Reedley College in 1926 with 30 students and six courses, and

  - o Porterville College in 1927.

- Victor Valley College documented their founding in 1967 during periods of expansion of the community college system in 1960s and 1970s.

- Norco College was first established as a campus of the Riverside Community College District and accredited as an independent college by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges in 1992.

- Teams included local historical events in their timelines. Pasadena City College included a campus visit by Albert Einstein in 1931 and Fresno City College noted Martin Luther King, Jr.'s visit for fair housing in 1964.

Lastly, equity was visible in different ways within different colleges. Notable examples include:

- Palomar College: In 2016, the college was put on probation by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) due to insufficient data and efforts related to diversity. This event served as a turning point, prompting the college to address these shortcomings and prioritize equity.

- Porterville College: The team's timeline included significant milestones that demonstrate the college's commitment to promoting equity and inclusivity such as the establishment of Umoja and Puente programs, both of which aim to support underrepresented students, as well as the expansion of ESL (English as a Second Language) programs.

- Reedley College: The team's history map highlighted the passing of the Americans with Disabilities Act, emphasizing the college's recognition of the importance of accessibility and inclusion. Additionally, increases in the Hispanic population in the college's service area, as indicated by local census data, reflect the changing dynamics and diversity within the community.

- Norco College: Starting in 2014, the team's timeline incorporated the deaths of Black youths at the hands of the police across the country, acknowledging the impact of national events and serving as a reminder of the ongoing struggle for racial justice and equity.

These examples illustrate how colleges recognized and incorporated equity-related events and developments into their history journey maps. By acknowledging both challenges and progress, these colleges demonstrate their commitment to addressing inequities and fostering a more inclusive environment for their students and communities.

Section 5: Coaches' Continued Leadership Development

Since the formalization of the coaching component in 2018, one of the goals of LFM has been to provide a space for the ongoing leadership development of LFM alumni, using coaching as a vehicle for growth. In 2021-2022, all of LFM's coaches were returning coaches who had been coaching for between two and four years. This year was the first since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and when coaches were able to coach their teams through both in-person and online formats, offering a more diverse coaching experience.

Coaches' Growth as Leaders

All coaches are required to submit an end-of-the-year reflection report where they are prompted to reflect on their personal growth as leaders and how their experience with coaching had contributed to their development within their institutions. The aim was to encourage coaches to assess the progress they had made and recognize the impact of coaching on their professional journey within their respective organizations. Several themes emerged from their responses:

- **Stepping back and creating space:** Coaches described learning to step back and provide team members with the opportunity and space to share their experiences, fostering a brave space for grappling with leadership concepts.

- **Taking risks and vulnerability:** Coaches acknowledged the importance of engaging in difficult conversations, taking risks, and allowing themselves to be vulnerable, which required courage and led to personal growth.

- **Finding leadership voice:** Coaches expressed discovering their leadership voice within their institutions, feeling more confident and vocal in addressing issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion.

- **Applying leadership styles:** Coaches discussed applying different leadership styles, particularly coaching and adaptive leadership, which they found to be directly applicable to their roles within their institutions.

Coaches shared the following additional ways in which they grew as leaders:

- Recognizing the importance of listening and observing team members' self-awareness and growth, which served as a reminder for their own leadership development.

- Engaging in challenging conversations related to institutional racism and mistreatment, leveraging personal experiences and taking more risks than in previous teams.

- Applying coaching skills to their leadership roles at the college, working with multiple teams and supporting others in reaching their goals.

- Developing a better understanding of adaptive leadership, adjusting strategies to different contexts, and considering the most effective approaches for different audiences.

- Feeling more comfortable volunteering for campus- and district-wide committees, speaking up, and sharing valuable skills and insights for the benefit of students.

- Speaking up on topics that may fall outside their traditional role, such as researchers advocating for change.

These reflections underscore the profound impact that coaching within LFM has had on coaches' growth as leaders, enabling them to apply new skills and perspectives within their respective institutions.

Learning from and Supporting One Another

In addition to their growth as leaders through coaching college teams, coaches also emphasized the value of learning from one another. Here are some reflections from a few coaches highlighting the significance of this peer-to-peer learning:

When I was able to attend the community of practice meetings, I found those very helpful. I always appreciate the opportunity to have conversations with the other coaches, to hear what they are doing and experiencing. I learn a lot from the other coaches.

A lot of what I learned was actually in the coaches' meetings in the evenings. Listening to what other groups were going through and interacting with the coaches during the convenings helped me to get feedback about the issues I was encountering within my team and then to apply them. I also gathered insight about what other coaches were trying and, where appropriate, I tried implementing them in my group.

I felt far more supported this year because of the return to coaches' meetings during the convenings. These were sorely missing in the previous academy! I do not know if there is a way to do these virtually with the online convenings, but I will suggest that. I learn more in these meetings and get better advice that any other type of support offered.

When I'm in meetings and CoPs [communities of practice] with folks from LFM, I feel sane. It's rejuvenating being around people who care about social issues and bring educated and informed perspectives on issues I encounter at my college.

The opportunity to collaborate and learn from fellow coaches has been instrumental in expanding my toolkit as a coach. Sharing best practices, discussing challenges, and seeking advice from one another have contributed to our professional growth as a cohesive coaching community.

Learning from other coaches has broadened my understanding of effective coaching techniques and strategies. Their diverse perspectives have challenged my thinking and enriched my own coaching practice.

These reflections underscore the importance of creating a supportive community of coaches where knowledge-sharing, collaboration, and mutual learning thrive. By leveraging each other's expertise and experiences, coaches enhance their coaching skills and contribute to the collective growth and effectiveness of the coaching program.

Section 6: Concluding Remarks

The primary goal of this evaluation report is to effectively communicate the value and impact of the LFM Academy to a diverse set of community college stakeholders and to provide valuable insights into the program's effectiveness. The findings in this report demonstrate that the academy continues to equip middle leaders with the necessary skills, strategies, and mindsets to navigate the complexities of their roles and effectively champion student success, equity, and inclusion. By providing a space for learning, reflection, and collaboration, the academy has nurtured a sense of inquiry and evidence-based decision-making among participants.

The academy's comprehensive curriculum has addressed key aspects of leadership development, such as understanding organizational dynamics, navigating resistance, and leveraging individual and collective influence. By integrating new topics and tools, such as the circles of influence, history journey maps, and equity-centered planning, participants have gained valuable insights and practical frameworks to effect change within their colleges.

It is clear from the reflections and feedback shared by both participants and coaches that the academy has had a profound impact on their personal and professional growth. They have become more self-aware, adaptable, and courageous leaders, ready to navigate the complexities of their roles and advocate for equity, diversity, inclusion, and antiracism at their institutions. Additionally, the coaching component has provided a safe and supportive space for reflection, growth, and the honing of coaching skills, further enhancing their effectiveness as leaders.

Moreover, LFM has not only fostered the development of individual middle leaders but has also cultivated a community of practitioners dedicated to advancing student-centered and equity-minded practices. By leveraging the knowledge, experiences, and networks formed through the academy, these leaders can continue to collaborate, share best practices, and support one another in their ongoing leadership journeys.

Recommendations

As we reflect on the 2021-2022 LFM Academy and consider its future development, it becomes evident that building upon its strengths and successes is crucial. The insights gathered from this report will guide the LFM team in making informed decisions and implementing necessary improvements to enhance future program iterations. Therefore, we propose the following recommendations to amplify the academy's impact.

Firstly, **refine the onboarding process to ensure that participants have a clear understanding of the academy's goals, expectations, and resources from the very beginning.** This will help them engage more effectively with the program and maximize their learning experience.

Additionally, it is important to **allocate adequate time for content coverage during the academy**. By providing sufficient time for in-depth exploration of key topics, participants can delve into the material and fully grasp its relevance to their roles as middle leaders.

To enhance clarity and facilitate effective planning, **clear timelines and expectations for completing activities** should be provided. This will help participants manage their time effectively and stay on track throughout the academy.

Moreover, an important aspect to consider in future iterations is **modifying the sustainability planning component to include how middle leaders sustain themselves**. Strategies to manage burnout, address mental health, and prioritize self-care should be integrated into the program to support the well-being of participants.

To further enhance the effectiveness of the coaching component in the LFM Academy, **continuous integration of emerging coaching and facilitation techniques** should be made available. These additions will help coaches be more effective at supporting their assigned teams, and facilitate their growth as transformative leaders.

Lastly, **staying responsive to evolving needs and challenges and continuous integration of new topics and tools is essential**. By incorporating emerging trends and best practices into the academy's curriculum, middle leaders can stay at the forefront of innovation and adapt to the changing landscape of higher education.

In conclusion, by building upon its current strengths and successes while making strategic enhancements for the future will position the LFM academy to remain effective in equipping middle leaders with the skills and knowledge needed to drive transformative change in their institutions.

Appendix A: 2021-2022 LFM Colleges and Project Descriptions

The project descriptions provided below were written by LFM coaches in collaboration with their assigned teams.

Crafton Hills College: Updating COR's with an Equity Lens

The Crafton Hills LFM Team has undertaken a project aimed at updating the course outlines of records (CORs) as a means to address and close the opportunity gap within the classroom. Their efforts involve collaborating with various committees, including the curriculum committee, academic senate, professional development committee, and faculty members. The team's objective is to embed principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion into syllabi, reading materials, lectures, and the overall curriculum. They are also focused on developing additional strategies to promote student success, particularly for underperforming groups.

The team is actively engaging faculty members, raising awareness about the significance of equity-infused CORs. They are providing resources, tools, and examples to support faculty in updating their course outlines while fostering a sense of support and guidance throughout the process. By educating faculty and empowering them to make meaningful changes, the Crafton Hills LFM Team is working towards creating a more inclusive and equitable learning environment for all students

Fresno City College: Informed Decision Project

Addressing the complexity of students selecting the right major requires a multifaceted approach. In order to tackle this issue, our LFM project at Fresno City College consists of four small projects aimed at ensuring informed decision-making for students.

The implementation of Career Coach, a resource that directs students to explore market labor data for the Central Valley before they even complete the CCC application. By providing access to this valuable information, students can make more informed choices when selecting their major for the first time.

We will emphasize the importance of counseling interactions and ensure our counselors are actively inquiring about students' post-graduation plans and what their desired career path entails, including salary expectations. By engaging in these conversations, we aim to enhance students' awareness of the practical aspects associated with changing majors.

We will create visual aids, such as occupational maps for our departments. These maps will visually illustrate the various options available to students, including certificates, associate degrees, transfer pathways, and more. By providing this visual representation, we aim to guide students in exploring the wide range of educational and career opportunities open to them.

We will train and equip faculty members with the necessary tools and knowledge to engage their students in conversations about potential career paths. This collaborative effort between faculty and students will further support students in making informed decisions regarding their majors.

By implementing these initiatives, our LFM project seeks to address the complex nature of students' major selection process, ensuring that students have access to the necessary resources, guidance, and information to make informed decisions about their academic and career pathways at Fresno City College.

Hoopa Higher Education Program: Increasing Access to Full Degrees, Certificates, and an Equitable Learning Environment for Native American Students Served by College of the Redwoods at the Klamath-Trinity Education Site

The Hoopa Higher Education Program (HHEP) project aims to ensure equitable access to education for Native American and rural students in the Redwoods Community College District. By offering a stable schedule of classes taught by qualified faculty who reflect the cultural experience at the Klamath-Trinity Instructional Site (KTIS), the project seeks to provide students with full coursework pathways in transfer and vocational programs.

Through the project the team will establish stronger relationships with College of the Redwoods (CR) administrators. This collaborative effort will facilitate communication and coordination between the CR and KTIS. Furthermore, the project aims to develop a multi-semester schedule of offerings with a predictable rotation to meet the diverse needs of students. This will involve recruiting qualified faculty who either reside in the Hoopa Community or the surrounding areas of Klamath-Trinity, or who are willing to travel to the KTIS.

Team members will advocate for further structural and technological development of the KTIS site itself. By enhancing the site's resources and facilities, the goal is to elevate it to the level of a college center. This development will align with the College of the Redwoods' equity objectives by ensuring that Native American and rural students are better served in their educational pursuits.

Overall, the HHEP project represents an important step towards achieving educational equity for Native American and rural students. By offering comprehensive degree and certificate programs at the KTIS, the project aligns with the mission of the College of the Redwoods and fosters greater access to higher education within the community.

Modesto Junior College (MJC): Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) Project

Our cross-functional LFM team will lead faculty discipline experts, administrators, and counselors in an in-depth examination of the policies and regulations surrounding Credit for Prior Learning (CPL). This examination will explore opportunities for students to receive academic credit based on their prior learning experiences in the military, established careers, or other relevant areas where they have achieved learning outcomes comparable to existing courses.

Over the course of the next year, our team will need to determine which departments have eligible classes, which classes should be opened to CPL and which should not, and what types of assessments should be accepted for credit evaluation. We will also designate discipline faculty members as point persons for each area of study.

It will be essential for our LFM team to spearhead the institutionalization of this process within the college, fostering seamless collaboration between counseling faculty, evaluators, classified staff, discipline faculty, and division deans. This collaborative effort will ensure a smooth transition for students, from the initial application stage to the transcription of earned units.

To facilitate this process, our team will need to coordinate closely with the Yosemite Community College District (YCCD) and Columbia College. This will involve creating a district-wide electronic form to streamline the CPL evaluation and approval process. Effective communication, influence, and leadership across all departments involved will be crucial as we strive to establish a clean and simplified process for students at Modesto Junior College (MJC) and within the broader YCCD community.

Mt. San Antonio College (Mt. SAC): Accessibility Project

Mt. SAC is actively advancing its accessibility initiatives on campus. Our LFM team will establish a centralized accessibility hub that will serve as a comprehensive resource for the entire campus community. To achieve this, we will collaborate with various departments and stakeholders across the campus.

One of our team's key actions will be to organize coordinated trainings on accessibility. These trainings will engage members of the campus community and raise awareness about best practices and strategies for creating accessible environments. By equipping individuals with the necessary knowledge and skills, we aim to foster a campus culture that values inclusivity and accessibility.

Our team will form a dedicated campus group tasked with evaluating institutional data on accessibility. This group will assess current practices, identify areas for improvement, and make recommendations to enhance Mt. SAC's accessibility efforts. Through data-driven decision-making, we will ensure that our accessibility initiatives are effective and aligned with the needs of our community.

By implementing these measures, The Mt. SAC team is committed to promoting equity and inclusivity on our campus. We recognize the importance of providing accessible resources and services to all individuals, regardless of their abilities. Through a collaborative and proactive approach, we will continue to enhance accessibility at Mt. SAC and create an environment where everyone can thrive.

Norco College: Revamping Assessment Procedures Project

To address racial inequities and foster a culture of change at Norco College, our LFM team is undertaking a significant initiative to revamp Norco's assessment procedure. Our focus is on integrating Canvas Gradebook into Nuventive, a platform that will enable us to disaggregate Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) by equity groups.

By implementing this integration, we will have access to new data that provides a detailed breakdown of SLO performance based on different equity groups. This data will serve as a valuable resource for facilitating discussions and informing decision-making processes at Norco College. It will allow our team to identify and address disparities in student outcomes among equity groups, ultimately helping to close equity gaps and promote a more inclusive learning environment.

Through this strategic effort, the Norco LFM team is taking a proactive approach to transforming their assessment practices and promoting equity within the college. By leveraging data and utilizing technology, they are paving the way for meaningful change and creating opportunities for continuous improvement in support of their students' success.

Palomar College: Student Success Teams Project

To address the equity gaps in access, success, retention, and completion that affect the achievement of Palomar College students, our LFM team will develop Student Success Teams. These teams will focus on each of the college's pathways and comprise representatives from various departments across the campus.

The Student Success Teams will analyze data and identify patterns that indicate where students may be encountering difficulties along their chosen pathways. By conducting this analysis, the teams will gain insights into the specific challenges faced by students and develop targeted strategies to address them.

Student Success Teams will play a vital role in orienting students, facilitating effective communication, and providing engagement opportunities tailored to each pathway. Additionally, they will establish seamless coordination between different departments to ensure a smooth transition for students. Some team members may serve as valuable resources, offering support and guidance, while others may act as direct points of contact for students.

Through the implementation of Student Success Teams, the LFM team aims to close equity gaps and enhance student success by addressing barriers and providing personalized support. By

fostering collaboration and utilizing data-driven insights, the college is committed to improving outcomes for all students and promoting an inclusive and supportive learning environment.

Pasadena City College: Equity Outreach Plan

Pasadena City College is taking proactive steps to address the specific needs of its most disproportionately impacted student population, including African-American students and those affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The college has observed a significant decline in African-American student enrollment over the past two years, reflecting a broader trend seen in community colleges across California.

In response to this urgent situation, the Pasadena LFM team will develop an equity outreach plan that aims to prioritize the needs of marginalized communities. The team will foster collaboration among various on-campus equity-facing programs, affinity groups, and specialty programs to collectively design a comprehensive onboarding strategy. This strategy will directly address the challenges posed by declining enrollment and the emerging concerns associated with the pandemic.

By issuing a "call to action," the team seeks to mobilize these stakeholders and encourage their active participation in the design of the outreach plan. The goal is to create a seamless onboarding process that effectively supports students and addresses their specific needs during these challenging times.

Porterville College: STEM Summer Bootcamp Pilot Project

To enhance the degree/certificate completion rates of students of color at Porterville College, the Porterville LFM Team will implement a Summer Bootcamp initiative. This program aims to introduce incoming students to the diverse range of degrees and career opportunities available within their chosen pathway. The team will develop a comprehensive manual that can be applied to any of the college's four Guided Pathways. This manual will provide detailed instructions and best practices to ensure that the Bootcamp aligns with its intended learning objectives and outcomes.

To refine the effectiveness of the Bootcamp, the team will launch a pilot program focused on STEM subjects. This pilot will serve as a valuable opportunity to gather insights and feedback, enabling the team to make necessary improvements to the manual. By documenting and evaluating the outcomes of the STEM Summer Bootcamp, the team will enhance the final version of the manual, ensuring its efficacy for future implementations.

Through the implementation of the Summer Bootcamp and the development of the accompanying manual, the Porterville Team aims to increase the engagement and success of students of color. By providing targeted guidance and support, this initiative strives to empower students to explore and pursue exciting educational and career pathways.

Reedley College: Addressing Gender and Racial Inequities in Enrollment and Success Rates in STEM Fields Project

Reedley College has identified gender and racial inequities in enrollment and success rates in STEM fields. To address these inequities, the Reedley team is implementing a comprehensive strategy with multiple approaches. The team aims to address these issues through K-12 outreach programs and the adoption of more equitable grading practices in STEM courses.

As part of their strategy, the Reedley team is developing a series of summer workshops specifically designed for girls interested in STEM fields. These workshops will provide an engaging and supportive environment to encourage girls' participation and interest in STEM disciplines.

Additionally, the team is actively recruiting professors to collaborate on revamping the assessment methods used in STEM classes. By workshopping changes to the evaluation process, the team aims to implement fair and unbiased assessment practices that promote equal opportunities for students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in STEM subjects.

Through this project, the Reedley LFM team is committed to addressing the existing gender and racial disparities in STEM fields. By fostering interest, providing support, and implementing equitable practices, the college aims to create a more inclusive and accessible environment for all students pursuing STEM education and careers.

Victor Valley College: Leadership Academy for Administrators

Located in the High Desert region of California, east of Los Angeles, Victor Valley College (VVC) is committed to a student-centered approach in serving its diverse campus community. With a student population where 65.9% are racial/ethnic minorities, VVC recognizes the importance of its administrators in driving transformative change to address equity gaps.

In the coming year, the VVC LFM Team will undertake the development of a leadership academy specifically designed for administrators on campus. The goal is to equip these administrators with the skills, knowledge, and mindset necessary to provide strategic and intentional leadership. Through this academy, the team aims to empower administrators to make a meaningful impact on the lives of those they supervise.

Central to the academy's foundation will be the integration of equity-minded practices. VVC is dedicated to fostering an environment where every student has an equal opportunity for success. By increasing the leadership capacity of administrators through the academy, VVC aspires to positively influence the experiences and outcomes of the students it serves.

The Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges

As the representative organization for Institutional Research, Planning, and Effectiveness (IRPE) professionals in the California Community Colleges (CCC) system, The RP Group strengthens the ability of CCC to discover and undertake high-quality research, planning, and assessments that improve evidence-based decision-making, institutional effectiveness, and success for all students.

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