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Reflections from the Leading from the Middle Academy 2017

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Introduction

The Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges (RP Group) launched Leading from the Middle (LFM) Academy in 2013 to support the development of middle leaders across California Community Colleges (CCCs). This charge entails providing ongoing professional learning opportunities for deans and department chairs, as well as for educators in a range of positions, including who serve as campus program coordinators or directors. LFM believes that middle leaders are well positioned as change agents to move their colleges in ways that advance student success and equitable outcomes.

Since LFM's inception, more than 400 CCC educators have participated in LFM activities, including the yearlong academy and customized programs for individual colleges and consortia. After each annual Academy, LFM produces an internal report capturing what participants share about their learning from the experience. In addition, the LFM leadership group uses the opportunity to reflect on its own learning about how to best support development of middle leaders. This understanding of and support for middle leaders has become even more important as colleges across the system are preparing for guided pathways. The guided pathways model requires rethinking campus policies, procedures, and practices through cross-functional inquiry and inclusive decision-making. Middle leaders will be critical agents in this change process.

This report captures reflections from both leaders of and participants in the 2017 LFM Academy, with the goal of advancing and deepening our collective understanding of middle leadership. The report begins with an overview of the program's purpose and design, outcomes, and changes in 2017. We then present the reflections associated with the LFM outcomes, organized in three clusters: (1) individual leadership, (2) collective leadership, and (3) college transformation. The conclusion highlights potential next steps for the Academy.

LFM Program Background and Design

The LFM Academy design reflects current literature on effective professional development and is experiential, undertaken collaboratively with colleagues, and directly related to practice. The LFM Academy invites colleges to send teams that draw from various functions of the institution and include current and emerging leaders. Participating college teams of four to six community college educators typically include administrators, faculty, and classified staff; LFM also strongly requests that each team include an institutional researcher.

The core LFM curricular contents were developed over the first two Academies and have been adapted and refined during the three years since. The curriculum covers tools for planning and communication, aspects of the change process, as well as challenges of leadership. Each team comes to LFM with a proposed campus project. Collaboratively planning and implementing the project gives campus teams the context to apply the LFM curriculum and to experience leadership in practice. The professional learning setting also connects participants with peers from other colleges across the state, providing a broader context to understand their work.

The LFM Academy has three components:

1. Face-to-face convenings across a calendar year (February, June, and October)
2. Online activities between convenings
3. Coaching by a member of the LFM leadership group

The first convening focuses on making the case for change; participants construct a concept map and a logic model of their campus project. Each team writes, practices, and delivers an elevator speech that presents their case for change, and plans how and who to deliver this message to on campus. The second convening addresses the change process, with attention to risk taking, engaging resistance, and failing successfully. During the third convening, each team writes a case study, highlighting a common obstacle that they have encountered. As the cycle of convenings completes, teams plan for ongoing steps for their projects, as few projects fit into a one-year schedule.

An LFM coach, a former LFM Academy participant, works with each college team during convenings and maintains ongoing contact between convenings. Coaches provide support and feedback from an informed external perspective, helping teams assess their progress and plan next steps. In addition, the experience of being a coach provides ongoing leadership development for these former participants; they go through the LFM curriculum again and get to see how the ideas play out in another campus setting.

LFM Outcomes

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT:

1. Develop leadership identity
2. Develop strategies to sustain and support leadership development

TEAM COLLABORATION AND LEADERSHIP:

3. Create and sustain professional relationships in which peers share ideas and strategize together

LEADERSHIP IN THE CONTEXT OF A COLLEGE INITIATIVE:

4. Engage with existing literature
5. Apply research and evidence to make informed decisions that advance institutional change efforts
6. Strengthen capacity to prioritize and lead departmental, institutional, and other changes through the process of evidence-based inquiry

Programmatic Changes in 2017

Participant feedback and reflection by the LFM leadership group have contributed to the evolution of the Academy model since its inception.

During the first two years of LFM (2013 and 2014), some college projects were not central to campus priorities. In the third year (2015), LFM asked all college teams to focus their projects on their campus's Student Success and Support Program (SSSP). In the last two years, teams have increasingly enrolled to specifically advance campus reform initiatives; in 2016 and 2017, some colleges began preparing for guided pathways.

In 2017, LFM received a grant from the California Community College Chancellor's Office (CCCCO) Office of Institutional Effectiveness. This funding subsidized college participation by decreasing cost per individual team member. In addition, the grant provided increased staff resources to support coaching and an external evaluation by the Education Insights Center (Ed Insights) at Sacramento State University. Ed Insights evaluators attended the LFM convenings and followed up with participant surveys.

The LFM 2017 cohort started at a similar size to the 2016 cohort, with 12 college teams and 70 participants. More former participants joined the leadership group as facilitators and coaches (see Appendix I: LFM Leadership Group). While Laura Hope began the year as co-director with Bob Gabriner, in summer 2017 she accepted the position as Executive Vice Chancellor for the CCCCO's Educational Services Division. Other individuals from the leadership group took on responsibilities for planning and delivering the October convening as well as filling in on LFM presentations at the Strengthening Student Success Conference.

Coaching has been part of the LFM design from the first year. The intent was to have a member of the leadership group stay in contact with participating college teams to support their work between convenings, and to some extent, mentor leadership development. Over the first four years, participant feedback on coaching was uneven. When coaching worked—when logistics and communication gelled—teams valued the support tremendously. However, there were also cases where the teams and coaches did not manage to connect. In 2017, RP Group Senior Researcher Ireri Valenzuela assumed responsibility for LFM's coaching component; she organized orientation, resources, and tools for coaches. Coaches were able to spend more time and deepen their relationships with their teams during and outside of the convenings.

The core content of the LFM curriculum (see Appendix II: LFM Core Curricular Topics) was shaped during the first two years of the academy and was rooted in the experience of the initial founders—experienced middle leaders themselves. Each year, LFM leaders have adapted the content to college team projects and system-wide initiatives. LFM leaders have also created new hands-on activities on topics such as momentum mapping, prototyping, and the level of risk and experimentation that are part of the program design process.

Prior academies did not have conceptual themes. However, this year, LFM leaders thematically wove the concept of coherence across the three convenings. LFM 2017 readings highlighted Fullan's (2001, 2016) work on coherence. Although Fullan focuses on K-12 systems, coherence—or lack of it—is also a relevant issue in the community college setting, particularly as colleges integrate disparate initiatives (Basic Skills Initiative Student Equity Plans, and Student Success and Support Program) and prepare for guided pathways.

LFM Academy 2017 Reflections

LFM's past internal evaluation reports focused on what LFM participants reported learning, as well as what the LFM leadership learned about middle leaders and their development during a given Academy. Prior reports were organized around the LFM outcomes, focusing on participants' feedback and identifying areas for programmatic attention and growth.

This year, the external evaluation conducted by Ed Insights (with support from the CCCCO) will specifically focus on LFM's intended outcomes. This internal report captures participant reflections on their LFM experience, providing key insights to support program leadership and the field in general in their future efforts to develop middle leaders.

Reflection is a recurring activity in the LFM hands-on pedagogy; the schedule provides participants with multiple reflection opportunities, in large and small group discussions and in writing through evaluation cards and surveys. These reflection activities allow participants to consider both their Academy experience and the characteristics of middle leaders (see sidebar, *What Do We Mean When We Talk about Middle Leadership? from Asera, 2017*). This section summarizes these reflections, which are organized according to three overarching categories: individual leadership, collaborative leadership, and institutional transformation, as described below.

What Do We Mean When We Talk about Middle Leadership?

Middle leaders…

- Are rooted in the moral purpose of their work; the mission of the institutions and the passions of the individual educators are motivation for taking on the responsibilities as leaders.
- Are key organizers, implementers, and sustainers of institutional change at their colleges.
- Engage in collaborations, teams, and coalitions; sometimes coalition building means working with a wide range of colleagues, not only those who agree.
- See and understand the bigger picture—bigger than their own classroom, program, division, or campus.
- Understand how complex and messy the change process can be and anticipate pitfalls and resistance.
- Are prepared to stay in for the long haul; the time frame for transformational change is measured in years.

Individual Leadership Development

Participant reflections underscore the numerous ways LFM impacts development of leadership identity. Involvement in the LFM Academy allows individuals to feel more aware, more willing, and better prepared to take on the challenges of leadership in the task of college transformation. Their determination to improve their institutions is rooted in a moral purpose and passion for the ways that their institutions can more effectively and more equitably educate students. One educator noted:

> *…with LFM, we have become storytellers and the stories we share include successes and failures, happiness and heartbreak, joy and frustration, and "heroes' journeys" of students who have overcome so much to graduate.*

In describing how they see themselves as leaders, participants used LFM language about taking risks, failing successfully, and engaging resistance—acknowledging the inevitable challenges of the change process. In response to a question about what they learned about themselves as leaders, participants did not express a simple view of leadership; one person concisely summed it up, stating, "Leadership is not a role, it is a complex activity."

Other participants similarly articulated coming to view the challenges of middle leadership as learning opportunities. As two participants shared:

> *Leadership involves calculated risk, coherence, collective inquiry, belief, and courage. I have learned that I am going to fail, I am going to make mistakes, and I will feel discouraged; however, when these things happen, I have learned that these setbacks are opportunities for learning, developing, and growing as a professional.*

> *As a middle manager, one can sometimes doubt the potential and power we have as a change agent within our institution. I have learned to increase my voice and lean in at the table when advocating for students and our staff in terms of equity and inclusion.*

During the LFM convenings, participants read literature about and practice both sides of communication—listening as well as disseminating information. Participant reflections indicate they incorporated that understanding into their individual sense of leadership. As one participant described:

> *I've learned that being a leader means being a good listener and see things from the other's point of view. Being a leader is uncomfortable, but speaking up about something I am passionate about is easier. Speaking up does not mean starting a fight or being aggressive, but rather explaining my ideas and then listening to what others have to say.*

Resistance is a particularly popular topic in the LFM curriculum, so much so that some people come to the first session asking, "When will we get to talk about resistance?" Many participants who have been involved in change initiatives on their campuses come to LFM having encountered opposition in one form or another. The LFM activity titled "engaging resistance" focuses on employing empathy and understanding rather than battling different points of view. Engaging resistance is a step towards becoming more strategic as a leader. Participants reported that they came to anticipate and appreciate resistance; in the words of two middle leaders:

> *One thing that really resonated with me from LFM was preparing for and working through resistance. I had always assumed that to persevere in higher education, you just needed "thick skin" and "grit." However, after attending LFMA #2, I learned that I can be proactive in addressing resistance by empathizing with my campus partners.*

> *I've learned that leadership doesn't mean knowing all the answers and having everyone agree with you. Also, resisters have something to offer in showing another perspective and a good leader will learn from both supporters and resisters.*

In describing their growing understanding of middle leadership, participants came to understand that there are multiple ways to be a leader as well as different ways to be themselves in leadership roles. As three participants stated:

Leadership is flexibility, reflection, and continuous improvement. It is about recognizing the team's strengths and leveraging those strengths towards a common goal. I have learned that even though I am on the lower end of the hierarchy, I have the ability to influence projects around me. I have the avenues to get involved.

I've learned that there are all types of leaders and not all leaders are the 'stand in the front of the crowd' type. As one of my team members mentioned, sometimes we are "reluctant leaders."

The "strong back, soft front" metaphor is really powerful for leadership. I had several people tell me that they think of me as fitting this description, which, it's hard to put into words how good this makes me feel. I think I'm a very persistent person, but sometimes it's important to back off and let someone else do the leading. But, the learning I've had gives me the confidence that my style is a good leadership style, even though I may not appear to be the typically "extroverted," "on the stage" type of leader.

At the final LFM convening, participants took part in a 'role-alike' activity where they met with colleagues in similar roles from other colleges. The group divided into small groups of instructional faculty, classified staff, counselors, program directors and coordinators, deans, and managers. This activity gave middle leaders a chance to share common satisfactions and challenges with counterparts at other colleges. The conversation reinforced participants' understanding of opportunities to lead from their position on campus.

Based on the final report out from this activity, each group's conversation was upbeat; along with acknowledged challenges, several groups talked about how much they enjoyed their work. They realized how rarely the joys of middle leadership are told. A participant concisely and humorously summed up the experience as a department chair, "It's madness, but we like it." (See Appendix III: Department Chair and Program Manager Reflections.)

In acknowledging the stresses of middle leadership positions, the participants shared self-care strategies for sustaining themselves as leaders. Beyond the importance of "[knowing] how to decompress [by doing] whatever works for you" (e.g., enjoying a glass of wine, going for a walk or run, talking to a trusted friend), participants identified resources for professional support. These included:

- *Find other leaders, get together with my people to reenergize*
- *Keep things in perspective (step outside and see the bigger picture)*
- *Prioritize*
- *Be willing to ask for advice*
- *Draw strength from students.*

COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP

Collaboration is an inherent characteristic of middle leadership. Middle leaders take on problems that are bigger than one person; collaborating and building coalitions are vital strategies in addressing those problems. Development of participants' ability to collaborate effectively is a central part of the LFM experience.

Coming with a team of colleagues, participants recognized that they are also not alone on their campus. In describing their teams, participants indicated that they recognized the positive impact that shared values, vision, trust, and effort can have at their college. In the words of three participants:

> *We have learned that each of us are [sic] only as strong as the sum of all of us. United we stand with conviction according to a moral and ethical imperative, and divided we perish as a whole and ultimately fail our students and communities.*

> *I felt very safe to discuss thorny issues and problems with my group and to explore solutions. I want to take many of the LFM techniques back to my college and department to inspire my colleagues at home. I hope to use many of these techniques to change the culture in my department and institution.*

> *We can accomplish so much more by working together. We also have been able to create trust and the open atmosphere where we can work through differences in perspective. We are so much stronger and can accomplish so much more as a group than we ever could as individuals*

At the same time, participants reflected realistically on the challenge of developing as a team in the current environment. They felt safe acknowledging that the process of team building did not necessarily go smoothly. As one participant noted:

> *Our team has been so raggedy. It's hard to have a cohesive team in the current initiative climate, with everyone moving to new positions, or being given more to do and having to leave LFM behind. I think that when we were together, especially at LFM, we worked well and had some really good brainstorming sessions.*

Another participant thoughtfully articulated the connection between developing individual leadership skills and engaging colleagues in the collective leadership process, stating:

> *I have learned that leadership is an action. Everyone can lead, and we can all do leadership together. Leadership is not defined by a role or a position. It is defined by what we do to promote positive change in our environment. Through LFM, I have learned that I have a "presence". My colleagues look to me for advice and guidance, and, at times I think they expect me to make difficult decisions for the group. Within that context, I learned the importance of "creating space" or "holding space" for others to rise and do leadership. With the privilege and/or expectation of leadership, it is important to channel that energy towards lifting others up and promoting opportunities for them to take action.*

In LFM, participants interact with colleagues from colleges across the state. These interactions help participants recognize that they are not alone in their commitment to improve student success and equity. Hearing stories about other colleges reassured participants that they are not alone; other institutions and educators grapple with the similar challenges. One educator observed,

> *It's been very helpful to hear that other colleges around CA have similar problems as us, and amazing to meet all these passionate educators*.

INSTITUTIONAL TRANSFORMATION

The projects conducted by college teams as part of the Academy give participants the opportunity to better understand the interrelationship of leadership development and college transformation. As mentioned, LFM has drawn on Fullan's leadership framework from *Leading in a Culture of Change* (2001) since its inception as an inspiration and key resource. Fullan's framework includes five facets of leadership. Moral purpose, relationship building, and knowledge creation commonly appear in other definitions of leadership. Two additional facets—coherence making and understanding change—are not as often explicitly named and described as part of other leadership frameworks. These two dimensions are both particularly relevant to middle leadership at community colleges; the projects carried out by college teams allow participants to deepen their familiarity with these two critical leadership concepts.

Below, we describe the projects undertaken by the college teams; then, we explore participants' reflections on coherence making (LFM 2017's theme) and understanding change, through the lens of their campus project.

COLLEGE PROJECTS

The LFM 2017 college team projects divided roughly into three overlapping categories: college-wide initiatives, student-centered supports, and basic skills.

COLLEGE-WIDE INITIATIVES:

Three colleges came to LFM intending to work on campus-wide programs, all of which will subsequently contribute to guided pathways.

Fresno City College, which has regularly sent teams to the LFM Academy, came to prepare for guided pathways on its campus. At the final convening, the team reported, "Our group on campus has grown from six to 21. Though it was easier to agree at six, we now touch more parts of campus."

Chaffey College came to LFM with the goal of bringing Reading Apprenticeship (RA) into their campus Core Competencies, which are the fundamental components that link course and program level student learning outcomes to the overall mission of the institution. Over the

year, the college held more RA trainings on campus, and the team is looking for ways to embed RA in guided pathways and the campus STEM Academy.

Santa Barbara City College (SBCC) came to address the needs of part-time students. At the first convening, the team shared data showing that 60-70% of SBCC students were part-time, and the college maintains few programs designed specifically for them. At the end of LFM, the team reported that the college now "ha[s] a new way of describing part-time students as *flex students*." The campus has secured a five-year Title V grant, and the team shared that SBCC will be able to explore, "how to integrate flex student in guided pathways."

STUDENT-CENTERED SUPPORT:

Four colleges worked on student-centered support projects.

Merced College enrolled in LFM for a second year, with two returning and three new team members, representing both the central campus and outreach centers. The Merced team built on work from the prior year, continuing development of an online map for the college website designed to direct students to resources available to support their educational journey.

Crafton Hills College, another regular LFM participant, worked to get space and equipment to establish an assistive technology center on campus.

Monterey Bay College prepared to launch a First Year Experience, starting with a summer bridge. They are working on the ongoing challenge of data collection and analysis.

Golden West College conducted six focus groups to understand the student experience, in an effort to inform their work to develop a one-stop student support center.

BASIC SKILLS:

Four colleges developed projects related to basic skills.

City College of San Francisco piloted short, non-credit refresher workshops in math and English for specific student groups (recent high school grads or returning adult students) to improve placement and shorten students' time to completion.

San Diego Mesa College used the resources of its Basic Skills Transformation Grant to support faculty going into the institution's non-credit Continuing Education classrooms to give students a sense of college content. In moving towards institutional coherence, they planned to work with the Outreach Office to continue this connection and encourage enrollment of Continuing Ed students at the college.

Saddleback College focused on reworking and integrating its basic skills content as part of the campus Completion, Retention, and Persistence Task Force.

Yuba College spent the year planning a support lab for developmental math courses. The team had some success with an increase in use of tutoring, however its initial plans were altered by the passage of Assembly Bill (AB) 705.

The goal of AB 705 is to ensure that students are not placed (or misplaced) into below-college-level courses that would delay their educational progress. As part of the implementation of AB 705, assessment measures should inlcude high school performance. College teams working on basic skills initiatives reflected on the challenges and opportunities due to this new policy direction. In the words of a participant:

> *We did some good work, but AB 705 may have made it moot. Right now, we are looking at pivoting, and seeing how we can salvage and leverage what we have done.*

COHERENCE MAKING

Given recent movement to create more continuity across the CCC system's student success and institutional effectiveness efforts, LFM designated institutional coherence as the theme for the 2017 Academy. During the last year, the CCCCO recognized commonalities across BSI, SSSP, and SEP, and called for the consolidation of their respective plans into one integrated plan. The CCCCO's new strategic vision (2017), with ambitious goals to increase student progress, degree completion, and transfer as well as reduce equity gaps across those measures, provides another set of cardinal directions for colleges to apply in their coherence making. Further, with the CCC system embracing the guided pathways movement, the pursuit of coherence is becoming more salient.

To Fullan (2001), coherence is the shared depth of understanding about the nature of the work. Fullan (2001 p. 6) notes that, "the complexity of the change process can keep people on the edge of chaos. Therefore, effective leaders tolerate enough ambiguity to keep the creative juices flowing, but along the way… they seek coherence." Coherence is the counterbalance both to maintaining the status quo and to change for the sake of change.

More recently, Fullan (2016) ascribes initiative overload and fragmentation as barriers to bringing about successful and sustainable change in K-12 schools. Fullan metaphorically likens schools with their numerous programs and initiatives to Christmas trees, with too many glittery things strewn like lights and ornaments across the institution.

The language of initiative overload is familiar to the community colleges. Over the last 10 years, CCCs have been showered with a growing number of mandates and programs, funded by the state legislature, federal grants, or philanthropic investments. Although student success has been the overall goal of all such efforts, each initiative has had a different focus and format. As a result, campuses have fielded a growing number of programs that have been disconnected, disjointed, and (at times) duplicative and that fall short of their intended goal of increasing student success at scale.

During the first LFM convening, to determine the level of initiative overload, program leaders asked college teams to count the number of initiatives on their campuses. Most colleges initially identified eight to 10 major initiatives, although one college counted as many as 35 initiatives. After a large group discussion and the chance to hear about initiatives at other colleges, most teams upped their estimates, with the majority counting more than 10 initiatives

across campus, and three colleges identifying more than 25 efforts. Teams realized that multiple campus initiatives provide the opportunity for building coherence.

At the same time, a few campuses notably described their reform efforts as more coherent than chaotic, with intentional linkages across their initiatives. Santa Barbara City College, an Aspen Prize awardee, described their campus culture in terms of support and connection. City College of San Francisco, after five years of responding to accreditation pressures, indicated that this experience had the effect of engendering common strategic goals across this large multi-center college. In describing the CCSF experience, one team member noted that any proposed project now has to align with college-wide goals.

Many LFM participants agreed that a shared commitment to the community college mission of equitable outcomes for a diverse student population was a starting point for developing coherence. However, prior experience led many people to recognize that an absence of communication and/or strategic alignment could contribute to the Christmas tree phenomenon. Participants reported having seen colleagues start initiatives with best intentions, without recognizing that other related efforts were already happening on campus. The immediacy of and focus on what individuals can see and control around them often contributes to this dispersion of programs across campus.

LFM discussions led participants to understand that coherence is more than just structural connectivity and alignment. Coherence also depends on common cultural norms and shared accountability. LFM facilitators translated Fullan's coherence framework for community colleges (see Appendix IV: Coherence Framework). Teams had multiple opportunities over the year to assess their campus strengths and needs in coherence making.

UNDERSTANDING CHANGE

At the end of the Academy, participants reported developing a deeper understanding of the messiness, complexity, and timeframe for change to take place. As participants become more comfortable as leaders, they also became more intentional and strategic in their campus efforts. Participants described feeling better prepared to anticipate and address the twists and turns of change. Three participants expressed this:

> *Change and transformation take time, persistence, patience, courage, and hard work.*
>
> *Change is slow, and while our project has had some momentum issues, it is progressing, and the light at the end of the (once dim) tunnel is brighter.*
>
> *Change feels like wading through mud. This wading process can be incredibly frustrating for people like me who want to get things done and can quickly take research and concepts and envision exactly how they will work at my institution (at least I think I can!). But, I have a high tolerance for risk and I love change, and I realize not everyone is the same.*

Engaging stakeholders across the institution was an important strategy for change. Leaders became more intentional in this process, as one participant said:

> *Buy-in from so many areas is crucial along with communication so that individuals in many areas can be a part of the transformation. I'm much more aware of the repercussions of decisions that go beyond my immediate scope.*

Conclusion

At the end of the fifth LFM Academy, the LFM leadership group continues to be convinced of and committed to the value of developing a broad cohort of middle leaders in individual colleges and across the system. Based on the experiences of delivering multiple Academies, including this most recent iteration, and in reflecting on participant feedback, four key factors—which are part of the LFM design—emerge as critical to the development of this important group of change makers.

- **Time away from campus:** Being away from campus, on 'retreat,' allows teams to concentrate on planning activities and engage in formal and informal conversations. Participants report that on their campuses, in their normal work schedules, they do not have time to engage in focused planning and often encounter logistic obstacles even to meeting. Time outside of their regular schedules lets teams get to know each other, interact with teams from other colleges, and connect with colleagues who share common passions and problems. Kellogg West, on the Cal Poly Pomona campus, provides a comfortable environment inside and outside.

- **Tailored content and hands-on pedagogy:** LFM's curriculum covers a mix of hard and soft skills, including planning tools, communication tools, and strategies for change—all designed to build the capacity of middle leaders to lead change initiatives. The hands-on pedagogy allows participants to practice using the tools, receive feedback from a range of colleagues, and see how other colleges address the same topic. The LFM leadership group has learned that readings can be varied each year to provide theoretical and practical perspectives on issues and thematically respond to campus projects.

- **Broader context and community:** The LFM setting provides participants the opportunity to gain perspectives outside their campus experience, hear about emerging issues, learn about policy changes in the state, and read current research. Joining a community of middle leaders across the system also creates an extended network that participants can draw on during and after their Academy experience.

- **Ongoing coaching:** Coaching has evolved as a critical component of the LFM experience, expanding the capacity of the LFM leadership group to provide sustained support throughout the Academy. LFM coaches provide an external

prompt to keep team progress on schedule and help the team problem solve when they encounter barriers.

Participant feedback underscores the importance of these factors to middle leadership development. When asked how they would describe their experience in LFM to a colleague, several participants thoughtfully described the impact of the time away, instructional approach, the community, and the coaching on their own leadership identity and capacity. In the words of multiple participants:

> *The value in attending LFM is the emphasis on leadership and collaboration as well as the hands-on work on a specific project. While the project might not be realized at the end of LFM, the skills gained around leadership and collaboration stay with you.*
>
> *The LFM Academy was both rejuvenating and energizing. Over the years faculty have created, implemented, and attempted to sustain many initiatives only for those efforts to slowly fade away. The Academy provided ways to face resistance, sustain momentum, and take risks necessary to achieve long-term goals. My biggest take away, first and foremost, was the opportunity to forge solid partnerships and relationships with my colleagues. As a result of these partnerships and relationships, we have a united voice, an interdependence…*
>
> *LFM has enabled me to be a part of a conversation with other colleagues in structured ways. This has been important to an understanding of building coherence and the practical next steps of our project—both pedagogy and specific applications have enhanced the experience.*
>
> *LFM allows community college members, from various backgrounds and levels of (formal) expertise, to explore topics of leadership and how to become (better) change agents. It allows members to reflect on campus culture in a natural/organic manner. Oftentimes, folks feel jaded and disempowered. LFM helps mobilize and create more conscious and aware change makers.*

Future Directions for LFM

Given the observations and the practical experience of five years, LFM is well positioned to contribute to the development of middle leaders across the community college system. LFM 2018 will mark the second year of delivering the Academy with CCCCO support, allowing the RP Group to continue subsidizing participation for another year. The resources will also allow LFM to bring more former participants into the leadership group as coaches and facilitators and support the embedded coaching model.

The LFM Academy 2018 will focus on guided pathways and implementation of AB 705. LFM will hold two Academies, one for a group of Central Valley colleges that will be regionally organized and supported by the Chancellor's Office as a site to experiment and the place to learn from experience in the field.

LFM will continue to highlight the vital role that middle leaders can play in campus transformation, demonstrating that these important change makers are central to the process of transforming their institutions in ways that support stronger, more equitable student success.

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Appendix I: LFM Leadership Group

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Appendix II: LFM Core Curricular Topics

Making the Case/Using Evidence

Understanding and Analyzing Institutional Cultures

Building Teams and Coalition

Engaging Resistance

Using Design Tools: Concept Mapping, Prototyping, Case Studies and Logic Models

Communicating Successfully

Taking Risks

Failing Successfully

Appendix III: Department Chair and Program Director Reflections

Department chairs and program coordinators made up the largest sub-group of LFM participants in 2017, with more than 10 participants. The department chair or coordinator position is a formal transition point for faculty to middle leadership and provides a structure for moving into leadership. However, that structure does not always provide support.

When asked about what they appreciate about their work, the chairs and coordinators noted that they are in a position to solve problems, support students, and be part of the bigger campus conversations. These participants also appreciated that their positions gave them a broader view of practice and the college. Several participants explained:

- As faculty I felt alone, now I'm part of interesting conversations.
- I'm able to think in terms of systems.
- I ran and was elected as chair. I saw things that needed fixing and now I can address them. It's satisfying to get people on the same page.
- I get to see the bigger picture and do something about it. I have the opportunity to be at the table, and help change the climate.
- I'm in a position to support students and remove barriers.
- I serve students and faculty, solve problems, and am part of campus conversations.

They also shared common challenges that they identified as part of the territory:

- I'm not part of admin, but I'm seen that way by faculty.
- Students complain, but there is little I can do with personality conflicts.
- A struggle is the turnover of deans.
- The biggest challenge is time.
- Institutional memory can be a burden, trying to stay true to the memory, but the structure needs revamping.

Appendix IV: Coherence Framework

The LFM facilitators adapted the four facets of Fullan's coherence framework to community college work, as outlined below.

FOCUS ON PURPOSE

- Focus on shared moral purpose
- Short list of goals tied to learning and student achievement
- Clear strategies for accomplishing college goals
- Clear communication about college goals and progress toward them

COLLABORATIVE CULTURAL NORMS

- College values on learning/sharing
- Champions at all levels to accomplish goals
- Structures that support collaborative work
- Engagement of research/evidence to solve problems

STRUCTURAL CONNECTIVITY

- Departments/units have structured opportunity to share ideas/practices
- Goals inform resource allocations
- Connections among services are clear to students
- Planning coordinates a variety of units together

SHARED ACCOUNTABILITY

- Underperformance seen as a growth opportunity
- External accountability is transparent and a chance to measure progress
- Results in achievement or underperformance perceived as a reciprocal/shared responsibility among administrators and faculty
- Faculty hold administrators accountable for supporting their goals, and administrators hold faculty accountable for their impact on students

Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges

The RP Group strengthens the ability of California community colleges 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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