

WIN-WIN at Lane:
developing systems and practices that support students
completing associate degrees.

1. Removing curricular roadblocks

Lane Community College serves many students who complete at least 90 credits at Lane but transfer classes directly to four-year institutions without an associate's degree. We asked ourselves whether some of these students might qualify for a degree, and whether there were any common curricular roadblocks among these students.

- We selected a pilot group of students for investigating possible obstacles to earning a degree. We chose our Engineering transfer students from the past four years (2007-2010) because we believed that they had completed more than enough credits for our Associate of Science (AS) degree. There were 101 students in this pilot group. Only 17 students had been awarded an AS degree. The majority of these students transferred to a 4-year university without earning any degree from Lane.
- We performed a degree audit for the remaining 84 students in the pilot group, and analyzed the requirements for the AS degree that were not completed. The most common unmet AS degree requirements were:
 - The requirement for three credits of Health Education and three credits of Physical Education. Most of these engineering students were planning to transfer to Oregon State University, where a health class is required, but not P.E.
 - The requirement for 93 total credits for the degree
- We surveyed the AS degree requirements at all other Oregon community colleges, and found that no other college required both 3 credits of Health and 3 credits of P.E. . At every other college the Health/P.E. requirement could be satisfied with no more than 3 credits. We also found that the norm for total credits required was 90.
- We compared the AS degree requirements to our other transfer degree requirements, and found that our Associate of Arts Oregon Transfer degree required only three credits of either Health or P.E.; and a total of 90 credits.
- We tentatively proposed changes to the AS degree to require three credits of Health or P.E.; and a total of 90 credits for the degree.
- We performed a “what-if” degree audit analysis of the pilot group of engineering students to see how many additional degrees would be awarded if the proposed changes were adopted. Our results showed that an additional 17 students would have been awarded an AS degree if these proposed changes were adopted.
- We presented the proposed changes for the AS degree to Lane’s Degree Requirements Review Committee. We presented the results of the “what-if” analysis to show what impact these changes would have had on our engineering transfer degree awards. We also presented the information about requirements at the other Oregon community colleges, which demonstrated that our current requirements were unique among Oregon colleges.
- The Degree Requirements Review Committee approved our proposal for changes, and recommended approval by our Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs.

2. Removing policy and procedural roadblocks

Two questions arose about whether we could grant degrees and certificates automatically [“automagically,” as one student said].

First, there was a longstanding, unwritten policy that a student who met all degree requirements had to apply to Enrollment Services for the award to be granted. Until approximately 5 years ago, the application had to be accompanied by a \$25 fee, so unless students planned to walk at graduation, most did not bother to seek the award. When the fee was dropped (actually changed to an admissions fee), the application for graduation requirement was left intact, and most staff assumed that students had the legal right to choose whether to seek a degree or certificate. That assumption turned out to be false.

A second myth we discovered hinged on the assumption that students would no longer qualify for financial aid to continue their education at Lane or elsewhere. In reality, students who want to earn additional certificates, degrees, or even direct transfer to another institution are still eligible for financial aid.

We thus cleared the way to grant degrees and certificates upon students’ completion of the requirements. In June we successfully granted degrees and certificates retroactively for the last three cohorts of engineering and health professions students, and are working to complete the degree audit parameters in Banner to be able to transcript awards to all students who qualify.