Springtime in Laramie County is rejuvenating. It’s when we celebrate our collective success as hundreds of LCCC graduates cross the stage and into their future. It’s when we see newness and rebirth, plan for the near and long-term future, and are reminded that we are part of a greater purpose. Springtime is also when we have the opportunity to share special stories about our students, our people, and our great institution of higher learning right here in the pages of The Talon.

Newness is evident on campus in a variety of ways. Most notable is the wonderful renovation and expansion activity that continues to happen here at LCCC. This spring, we celebrated the grand reopening of a newly renovated and expanded Ludden Library, which has been a transformation to the heart of LCCC. The Albany County Campus is also expanding this summer with the addition of two large multi-use classrooms. We are underway with the construction of new student housing, which will become a 350-bed residence hall that—more importantly—puts many more students living and learning on campus. Finally, the long-awaited renovation and expansion of the LCCC Fine Arts building is also getting started, and we’ll soon celebrate the addition of the new 400-seat auditorium to accompany the comprehensive renovation.

We have some existing new things occurring with our programming as well. This past legislative session, Senate File 111 passed; this allows Wyoming community colleges to offer applied baccalaureate degrees. These degrees are designed to provide a local opportunity for students who have earned technical degrees and credentials, such as the many associate of applied science degrees we award every year, to seamlessly move into a program leading to a bachelor’s degree.

We anticipate being one of the first community colleges in the state to offer these degrees, and we are working first on programs in applied management and health care administration. Stay tuned.

There is just so much more, but nothing probably more transformative than our work on Guided Pathways. LCCC is just one of 13 community colleges in the nation that was selected to become part of the American Association of Community Colleges Guided Pathways 2.0 project, which focuses on institutional transformation centered on improving the student experience and ultimately student success. You’ll have the opportunity to learn much more about his work in our next edition of The Talon.

I cannot stress enough how fortunate we are to have the support of our communities or, honestly, how fortunate our communities are to have LCCC serving them. The dedication of our faculty and staff, and the deep commitment we have to helping our students succeed in their educational journey is inspiring. We are fortunate to be part of this great enterprise, and I invite you to campus anytime you want to be rejuvenated!

Warm regards,

Dr. Joe Schaffer
President
After years of anticipation, this spring the newly renovated and expanded Ludden Library opened to the students and the community for the spring 2019 semester. This $6.2 million project was made possible through a mix of private donations, LCCC monies, and funds provided by the Wyoming Legislature.

This expansion—in addition to improving the entire aesthetic and access—includes a variety of new amenities including improved instructional areas, additional meeting space, a dedicated family study room, quiet space for students, innovation lab, individual study rooms, cultural heritage area, vastly improved power and Wi-Fi, and so much more.

This 21,000-square-foot space is named for Randy and Yvonne Ludden, two of the college’s generous and long-term friends. In 2006, the Ludden Library became one of the first named building on the LCCC campus. The Luddens immediately dreamed of a way to expand and update the library; that dream came true this spring, with the rededication of the library.

"Successful people almost never forget their roots. They always look back and offer a helping hand to those who follow them. That is why we chose to endow the library. A library is a refuge for everyone—young and old, poor and privileged, educated and uneducated—to go relax, to go and seek knowledge, truth, understanding and wisdom. May all who enter these hallowed halls find joy and happiness, knowledge and wisdom, and an everlasting and insatiable thirst to serve others."

—Randy Ludden, at the rededication ceremony
CULTIVATING A PASSION

The back wall of Dr. Ami Wangeline's office is blanketed in covers of science magazines. The homemade décor and the shelves full of books on botany and fungi tell a story of the biology instructor's research expertise. Alongside those hardbound books are plastic figurines iconic of her generation and her students'. On her desk sits a dish of toys built for fiddly, fidgeting fingers.

Her enthusiasm for teaching is obvious. It also rivals her passion for science.

LCCC offers a high-quality science education and enables students who are eyebing a four-year degree to move forward in their academic and professional careers.

One of those students is Bert Devilbiss, who was part of a collaboration with Colorado State University while an LCCC biology student in 2012. His passion for mycology—the study of fungi—and a superior performance in an entry level biology course led Wangeline to offer him a position in the LCCC research group and specifically do the fungal identification for the CSU group.

Devilbiss' work lead to a study published last year in the scientific journal Frontiers in Plant Science as original research—an amazing recognition for a student whose research was done at a community college.
The natural science program (with concentrations in biology, chemistry, human biology, molecular biology, physics, physiology, wildlife biology, and zoology) curates opportunities through academic rigor and surprising access to highly specialized equipment.

The array of equipment offered to students at LCCC is broad, and so is student access.

Take, for example, the school’s electron microscope. Or the X-ray fluorescence spectrometer (XRF), used for elemental analysis of plants and animal tissues. Or the confocal suite of microscopes used for increasing optical resolution and contrast of a micrograph.

Electron microscopes render images with high magnification and resolution by employing electron beams in place of light in combination with electron lenses. At a cost of about $450,000, the equipment is well out of reach for small science programs, but Wangeline is a relationship-builder, constructing collaborations with universities and agencies to support her students’ growth in the classroom and in life.

That electron microscope came to LCCC through the University of Northern Colorado. When that program saw need for a new microscope, they asked Wangeline to partner on a grant. UNC was awarded its grant, and it needed a new home for its old electron microscope. LCCC eagerly accepted it.

Other pieces of equipment come to the Science Center through the Wyoming Department of Health’s Public Health Lab and the Wyoming State Crime Lab, which wants to send its highly specialized equipment to a working lab. Otherwise, it might sit somewhere, uselessly.

Wangeline points to an Isotemp basic—a black upright freezer similar to what shoppers see at appliance stores. It keeps samples, particularly tissues, intact and viable for students’ scientific discoveries for a very long time, she says as she points to a skinned bat that’s drying in a fume hood. Research samples like these are headed to a museum, and its tissues, which might be of interest to a future student project, are in the Isotemp.

Students drive the LCCC natural science experience they want to have, says Dr. Zac Roehrs, a wildlife biologist by training with a background in genetics and molecular biology. “I had the RNA of a fungus collected by Wangeline. He uses a machine to view gels of the genetic material. Hopper plans to pursue his bachelor’s degree at UW or CSU so he can stay in the region.”

The program revamp was possible because of the college’s small size, solid relationships with the science community in the region, and the support of the administration in continually developing a high-quality program. But it was also driven by students’ experiences: instructors aren’t tracked into a program because of the institution’s need to maintain funding requirements. Rather, the research done by LCCC students is driven by the students themselves. This is an important distinction both for students and the quality of the science education being offered at LCCC.

Take the time three Ph.D. candidates at Colorado State University needed support on analyzing the antioxidant capacity of biological samples with a microplate reader. CSU didn’t have the equipment or the expertise. But Wangeline had both, and she trained a student to use the equipment and run the samples.

“Material considerations can keep students from doing great science,” Roehrs says. “As an instructor, I’m better equipped to do that at LCCC.”

That’s the very idea that led Wangeline to use her sabbatical leave in 2017 to break down the parts of the biology coursework experience and propose a new way for LCCC to engage students in science.

Most students learn science the traditional way—content first, lab experience later. It’s how Wangeline learned science, she says, but she, Roehrs and fellow instructor Dr. Courtney Springer saw an opportunity at LCCC. “We revamped the program was successfully implemented in 2018.”

“Students drive the LCCC natural science program. It’s their way to learn about and participate in real science,” says Dr. Ami Wangeline, professor of biology.

“We as faculty put a high value on our students doing real science that expands into tangible experiences for them,” Wangeline says. “As an instructor, I enjoy seeing the excitement in students doing real science that expands into tangible experiences for them.”

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Wangeline adds, “We value the students. We want to support them in their pursuits and ensure they have the best possible experience here. We learn from them, and they learn from us.”

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In April, LCCC’s wind energy technology students and Steve Hrkach, instructor in that program, toured the High Plains and McFadden Ridge wind energy project’s electrical substation. The substation is used to connect the power from 85 wind turbines (total capacity of 127.5 megawatts) to Rocky Mountain Power’s transmission system. Shown here, the group is standing near transmission lines exiting the substation carrying 230,000 volts of electricity. LCCC’s wind energy program has been leading the way in educating and training students in this high-growth technical field for several years.
When a child talks about a challenging home life, most people are inclined to say, “I’m sorry that happened to you.” But not Derede Darden (formerly Heim). She’s going to say, “That’s your story. How are you going to write the ending?”

It might sound like tough love, but it’s Derede (pronounced DARE-uh-dee) speaking with experience and hope for their future.

Derede is the youngest of five children, and her family struggled financially. “By the time I came along, my parents were just kind of done raising kids,” she said.

By the age of seven, her parents came in and out of her life. She left home at an early age and hopped from place to place, staying with family and friends over the years.

Life was hard without parental support. In high school, she worked to support herself and afford an apartment, leaving her exhausted for class. Derede remembers during those days that if people saw you without your parents, “they thought it was because you were a bad kid.”

People told her, “You won’t amount to anything.”

In the fall of 1986, Derede walked into LCCC and said, “I don’t have any money, but I want to go to college.” She was ready to prove the naysayers wrong.

Derede took a job with LCCC’s Veterans Affairs, working for Michelle Massey. That job led to money, classes, and so much more.

“I didn’t have a lot of confidence, and Michelle was the first person that I can remember reassuring me that I could do this thing called college,” Derede shared. Michelle counseled Derede when she was struggling and helped her find ways to earn money on campus, such as proctoring tests.

“Derede is probably the most determined person I’ve met,” said Michelle, who now works in LCCC’s Office of Financial Aid & Scholarships. “Like many of our students, she had to overcome tremendous obstacles in order to go to college.”

Derede remembers her history instructor noticing she wasn’t doing well in class and working with her on how to study. Because she struggled early in life, she was learning some subjects and skills for the first time in college. She finally had teachers who connected with her and inspired her.

“LCCC gave me the confidence that I didn’t get during the first 17 years of my life,” she said. “I needed to know that I was not disposable to the world.”

In 1991, she completed her bachelor’s degree in elementary education at the University of Wyoming, followed by a stint teaching at Noah Webster Christian School. Over the years and through different jobs, she kept running into students who struggled with learning. No one could tell her what she could do to help them. That inspired her to earn her master’s degree in special education at UW.

Derede worked as a special education consultant for Laramie County School District No. 1 for about six years, but she missed working with the kids. She moved to Carey Junior High in Cheyenne where she became the school’s principal.

Most recently, she served as the principal at Hobbs Elementary, and this fall she takes on a new role as the student support district administrator in Cheyenne to help schools with areas such as safety, positive behavior, and intervention support.

Derede’s made it her mission to leave a positive imprint on every stakeholder she encounters. She feels drawn to support those students and families in challenging situations because she’s been there.

“It’s the reason I am who I am,” she said. She wants to share with them what they don’t always hear, “You will be okay. It’s not easy. You can do this. I believe in you.”

Not only did LCCC help Derede get her start, but it did the same for her family. Her husband and two daughters have attended and graduated from LCCC.

“I am so thankful for LCCC, and I share that daily,” Derede said.
Since Golden Eagle athletics returned to LCCC in 2002, nearly 200 students—so far—have been recruited and successfully transferred to four-year schools to continue their student-athlete journey. In fact, more than half of this group moved on to NCAA Division 1 and Division 2 institutions. Stretching coast to coast across 40 states (as well as Canada, Alaska, and the District of Columbia), this map showcases the geographical breadth of these Golden Eagles around the country.
It seems that often life is full of busy, harried days, when life feels like an endless to-do list. But for some college students, that chaos can ultimately lead to some fantastic opportunities, even if the path to get there is a little daunting.

Take Zach Hammons, for example. A Cheyenne native and graduate of East High, Zach started out in the restaurant industry when he was just 15. Always a hard worker, he successfully worked his way to the position of manager at a couple of high-traffic eateries in the city.

After 17 years in that field though, he knew it was time for something more. Almost casually at first, Zach explored the idea of getting a college degree.

"I decided I wanted to come to school. I thought through what would work best for me and my family, what I'm passionate about," he said.

LCCC was that school, and exercise science ended up being the program that called to him. As a child, Zach’s dad coached youth sports, and that passion grew in Zach as well. He began exploring a degree in physical education.

But there was a challenge: Zach is married and a dad to five kids. Plus, he had to stay at his job, working 30 hours every week.

"It was stressful, especially since it’s been more than 10 years since I'd taken any kind of classes," he said.

Zach even had some concerns coming in as someone older than the traditional student, even though nearly one-third of all LCCC students are 25 or older. "But it went smoothly," he said with a chuckle.

His wife, Sarah, had an idea how difficult this entire change of lifestyle could be. "We had to recreate our balance, get organized with all five kids. It takes a village to raise a child, and we have five of them," she said. "But we get it done."

Dr. Cindy Henning, program director for exercise science at LCCC, is one of Zach's instructors. She finds that his background and challenging lifestyle make him a better student. "He works hard to take advantage of his time. He asks question and overlays his experiences with what he is learning," she said. "Zach is open to things he can change and even when he has taught a lesson exceptionally well, he still wants to know what can be improved upon."

According to Henning, Zach maintains a 4.0 grade point average and is a member of the program’s honor society. “I’m trying my best, trying hard every day,” Zach said. “I’m serious about doing this.” He is the first person in his family to go to college or even take college courses and talks about how much he wants to be a role model for his children.

"I want to inspire them as well."

Zach shared that it can be interesting at home, with books scattered about and his kids asking “How was your day at school?”

He still strives to be involved in his family’s life as much as possible, knowing how important they are to achieving this dream.

"Tears well up in Sarah’s eyes, thinking about her husband working toward his lifelong goals. "He gets to follow in his father’s footsteps," she said. "He gets to be the father to his own kids that he had growing up."

Zach is on track to complete his degree next fall. He’s already completed an internship with the women’s Golden Eagle basketball team, and he’s looking to transfer to the University of Wyoming or the University of Northern Colorado. After that, he hopes to teach and coach elementary school students in this area.

What advice would Zach offer to other adults thinking about starting their college journey?

“No matter what stage of life you’re in, you can always better yourself. Juggling everything as a non-traditional student is tough, but the work will be worth it in the long run. Get out there, do what makes you truly happy, and the rest will fall into place.”
Collaborating in Laramie

Near the end of a long corridor in the new high school in Laramie—past the posters celebrating the Plainsmen, past bustling classrooms, past a cabinet filled with student artwork—is a lab that looks unassuming enough from the outside. In here, a number of Laramie High School students are studying automotive technology. And getting college credit for doing so.

According to Talisha Mottinger, the director of operations at LCCC’s Albany County Campus, or the ACC team, a partnership like this between the college and the high school (working with Albany County School District) created a perfect opportunity.

“With the high school being built close to ACC, it made sense for a partnership to develop. The new building provided state-of-the-art spaces, but staffing was difficult, and that’s where ACC was able to help,” she said.

Two of the students, Hailey Hysong and Jessica Predmore, each earned a credit diploma from LCCC in automotive technology and engine management/drivability in May.

“Working so hard for that was a great incentive,” Hysong said. “Even if you aren’t going into an automotive field, you have the work ethic to get it done.” She talks about the sense of accomplishment this built for her future—whether applying for college or applying for a job.

Predmore likes working with vehicles, but after high school, she’s heading to North Carolina to study baking and pastry arts.

“When I started the program, it was more of my mom wanting me to explore the basics. It was just something that I really enjoyed learning,” Predmore said that initial interest lead to something much greater.

In no small part, that’s due to Seth Robbins, the LCCC automotive/diesel technology instructor who also teaches this class at LHS.

Robbins, who estimates that more than 300 LHS students have been through these classes, has a sincere love of teaching this subject—and it shows in the success of his students.

“Since the dual enrollment agreement was signed, we’re just now seeing our first class of graduating seniors apply for the credit diploma, many of whom are moving on to college careers,” he added.

The planning process took several years, Mottinger shared. With the automode push to improve technical training options for students, the ACC team was happy to help.

“Research showed a high need for auto diesel technicians. Add in the desire of businesses to donate equipment, and we found ourselves with a unique opportunity where a full program emerged,” Mottinger said.

This program is definitely a hands-on experience. Students being in their own vehicles—or those of friends and families—to practice their skills. Robbins guides the students through the process, giving them the independence to learn with gentle support stepped in expertise.

Plus, there are practical applications to all of this. The students talked about the extensive work they’ve done on vehicles, and the tremendous cost savings it had for them—from oil changes to changing leaf springs, and still a lot more that we can learn.

“We can do pretty much anything in the shop and learn from it, which is really cool because I like how I know what I can do and I can’t do,” Predmore said. “And there’s still a lot more that we can learn.”

This experience also gave them insight into college.

“It was more than just an auto class. It was a door opening to LCCC, “ Hysong said. “Now I’m more familiar with the college scene and how much LCCC has to offer.”

Being a high school student created this rare opportunity for them.

“It’s cool that it counts as credits at my high school and my college. Because I did all these programs and I’m getting the credit diploma, it’s like I’m graduating from LCCC. I feel that I’m part of the college,”

Ultimately, the Laramie community gains a lot from this collaboration.

“We have LHS students that are graduating with work-ready skills and industry credentials. They’re leveraging to either start careers in Laramie, or be ahead of the game when furthering their education,” Mottinger said.

“We sincerely hope to expand programming to support even more Albany County students.”
For additional details and more information related to this report, visit lccc.wy.edu/about. Content for this report (including the grades to the right) was provided with the support of LCCC’s Institutional Research Office and Budget Office.
DEGREES & CERTIFICATES AWARDED

Average Time to Completion (Years)

Course Success Rates

The percent of students who earn a passing grade (A, B, C, or S) out of those who officially enrolled.

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The following individuals have generously included LCCC in their long-range estate plans.

Billie Addleman and Brandi Monger
Barbara F. and Anthony G. Andriakopoulos
Ms. Debby F. Baker
An opportunity for **FREE college education**

**DO YOU QUALIFY?**

- 25 years of age or older
- No previously earned degree
- Current Wyoming resident who has lived here for the past three years
- Enrollment in specific programs - details can be found at [lccc.wy.edu/rediscover](http://lccc.wy.edu/rediscover)