

# **Lane Community College / OVRs Partnership: Career Workforce Skills Training**

## *Site Report*



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## Table of Contents

*Introduction and Overview* – page 3

*§ 1 – Responding to a Need: Development of the LCC/OVRS Partnership* – page 5

Collaboration – page 6

Pattern of Services – page 7

*§ 2 – How and Why the Program Developed* – page 11

Challenges – page 11

Students – page 12

The Community College Environment – page 12

Professional Development and Technical Assistance – page 14

*§ 3 – Program Impact and Sustainability* – page 14

Impact of the Program – page 14

Keys to Success – page 15

*Conclusions* – page 16

*Table 1: Key Events (history of the program)* – page 17

*Table 2: Key Personnel* – page 18

# **Lane Community College “Systems Change” Site Report**

## **Introduction and Overview**

The purpose of this report is to describe and document the impact of the partnership developed between Lane Community College (LCC) and the Oregon Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (OVRs). This partnership was initially funded during the 2003/2005 biennium and is currently funded through June 30, 2007. The LCC/OVRs partnership, known as Career Workforce Skills Training (CWST) is designed to improve employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities by providing a combination of classroom instruction and community based training experiences.

During the spring of 2006, a team of researchers from the University of Oregon conducted an on-site visit with Lane Community College and Vocational Rehabilitation personnel in the Eugene/Springfield area. We were interested in collecting information that would allow us to better understand how this innovative partnership was developed and integrated into the existing community college and OVRs programs. Through site visits and extensive interviews we were able to examine the pattern of services provided through the LCC/OVRs partnership and document how the program developed and changed over time.

During the site visits, we conducted group and individual interviews with key personnel involved in the LCC/OVRs partnership. All of the interviews were recorded (with informed consent of participants), transcribed, and analyzed for common themes and key findings. The following specific interviews/activities were completed for this report:

- Individual interviews with Cooperative Education Coordinator
- Individual interview with LCC Division Chair of Cooperative Education
- Group interviews with OVRs Counselors and Branch Managers from the Eugene and Springfield branch offices
- Group interview with Youth Transition Program (YTP) personnel
- Student focus group interview

In addition to these interviews, we collected informational and historical documents in order to garner a basic understanding of the program and the LCC/OVRs partnership. Document review and informal interviewing were performed prior to group interviews, and helped guide the study. However, it was the information from the interview participants that shaped the writing of this report. Key themes and details regarding Lane Community College’s CWST project and the LCC/OVRs partnership emerged directly from the interview transcripts as well as from our observations.

This report contains information on the program, the partnership, and influencing factors associated with program development and integration from the perspectives of LCC and OVRS staff, as well as from high school and other community college staff. The report is divided into three major sections: (1) the development of the LCC/OVRS partnership, (2) how and why the program developed and changed over time, and (3) a description of program impact and systems change.

The research team from the University Oregon would like to extend a sincere thank you to the participants at Lane Community College, as well as participants from OVRS and YTP. A very special thank you is extended to Beverly Farfan who provided so much information and help to our team; her participation and cooperation was essential to the success of this project.

## § 1 – Responding to a Need: Development of the LCC/OVRS Partnership

The LCC/OVRS partnership was developed to meet the needs of OVRS clients with disabilities. While some of these clients were referred to the program during the 1990's, they were generally not able to complete training and secure employment through the existing programs. This was largely because the program already in place, managed by faculty member Chuck Fike, was designed to serve injured workers from private rehabilitation agencies.

The effort to serve students with a wider range of disabilities began in 2003. Table 1 describes the evolution of this partnership effort, and Table 2 displays personnel changes over time. Early in the program development process, faculty from the University of Oregon met with Andrea Newton (Division Chair of Cooperative Education at LCC), Chuck Fike (OST/PST Program Lead), and OVRS Counselors to discuss establishing a partnership between OVRS and LCC. Eventually, a decision was reached that LCC would apply for a OVRS grant to fund a full-time position to help with referrals, but that this portion of the OST program would be separate from the traditional program that served injured workers. Chuck Fike would remain the manager of the latter, and a new faculty member would be hired to work with VR-referred clients.

Lane Community College received a grant for the 2003/2005 biennium, and the new OVRS/LCC-funded position was established at LCC. This position, "Cooperative Education Coordinator", was designed to help OVRS clients better access LCC short-term training and technical programs. In this sense, the Cooperative Education Coordinator is a liaison between OVRS and LCC as well as a service provider for the VR consumers. This position is funded through a financial partnership with two-thirds of the 1.0 FTE paid for by OVRS, and one-third contributed by LCC.

After receiving the grant funding, LCC completed a national search for the new position. The initial candidate recruited was unable to enter the position and Andrea Newton then hired Beverly (Bev) Farfan as the Coordinator of this new program. Bev had worked in the OST program in the past, and also had experience in other LCC programs. This familiarity helped her establish an intake process for new referrals and navigate the college system. Bev also had connections and experience with LCC's Cooperative Education Department (Co-op Department), which facilitated the establishment of training site development tasks.

As the sole faculty member in a newly established program, Bev initially faced some challenges in establishing the program and identifying and building a team oriented approach to service delivery. She remembers,

*"[At first] I found it a very limiting program, but ...one of the things I did at the start of the partnership is make it a WE program. I am alone here at LCC, and I need other people; so, my team was going to be VR counselors and the YTP specialists. And so I started basically forming a team with these folks, and one of the first things I did, was*

*arrange that I was going to be at VR one day a week...” (Beverly Farfan, Cooperative Education Coordinator Interview)*

As the LCC/OVRS partnership developed, Beverly discovered that meeting student needs required flexibility in terms of training sites and curriculum, and also in terms of the actual program. Although the grant was originally intended to focus on the OST program, in 2005 OVRS allowed services to be expanded to include other career related, one-year programs at the community college. The grant name was changed to the Career Workforce Skills Training Project to allow participants to access other short-term career and technical education programs. This change allowed the Cooperative Education Coordinator greater flexibility in finding the right program for students, including short term Professional/Technical programs, Occupational Skills Training (OST) programs, and Professional Skills Training (PST) programs.

*“We really tried in the beginning to see, and there were probably one or two clients that could fit into that framework of the OST program. But that was it! So, my objective also kind of changed along the line of, ‘How can I best, as an LCC employee, help VR clients who are accessing LCC?’ So, it’s not like I just see myself as the manager of the OST program: I’m the LCC liaison, helping VR students...so, it really changed.” (Beverly Farfan, Cooperative Education Coordinator Interview)*

Today, the program has the flexibility to meet the needs of students on a one-on-one basis. By communicating with students, OVRS Counselors, and YTP specialists, Co-op coordinators, and by finding the right LCC training program for each student, the program provides individualized supports to a range of students. Appropriate training opportunities have led to students finding employment in their desired fields, and these successes help make the partnership sustainable:

*“There are students who can’t get focused on a job goal but that were simply in college because that’s what the norm is. Now what happens is that I have a lot more faith in supporting a school goal or letting that person go off in that direction because I can still keep some tabs on them while they’re there and monitor what they’re doing and we’re more working as a team with that student to help work them into a job goal, rather than just letting the student go, having them fail and then come back and try to work with them. So I really see how Bev has made a difference in how I work those cases.” (YTP Specialist, Group Interview)*

### Collaboration

The Cooperative Education Coordinator works with students throughout their participation in the program, from referral to the time they exit the program. Further, the Cooperative Education Coordinator is the only staff or faculty member at LCC specifically devoted to helping VR-referred students access short-term and technical training opportunities. Early on in the partnership effort, it became clear that effective collaboration with OVRS counselors, YTP specialists, and the Co-op program at LCC was imperative to organizing successful referrals and training plans, and helping students

get jobs. As mentioned earlier, the partnership began with this collaboration-based model in mind and is based on these solid relationships across agencies. Bev attends OVRs meetings and makes weekly trips to both the Eugene and Springfield OVRs Branch offices. She also attends Lane County YTP consortium meetings and she maintains close ties with people in the LCC Co-op office and in the general community, thus helping to organize training sites. This broad, intensive collaboration is crucial to making the LCC/OVRs partnership work:

*Andrea Newton: "Lane was always really good at supporting students, but for VR-referred students, it was scattered. Having Bev on board gave us a focus. You know she'd go talk to the Counseling Department and they'd know that she was here for Voc. Rehab. clients if that came up. Disability Services works closely with her. So I think just having that presence of a person who is an advocate, a supporter, a tracker of what's actually going on with the students, and building that really good relationship with Voc. Rehab helps them realize how their students can be successful here." (Andrea Newton, Division Chair of Cooperative Education, Interview)*

*Interviewer: "So she is connecting people?"*

*Andrea Newton: "Exactly, I think that, to me, that's one of her biggest strengths – is her ability to do that. Plus, she has really good community connections so when the time comes to put them out on site, she knows where they can go and where they fit and how to work with employers to connect them up with the student and make the learning experience successful." (Andrea Newton, Division Chair of Cooperative Education, Interview)*

### Pattern of Services

As a result of the partnership, several new service delivery elements were developed or enhanced to support OVRs referred students. These elements include (a) the program referral process, (b) curriculum development/career planning, and (c) training site development. All of these services, which are summarized briefly in this section, are now provided by the jointly funded Cooperative Education Coordinator.

The referral process. The LCC/OVRs partnership program serves youth and adults with disabilities with a variety of needs and interests. The referral process begins with the OVRs counselor who works with a client to determine his/her employment goals. It's important that, if these clients go on to become LCC students, they maintain a dedication to finding employment. In this sense, being referred to the Cooperative Education Coordinator does not mean that a client is only going "back to college", but rather that the student is trying to gain additional skills to be more competitive in the workforce. To this end, training plans must be guided by both client interest and realistic labor market assessment.

Once a client has expressed interest in continuing education to meet their identified career goal, and the OVRs Counselor supports it as appropriate, then a meeting

is scheduled to include the client, OVRs Counselor, Beverly, and, if the client is a YTP youth, the YTP transition specialist. It is at this initial meeting that a training plan is discussed and outlined.

Curriculum development/career planning. Once the OVRs client registers as a student in one of the CWST-approved short term training programs, the Cooperative Education Coordinator works with the student to develop an individualized training plan. This involves several steps. The first thing students do is research labor market availability to determine the employment prospects of their field of interest. Given the employment focus of the partnership, this piece is crucial. Since the focus of OVRs is competitive community employment, appropriate clients/students are those who are in need of skills-based training to be more competitive in the workforce – essentially students who require short-term training, but not a lot of additional classroom academic education.

*“The clients that I have referred to her [Bev] are people that may need some training but not a traditional degree program, just skills-based training to enhance the skills that they already have to be more competitive in the employment setting.” (VR Counselor, VR Group Interview)*

Second, the student completes informational interviews with people in the community or at the college to get a sense of what the potential job entails. This information helps the student figure out if the goal is a good fit with his/her talents and abilities.

Third, the Cooperative Education Coordinator utilizes college placement test results and, as appropriate, college coursework. All students entering LCC are required to complete a placement test, and many OVRs Counselors require clients starting at Lane to complete one course or term as an ‘assessment’ before beginning the actual designated short term training program. These tasks help the Cooperative Education Coordinator develop an individualized curriculum suited for both the student’s abilities as well as the employment goal. These activities also help the student develop a clearer idea about job goals and employment prospects, and allow an opportunity to demonstrate the importance of a strong work ethic:

*“The students have to be able to follow through – checking out the job market and being able to show that they’re really interested enough to pursue whatever path they’re on. The students that I see that are best with these programs are students who are motivated to go on but perhaps don’t have the academic skills to go into a regular college [program], so they’re looking for training in an area that they’re interested in but they don’t believe, and possibly we don’t believe, that they would be successful at just the standard academic degree program.” (YTP Specialist, Group Interview)*

Finally, the Cooperative Education Coordinator talks with the student (and counselor, if needed) about barriers the student may encounter, survival strategies, and

support services that the college offers. This frank discussion helps the student form a coping plan in the event that barriers manifest during training:

*“What we do is we talk about those [barrier] situations in the beginning...and one of the things I’ve developed in the application process is a Barriers and Limitations form that students fill out. I tell them, ‘This is not something that stops you, but these are life situations that come up.’ And it talks about transportation, childcare, and all kinds of different questions that are real life situations that may come up and that may need to be addressed. We want to think about them so that when something comes up, [the student] can [think], ‘Oh yeah, my back up plan was to do this... and so I have a plan instead of getting stressed out and quitting.’” (Beverly Farfan, Cooperative Education Coordinator Interview)*

Training programs. Students can enroll in a variety of short-term training and technical programs, such as a Professional/Technical program, Occupational Skills Training, or Professional Skills Training. Based on a student’s abilities and early performance, the Cooperative Education Coordinator will recommend a program that both the student and the counselor feel is the best venue for building work-related skills.

All of the short-term training and technical programs have classroom requirements, although they vary greatly. At times, students may only take Adult & Basic Secondary Education classes at LCC; other times, the classroom element is more extensive. In the end, plans are typically highly individualized and depend on specific student needs:

*“The student won’t be enrolled until we have a meeting and figure out what the plan is, what kind of courses they would need, and how long it’s going to take. One of the things we’re also considering is individual students’ abilities, because some students can take 12 credits, some students can only take 9, and some students can only take 6.” (Beverly Farfan, Cooperative Education Coordinator Interview)*

In addition to flexibility, working with the whole student is crucial to finding a good fit between student and plan. By having the student talk about goals, doing some independent research, and talking about life situations that may arise during training, the Cooperative Education Coordinator is able to develop the training plan that pertains to the whole student, and not just their academic program:

*“What makes [the program] work well? Well, I think part of it is working with student as a whole person, and not just, ‘Okay, here’s your class, here’s your schedule...’ It’s really being here for their stress, being here to support them when they’re stressed, being here to encourage them, being here to problem solve for them, so they know that they can go to somebody.” (Beverly Farfan, Cooperative Education Coordinator Interview)*

Finding the right mix of classroom instruction and hours on a training site is difficult for many students, but the student, the Cooperative Education Coordinator, and the OVRs counselor work to find this balance. According to many OVRs counselors,

Bev is particularly effective at keeping the student grounded and focused on realistic employment goals.

*VR Counselor 1: “Most of our clients, you know, their confidence is really low. They’re kind of beaten down and they’ve never been given these chances; they just don’t know how to negotiate the system, they’ve never had the role models. One client I had, she was just clueless on how to negotiate the system, but with the help of Beverly, she’s been able to do that. Beverly really took her hand, helped her get into that.” (VR Counselor, Interview)*

*VR Counselor 2: “And our job sometimes is at odds with the school because we want them to go to work as soon as possible and [Beverly] has been instrumental with the clients I’ve sent her, bringing the world of work back into the picture.” (VR Counselor, Interview)*

Connecting students with the best program options, the tutor center, instructors, the Co-op Department, and different college services is a crucial piece of the training mosaic. These connections provide students with the support they need to succeed in the classroom, on-site, and in their personal lives:

*Student: “Beverly helped me because I really was confused about the whole Co-op program. I didn’t really understand what it was and she walked me through it...we went through every job opportunity they had on the computer, and – I was just so limited that there really wasn’t a whole lot I could do. And so when I got hooked up with Beverly we decided that a training site would be a good idea so that I could see what I can do and what I can’t do. It worked out, and I have been working part-time for a couple of months now.” (Student, Focus Group Interview)*

Once students are connected, there needs to be a mechanism in place to be able to monitor and evaluate students’ progress. Bev recognized this need and tapped into a system of midterm progress reports already in place at LCC. She utilized an existing resource and applied it to the CWST Project. These reports provide a summary of how students are performing academically, and are helpful for identifying problems (academic, personal, or other) and solutions before the end of the term, when it may be too late to intervene. Sending these reports to appropriate OVRs counselors provides an ongoing mechanism for feedback.

*[Regarding midterm progress reports] “Bev also continues to contact teachers to find out how the student is doing; this gives Bev and the counselor advance notice if they’re doing well or if they’re having some problems. If they are having some problems, maybe there’s something we can do to help them. This way, they don’t go to the end of the term with a fail or with a, ‘Well, what happened?’” (VR Counselor, Group Interview)*

The Cooperative Education Coordinator’s goal is to coordinate effective training opportunities that will lead to employment in a student’s desired field. Making that transition to employment, though, is not solely the Cooperative Education Coordinator’s

responsibility. Staff from the Co-op office, OVRS counselors and employers all work together to place students at jobs once their training is complete. By organizing on-site training in a field with ample employment opportunities, providing students the services they need, and maintaining strong relationships with the Co-op Department and community employers, the program maximizes the chances for students to enter employment in a field of interest.

## **§2 –How and Why the Program Developed**

*Beverly Farfan: “Every Wednesday I do my little walk around [VR offices] and I check in with all the counselors to see if they have any new referrals. Usually I’m also getting new information about how students are doing and what’s going on and we update each other... We [meet] face to face.”*

*Interviewer: “And it’s better that they see you and they know that’s your day...”*

*Beverly: “... that’s it, they expect me there.”*

*Interviewer: “So it seems like you’re in this sort of, constant improvement process.”*

*Beverly: “Constant, constant, constant! We’re always in process!” (Beverly Farfan, Cooperative Education Coordinator Interview)*

As needs changed over time, so did the LCC/OVRS partnership. Weekly visits to branch offices helped counselors to keep LCC’s programs in mind as a viable workforce training option. Midterm progress reports also built this connection, and helped counselors to address issues or concerns about a student or a course before it is too late to intervene effectively. This collaboration between OVRS counselors, YTP specialists, and the Cooperative Education Coordinator made a new range of LCC programs and services available to clients.

### Challenges to Program Development

Establishing the partnership has required overcoming challenges, including finding a Cooperative Education Coordinator, the need to establish networks, and negotiating clear roles and responsibilities across programs. While the grant was initially funded in July, 2003, the Cooperative Education Coordinator did not begin work until January of 2004. By the Fall of 2003, the college had hired an external candidate; however after repeated delays, this person declined to enter the position. At this time, the decision was made to hire an internal candidate and Bev was recommended. She applied for the position in late Fall, and began working as the new Cooperative Education Coordinator in January of 2004. Being the sole official support person for VR-referred students, Bev had to quickly build connections with OVRS and YTP in order to organize successful referrals and trainings. Building these relationships was an initial challenge, however the work has culminated in a strong network of support for students.

Another challenge to implementation of the Career Workforce Skills Training project at LCC was to clarify the relationship with the existing OST program. In early discussions between the University of Oregon and LCC, it was clear that the college already had an OST program serving a variety of students. Instead of adding more students to that program, it was decided that the new services provided by CWST would be completely separate from the original OST program. The Cooperative Education Coordinator responded to this by creating and getting approved a new intake and curriculum development process specifically tailored to this pool of students.

There are several other factors that have influenced the development of partnership at LCC, including (a) the needs of individual students, (b) support from community college administration, and (c) the availability of professional development support.

### Student Characteristics

Through this partnership, LCC has developed additional support services geared toward meeting the needs of individuals with different disabilities, such as psychosocial impairments, cognitive impairments (including learning disabilities), and physical impairments. Some of these students initially have difficulty managing the workload on a training site and in the classroom,

*“... they’re doing the best they think they can and ... their best is just not working right now. So when I talk with [students], I help them get connected with the tutor center or I help them get connected with their instructor so that they understand what the assignments are or what needs to be done.” (Beverly Farfan, Interview)*

Students must also develop a strong work ethic to succeed within their training programs. The Cooperative Education Coordinator requires students to complete several up-front tasks (e.g., labor market research, informational interviews, enrollment in a class) in order to better prepare them for the academic and employment standards in the workplace. Many students enter the program lacking self confidence, but Bev is honest, realistic, and supportive, helping students build skills and meet expectations.

### The Community College Environment

The LCC/OVRS partnership has historically had good support within the LCC administrative system. At the initiation of the grant, incorporating the new Cooperative Education Coordinator position into the administrative structure was not difficult for the college. Because of LCC’s extensive Co-op Department and their experience with an established OST program, the new services were easily integrated:

*Interviewer: “Have you had to do much in terms of administrative changes at the college?”*

*Andrea Newton: “Not really. Because our Co-op program is so big and so much a part of the college already the fact that students go out and work and get academic credit for it is embedded in our system... Bev is really good at [making connections] and she is good at creating systems and so many times she’s the one that can just go off on her own and make those things happen without a lot of intervention on my part.” (Andrea Newton, Division Chair of Cooperative Education, Interview)*

The CWST project has also integrated with existing college support services such as a tutoring center, disability services, and career development programs, to better meet the needs of students. This supportive network makes overcoming barriers easier for students. Integrating with developing programs, such as Career Pathways and Regional Technical Education Consortium (RTEC) also helps build intra-college connections with other professional, workforce, and technical programs on campus. At the same time, it helps get the voice of students with disabilities heard at the ground level.

*Beverly Farfan: “I’m on [the Career Pathways] committee, which is really nice because then I can have my voice heard [at the college]...”*

*Interviewer: “So you actually get to collaborate on those systems?”*

*Beverly Farfan: “... exactly....” (Beverly Farfan, Cooperative Education Coordinator Interview)*

While the flexibility in program options for students is positive, funding for the Cooperative Education Coordinator position is still somewhat tenuous. This position is considered a “special hire” at the college, making this position particularly vulnerable to cuts in times of major funding reductions at the college. However, because the OVRs grant pays for two-thirds of the program costs, college administrators seem to be generally positive about continuing the program.

*Interviewer: “So what do you think the future is then, for this type of program?”*

*Andrea Newton: “Well I think it’s good. I think probably because we’ve established an ability to work with VR, that they will continue to send us clients. They have a contact in Bev, and so I think that will continue to grow. I am really interested in continuing the growth of the Occupational Skills program. I think there are a lot of opportunities for people to get into all different kinds of jobs, many that we don’t offer degree and certificate programs for.” (Andrea Newton, Division Chair of Cooperative Education at LCC, Interview)*

Bev’s individual efforts to build an innovative program within the community college have also been recognized at the state level. In 2006, Bev was recognized as Educator of the Year at the Building Futures Transition Conference sponsored by the Oregon Department of Education, Office of Student Learning and Partnerships, and the Oregon Parent Training and Information Center. This recognition further promotes the success and promise of her liaison role.

## Professional Development and Technical Assistance

Another partner that has promoted positive change in LCC's service model is the University of Oregon. Since the inception of the partnership, University of Oregon faculty have advocated for expanding service delivery at LCC to better serve OVRS referred students. In particular, Mimi McGrath Kato (UO Technical Assistance Provider) has supplied ongoing advice:

*"I would've quit if it wasn't for Mimi --, really. In the beginning it was really frustrating not knowing, 'What can I do, what can I not do?' I'm really a team kind of person, and Mimi was there for me from the beginning so it was like, 'Okay Bev, this is it; we can do this.' Her encouragement has made a whole world of difference...And with her support, I'm constantly exploring [options]!" (Beverly Farfan, Cooperative Education Coordinator Interview)*

The University of Oregon technical assistance team has facilitated conversations between college and OVRS staff and provided mechanisms for addressing challenges the LCC/OVRS partnership has faced. In addition, the database developed by UO has been helpful in tracking clients at LCC so that progress can be accurately monitored.

### **§3 – Program Impact and Sustainability**

#### Impact of the Program

Both in mission statement and practice, the LCC/OVRS partnership provides quality services for students with disabilities – a population that typically has difficulty in finding and maintaining living wage jobs. Since 2003, 20 students have completed certificates through the LCC CWST Program. A total of 21 students have entered employment, 86% (18) of whom were still employed at 90 days after their first day on the job. Consistently, at least 25 to 30% of the students enrolled are youth, under age 26. These students are employed in a variety of fields, including: oil lube technician, welding, parts sales, secretarial, and property management.

During their time in the program, students learn more than just academic and occupationally-specific skills; they also build confidence in themselves and learn about how to balance career goals and the demands of new jobs:

*Interviewer: "And you said before it was kind of, for you, trying to get a feel for what you could and couldn't do? Is there anything else [about the program] that's been especially helpful for you?"*

*Student: "I think for me the classes were – I needed them because I had no skills as far as office – but I know for myself, that it's the going out to different sites and figuring out what I can do. That was probably the most valuable [lesson] for me." (Student, Focus Group Interview)*

## Keys to Success

The LCC/OVRS partnership has been successful for a number of reasons. In this section we summarize three key factors that have contributed to the successful development, implementation, and expansion of the program over the last several years.

Consistent/credible staff members. Bev is a highly competent professional staff member. She was already familiar with the college and specifically with the Co-op Department when she entered this new role. Further, she has excellent communication skills.

*VR counselor 1: “Bev not only works well with us, she works well with the clients. She dispenses really sensitive input in a way that is respectful and digestible to the client.” (VR Counselor, Group Interview)*

*VR counselor 2: “She’s not threatening; she’s not threatening to anybody. Some clients believe that I’m in an authority position but she doesn’t present herself in that way. Instead, she represents herself as a resource, as somebody with knowledge and information to help so that when a client talks to her, it’s not this person who’s going to say ‘yes’ or ‘no’ as to whether they can go to school or not; she’s going to help guide you through a process.” (VR Counselor, Group Interview)*

And she is able to get VR-referred students at LCC into the programs and the supports that they need to succeed:

*“Bev transcends what her job description states. ... we, I believe, we have gotten a little spoiled because she’s such an excellent liaison. She does her work to a degree that is above and beyond and makes it very easy for us.” (VR Counselor, Group Interview)*

Support from OVRS. Since the beginning of the LCC/OVRS partnership, local Branch managers have been supportive. They understood that to get the partnership started would take some time. During those early months, the new Cooperative Education Coordinator was welcomed at local OVRS offices. This collaboration continues to facilitate more effective and creative service delivery for students:

*“Sometimes you have people just show up and talk to you about their program and sometimes you use them and sometimes you don’t. But she has – the more that I see her – become part of my integrated process. She’s just integrated so well for me that it would be difficult to do it without her in the education system. If I wanted to send somebody to Lane [Community College], I know things are going to be taken care of; I know the client and if they’re participating, they’ll get the services they need to keep going. And that’s just another load off the counselor’s back.” (VR Counselor, Group Interview)*

Support within the college. Administrative and departmental support at the college has also been key to the success of the partnership. Without the support of Andrea Newton, the Division Chair of Cooperative Education, and the Co-op Department, the

program would not be as viable. This support is often manifested in a management style that allows Bev the autonomy she needs to make things work. For the most part establishing this new partnership has not required major administrative restructuring. The program seemed to be a natural “fit”, and a match with the existing LCC priorities.

## **Conclusion**

Over time, LCC has grown increasingly capable of meeting the needs of OVRs referred students. While these students enroll in a variety of programs and across occupational areas, the Cooperative Education Coordinator facilitates connections to the training, courses, and support they need to achieve occupational goals that are challenging and at the same time realistic. The program clearly meets a need within the college:

*“Before the partnership we were looking for ways to expand our program, and this looked like a good opportunity to do that. We think that work experience is a good way for students to learn, because not everyone is a ‘sit in the classroom take notes’ kind of student; it opens up more possibilities for students who have different learning styles. There are some technical things that they have to learn in a different way, but if we can intersperse that with on-the-job-learning, that is the direction we’d like to go.” (Andrea Newton, Division Chair of Cooperative Education, Interview)*

From the perspective of OVRs, the need for a job focused program at the community college is also clear:

*Interviewer: “I guess just to wrap up, are there any things that any of you can think of that would make your partnership work better?”*

*VR Counselor: “... Some of the academic advisors on campus and counselors on campus, they talk about programs that are really kind of passé and don’t have a labor market. In contrast, I think this program understands what our job is and that we have to be job-focused and that we have to have that labor market in order to move forward for our client. So, more of this type of help at the college level would be helpful.” (VR Counselor, Group Interview)*

The presence of this need and the quality of support provided by the partnership together suggest that this innovation is sustainable, and can continue to help individuals with disabilities realize their occupational goals.

# Key Events for CWST/OVRS Partnership at Lane Community College

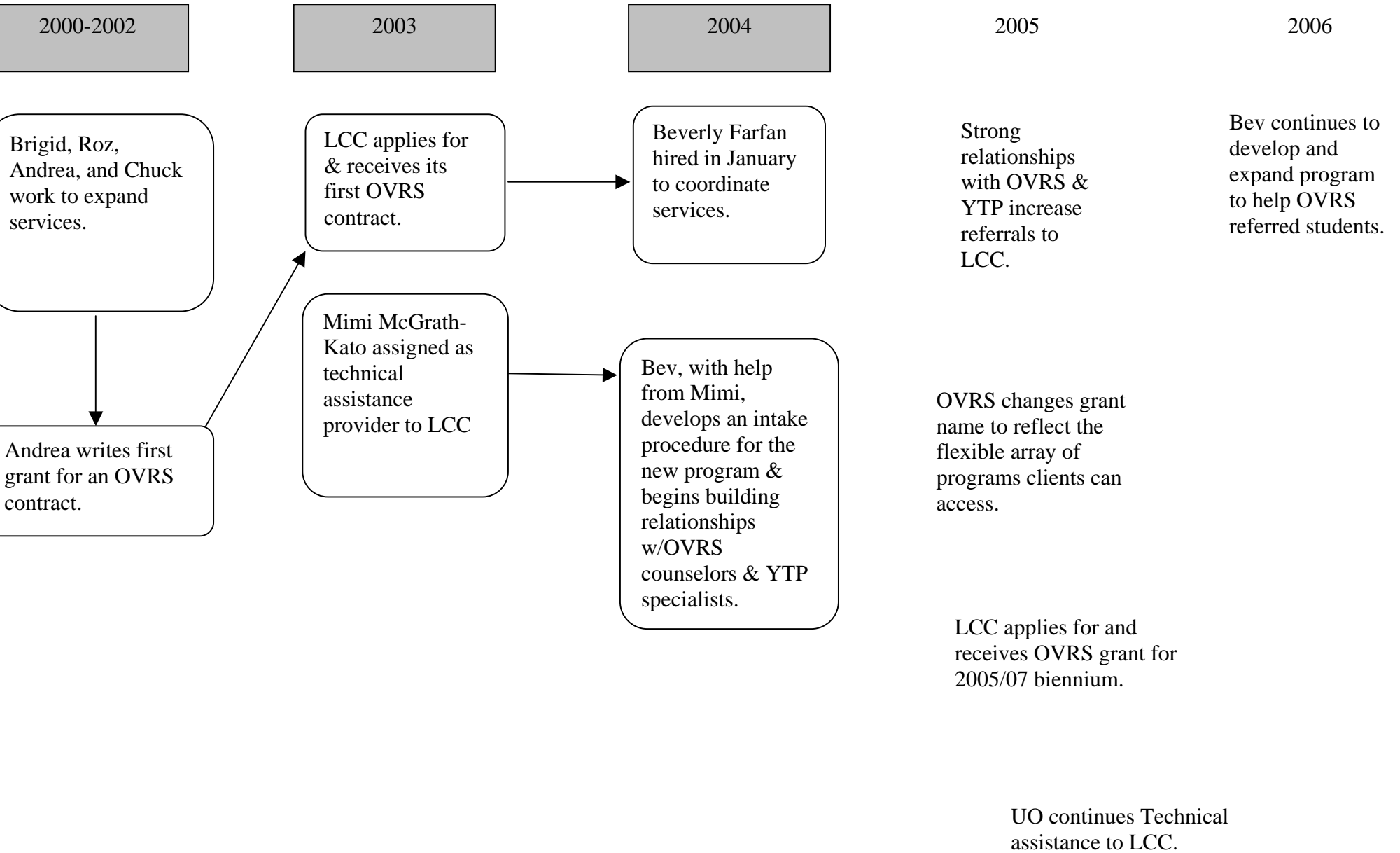


Table 2: Key Personnel Across Phases of Development at Lane CC

	Mid 90's	Late 90's	2000-2003 - Partnership	2004/2005
<b>LCC personnel</b>	Bob Way (Co-op education); <i>Chuck Fike</i> OST manager for private OVRs referred OST clients	<i>Andrea Newton</i> hired as Division chair for Co-op Education	<i>Andrea Newton</i> , Division Chair <i>Chuck Fike</i> continues as OST manager for injured workers, separate from OVRs	January 2004– <i>Beverly Farfan</i> hired as Coordinator for Cooperative Education
<b>OVRs personnel</b>	Geoff Webb; OVRs branch manager			<i>Sue Hauk</i> starts as Branch Manager at Eugene OVRs; <i>Ken Thorland</i> starts as Branch Manager for Springfield OVRs
<b>YTP personnel</b>			YTP regional network	YTP regional network
<b>Other key people: workgroup, etc.</b>	<i>Roz Slovic</i> UO introduces idea about serving OVRs and youth clients, but initially unsuccessful	<i>Brigid Flannery and Roz Slovic</i> coordinate postsecondary education work group (UO)	<i>Brigid Flannery and Roz Slovic</i> ongoing support for developing the partnership	<i>Mimi McGrath-Kato</i> assigned as LCC TA provider

*\*\*Italicized names refer to staff who presently work for the program in the position listed above, or other people still involved with the partnership.*