Brand Voice Guidelines

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The Foundation: Our Mission, Vision and Values
Our brand is built on the foundation of our mission, vision and values.

Mission:
The College of Lake County is a comprehensive community college that delivers high quality, accessible learning opportunities to advance student success and strengthen the diverse communities we serve.

Vision:
The College of Lake County strives to be an innovative educational institution offering exceptional learning experiences and to be widely recognized for student success, business and community partnerships and for the achievements of faculty, staff and alumni.

Values:
1. **Learning.** Compels us to create an atmosphere of academic excellence and life-long learning by pursuing the best ideas, approaches and methods.
2. **Integrity.** Requires us to work together honestly and respectfully.
3. **Quality.** Commits us to ongoing continuous improvement and excellence.
4. **Service.** Calls on us to serve as a force for improving the educational, economic, social and cultural quality of life of our students and the community.
5. **Accountability.** Guides us to be responsible and exercise good stewardship.
6. **Diversity.** Drives us to embrace and respect the uniqueness of students, employees and community members.
CLC’s Brand

Brand Attributions:
The college is: We teach students to be:

Professional, knowledgeable Knowledgeable
Serious/Focused/Committed Disciplined/Focused/Prepared
Meaningful/Worthy of Value Confident/Self-Assured
Diverse/Multifaceted/Interdisciplinary Respectful and Valuing of Individual and Cultural Differences
Challenging/Stimulating/Intriguing Empowered
Aspirational/Proud/Confident Goal-oriented/Aspiring/Striving for Excellence

Principal Brand Messages:
The College of Lake County offers:

- A superior learning environment, nurtured by dedicated, compassionate educators, committed to teaching those who want to grow.
- A competitive curriculum, as comprehensive as it is diverse, designed for a degree or to answer a question.
- A place to build a future, ready when you’re ready to begin or begin again.

Positioning Statement:
College of Lake County is a superior learning environment with a competitive curriculum, designed for those who are ready to build their future.

Brand Concept:
Empowering Success.

Brand Tagline:
Connect to Your Future.
Brand Promise:
We offer students a proven path to a better future. We promise to do this by providing high-quality educational opportunities that both challenge and nurture students. We believe that a high standard combined with caring support empowers students to achieve their best.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute</th>
<th>What We Offer</th>
<th>What Students Get</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional, knowledgeable</td>
<td>High quality academic programs</td>
<td>College and university transfer. (Students who transfer generally do as well or better as native students at four-year institutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>200+ academic choices</td>
<td>Careers. (Average annual salary of career program graduates is $41,000.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Serious, focused, committed</td>
<td>$2.3 million student success Investment.</td>
<td>Proactive outreach to help them succeed.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>14 articulation agreements</td>
<td>Options for university transfer, including many providing a $30,000 bachelor’s degree.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sustainability Commitments: IGEN, Presidents’ Climate Commitment</td>
<td>The opportunity to help save the planet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaningful, worthy of value</td>
<td>High quality plus affordability</td>
<td>A strong Return on Investment for an Associate degree—about three times stock market’s; 25 percent greater than for a bachelor’s degree.*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diverse, multifaceted, interdisciplinary</td>
<td>Multicultural/ international focus. Our international education program has been recognized with the Andrew Heiskell Award for innovation by the AACC’s Institute for International Education.</td>
<td>Preparation to live and work in the global economy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenging/stimulating/ intriguing</td>
<td>Academic programs to that meet every student’s needs from the Honors Scholar to developmental.</td>
<td>An education tailored to help every student move forward. For example:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td><strong>Health Care Pass Rates: 2013</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dental Hygiene                                   100%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Emergency Medical Tech                           100%</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Health Information Technology                     100%</td>
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<td>Massage Therapy                                   100%</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Medical Imaging                                    100%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Phlebotomy                                         92%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Profession</td>
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<tr>
<td>Surgical Technology</td>
<td>100%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medical Office Assistant</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A better educational experience.

*Source: Greenstone & Looney, 2011*
Brand Pillars and Evidence

Academics and Student Experience:

- Public university data show students who transfer generally do as well or better than students who started there.
- National Clearinghouse data show students have gone on to study at major universities across the country including Dartmouth, Harvard, Yale, Northwestern, the University of Illinois and more.
- Honors Scholars program provides a challenging option for academically gifted students. These students routinely receive thousands of dollars in scholarships when they transfer.
- Our University of Illinois Engineering Pathways articulation agreement provides a path to transfer to one of the nation’s leading engineering programs.
- In addition to the Illinois Articulation Initiative, which guarantees the transfer of credits to participating institutions, we have 14 articulation agreements with many universities for specific programs.
- International Studies program received Andrew Heiskell award for innovation from AACC’s Institute for International Education.
- Prairie Voices, our student literary arts magazine, won first place in the central division of the Community College Humanities Association 2014 Literary Magazine Competition.
- We have received prestigious grants from the National Science Foundation for a program providing scholarships and academic support to encourage careers in engineering.
- We offer programs in emerging technologies including Laser/Photonics/Optics, Mechatronics, engineering technologies and computerized numerical controls. We have invested more than half a million dollars in college and grant funds in the last several years to provide the latest equipment and technology in these programs.
- We offer the only certificate in the Chicago area preparing students for careers in the laser/photonics/optics field.
- Survey data show career program respondents report a mean annual salary of more than $41,000.
- In the 2014 CCSSE results, CLC received a higher score than the average for Illinois schools or the national cohort on the question “Would you recommend this college to a friend or family member?” They also rated their educational experience higher than the average for Illinois schools.
- We are investing $148 million over the next several years in constructing a Sustainable Campus Master Plan to enhance facilities and technology for learning on all three campuses and achieve energy savings and create a more sustainable campus environment.
- In the 2014-15 academic year we are investing $2.4 million to increase graduation and transfer rates through such initiatives as an early alert system and academic coaching and greater resources for tutoring, college readiness activities in high schools and dual credit programs.

Community Impact:

- We received the Gold Level Award from the Illinois Campus Sustainability Compact for integrating sustainability into our daily operations and transforming our culture. We seek to be a
leader in using best practices for green building and development, not only to conserve resources, but also to create a living laboratory for student and community learning.

- We have established a Skills Network to support our local economy by connecting employers with a skilled workforce, our students and graduates.

- Our dual credit offerings are providing an early start on college for many high school students, preparing them for college expectations and allowing them to earn credits they can apply to reducing their degree costs. In FY 2014, over 1,200 high school students enrolled in our dual credit courses.

- Our Grayslake Campus serves as the site of the University Center of Lake County, and we provided the land the UCLC building was constructed on, thereby playing an important role in providing access to bachelor’s and graduate degree completion programs.

- Our James Lumber Center for the Performing Arts and Robert T. Wright Community Gallery of Art provide local access to programming in the performing and visual arts. In the last year, more than 35,000 residents attended performances in the JLC.

- Our Workforce and Professional Development Institute helps working professionals enhance their skills through non-credit contract training and open-enrollment workshops. (In FY 2014, 2,652 students participated in this training.) Additionally, 501 entrepreneurs attended workshops and 319 received consulting services through the Small Business Development Center.

- We are a major Lake County employer. We currently employ 227 full-time faculty, 474 full-time staff, 938 adjunct faculty and 110 part-time staff.

- We increase graduates’ lifetime earnings. A CLC graduate can expect to gain $418,000 in earnings over a 40-year career.

- As a major employer and business entity, we contribute to our regional economy. In FY 2012, this economic impact was estimated at $94 million.

**Our Brand Personality**

A brand can only be successful if it satisfies one or more psychological needs. A successful cosmetic, for example, make us feel attractive; an investment firm, safe and secure for the future.

Strong brands create powerful positive feelings because they are trusted like a friend. Users of the brand feel a connection or relationship with the brand. They see the brand in terms of characteristics and emotions. Like a good friend, the brand has a personality.

**What Is CLC’s Brand Personality?**

If CLC were a person, how would it be described? Let’s start by considering our brand attributes and values:

**Attributes**

- **The college is:**
  - Professional, knowledgeable
  - Serious/Focused/Committed

- **We teach students to be:**
  - Knowledgeable
  - Disciplined/Focused/Prepared
Meaningful/Worthy of Value  Confident/Self-Assured
Diverse/Multifaceted/Interdisciplinary  Respectful and Valuing of Individual and Cultural Differences
Challenging/Stimulating/Intriguing  Empowered
Aspirational/Proud/Confident  Goal-oriented/Aspiring/Striving for Excellence

Values: Learning, integrity, quality, service, accountability, diversity.

Our brand attributes and values describe what we stand for and are a starting point for describing our personality. Extrapolating, we can identify five major CLC personality traits along with additional adjectives that flesh out the nuances and meaning of each of the four major traits.

Caring: Helpful, supportive, sharing, collaborative, kind, reassuring, understanding, empathetic, committed, inspiring, dedicated, respectful, nurturing and engaging.

Open-Minded: Interested, curious, questioning, flexible, exploring, respectful of differences (individual and cultural).

Optimistic: Hopeful, positive, affirming, upbeat, confident, assured, encouraging, enthusiastic, motivating, aspiring, seeing possibilities.

Authentic: Genuine, honest, reliable, dependable, truthful, trustworthy, committed and dedicated.

Please note that “smart” or “intelligent” has not been included as a major trait. As an educational institution, this characteristic is a given. Nevertheless, CLC expresses its intelligence is particular ways that can be described as:

Smart: Challenging, practical, realistic, bright, knowledgeable, imaginative, sensitive (emotional intelligence).
How a Brand Is Expressed

Brands are communicated symbolically through a visual and verbal language. (The components of visual identity are summarized in our Graphic Identity Standards Manual.) A brand’s verbal language starts with its brand voice.

Brand Voice Components

Just as a person’s speech conveys a personality, so does the brand voice. It is composed of tone, vocabulary (diction) and mood.

**Tone** is not what is said but how it is said as expressed through:

- The style of words used (formal, informal, colloquial or slang).
- The word order, rhythm and complexity of language.
- The **diction** (specific vocabulary choices) used.

**Mood** is about the primary emotion being expressed—happy, sad or mad, for example.

Why Is Brand Voice Important?

Establishing a clear brand voice offers several benefits:

- A voice builds recognition and awareness.
- A consistent voice builds trust.
- A trusted voice elicits positive feelings and a positive response.
- An engaging voice delights and attracts.

Does Brand Voice Vary?

Although it is important to strive for a consistent brand voice, it can vary by the medium, context or audience involved in the communication. For example, a parent uses a different vocabulary (diction) when speaking to a two-year-old than a 40-year-old. His tone of voice may be different depending on the context or situation—going to church or a ball game, for example. And his voice may also vary depending on the mood. His voice will likely be very different when engaging with a child on the playground or calming the child during a “time out.”
**CLC’s Brand Voice**

In general, our voice conveys:

**Caring.** We are skilled at using emotional intelligence. We are sensitive both to what students say and what they leave unsaid. Though we expect students to commit to their own education, we proactively reach out to foster their success.

*We show caring by being helpful, welcoming, supportive, reassuring, understanding, empathetic and respectful in our communications with students.*

Sample language: Been out of school awhile? No problem. CLC has many students like you. Our advisors are very approachable and will help you through all the steps to becoming a student.

**Optimistic.** We believe we can guide students from where they are to where they want to go. We believe in the capacity of each individual to grow and exceed even her own expectations.

We show our optimism by being hopeful, positive, affirming, encouraging and upbeat in our communications with students.

Sample language: If you have a dream, we’ll make it ours. Together, we’ll develop a plan to help you reach your goal.

Sample language: Having a few problems with math? Don’t give up! We believe you can be successful. Let me take you to math center and introduce you to trained staff who will help you.

**Open-Minded.** We are naturally curious and want to know more about people, cultures and ideas, and we teach students to explore, question and expand their boundaries. We respect individual and cultural differences and value our diverse student body. We constantly seek new ways to improve, and we use data to measure results and are committed to changing when our approaches don’t succeed.

We show our open-mindedness by being interested, curious, flexible, receptive, sensitive and respectful in our communications.

Sample language: You are welcome at CLC, whether you had a 4.0 GPA in high school or hadn’t yet found your direction. Whatever academic history, you will find classes to interest and inspire you.

**Authentic.** Though we are optimistic, we are also realistic and face problems. We don’t minimize concerns but respond to them.

*We show our authenticity by being honest, dependable and straightforward in our communications.*

Sample language: Academic success requires hard work. If you’re committed, we’ll work with you to help you become the student you want to be.
The Language We Use

- In many marketing publications, it is better to use the first and second person (“we” and “you”) rather than third person (“he,” “she,” “they.”). Using “we” and “you” builds a sense of connection with the reader. Note the difference between:

  *In our semester-long courses, you will learn the latest versions of Microsoft Office, digital imaging software and more*

  AND

  *In Southlake’s semester-long courses, students will learn the latest versions of Microsoft Office, digital imaging software and more.*

  That said, a more formal tone may be more appropriate in a publication such as an annual report.

  Most importantly, avoid shifts in person in like this:

  *In Southlake’s semester-long courses, students will learn the latest versions of Microsoft Office, digital imaging software and more. Looking for a faster option? We also offer day-long seminars on practical business skills—from technology to project management to leadership development.*

  In the above example, the first sentence is in third person, and the second sentence in second person. To avoid the shift in person:

  *In our semester-long courses, you will learn the latest versions of Microsoft Office, digital imaging software and more. Looking for a faster option? We also offer day-long seminars on practical business skills—from technology to project management to leadership development.*

- Use of contractions: Newspaper writing accepts the use of contractions that appear in the dictionary, but discourages excessive use of contractions. Marketers encourage a fairly liberal use of contractions in copy because they convey a sense of familiarity, conversation and friendliness. Follow the rule of moderation—use contractions but don’t overdo.

- Sentence length: To keep copy clear, use shorter sentences. To keep copy interesting, vary the sentence length.

- Ending a sentence with a preposition is acceptable if it avoids awkward, stilted language:

  *He is the student I spoke to you about.*

  Rather than:

  *He is the student about which I spoke to you.*

- In general, avoid split infinitives. However, sometimes placing an adverb between the word “to” and the verb is useful if the writer wants to emphasize the adverb rather than the infinitive. Steve Lodge, writing in the blog “8 grammar rules that all good copywriters break,” gives the example
of the Star Trek phrase, “to boldly go…” Splitting the infinitive places the emphasis on the word “boldly” rather than “go.” “The point is not that the crew of the Enterprise went where no man had gone before. The point is that they did it ‘boldly,’” Lodge explained.

- Copy should be student- or audience-focused rather than CLC-focused. This is a subtle distinction. Note the difference in saying:

  *Our career faculty includes professionals working in industry.*

  Versus

  *You’ll learn first-hand what employers want from faculty who’ve been working professionals in industry.*

- We follow a style conventions based on the AP Style Manual. This style guide is included as Appendix A.
Principles of Copywriting

Over the years, marketing copywriters have developed many different formulas for writing effective copy. Two of the mostly widely used are “AIDA” and “ACCA.”

AIDA refers to:
- Getting the reader’s **attention**
- Creating **interest**
- Turning interest into **desire**
- Calling for **action**

ACCA refers to:
- Building **awareness**
- Creating **comprehension**
- Moving the reader to **conviction**
- Calling for **action**

Both formulas, and the many others that copywriters have developed, are about moving the reader through the decision-making process about a product. Sometimes the copy is aimed at moving the reader directly to a sale; other times, to taking an intermediate step. (For example, at CLC, such an intermediate call to action might be, “call for a campus tour.”)

In his book, “The Copywriter’s Handbook,” marketing guru Robert W. Bly explains the basic formula this way:

Get Attention: Create a headline conveying the strongest benefit of the product to the reader.

Show a Need: Show the problem that the product will solve, and convince the reader she has this problem.

Solve the Problem: Show the reader how your product will solve her need.

Prove Your Superiority: Make the case that your product will reliably solve the reader’s problem and that your solution is better than competitors’.

Ask for the Order: Include a call to action to move the reader along the purchase decision path.

Here is how these steps might be followed in copy for CLC:

1. **Get Attention**

   How: The headline:

   *It’s time to talk to your kid about enrolling in CLC’s Summer Session.*

   Bly identifies several types of effective headlines:
• Direct: The selling proposition or benefit is stated directly.
• Indirect: The headline intrigues the reader to read further and learn the selling point in the subsequent copy.
• News: The headline reveals a new benefit offered by the product.
• How to: The headline reveals that the copy will tell the reader how to solve an issue or problem that’s important to him or her.
• Question: The headline presents a question the reader is interested in answering.
• Command: The headline tells the reader what to do.
• Reason why: This is the kind of headline that reads: “5 reasons you can’t delay going back to school.”
• Testimonial: This type of headline shows proof of the product’s major selling point through the words of the person giving the testimonial. Example: ‘After I completed my CLC degree, I tripled my earnings.’

In our example, we have used the command headline type.

2. Present a Need

In the copy, part of a direct mail piece, the headline was followed by a copy deck reading:

Follow our plan and save up to $5,600 on the cost of a bachelor’s degree. (Even if your student attends another college or university.)

This copy appealed to the need of most parents to save money and suggested how CLC can help meet that need.

3. Show How You Meet the Need

The remainder of the copy in this direct mail piece followed Bly’s five-step sequence to motivating the reader by:

• Further demonstrating the need: The copy emphasized the cost-saving benefit of attending CLC’s summer session, for both students attending other colleges during the rest of the school year and for graduating high school seniors. The copy also addressed parents’ concerns about having their kid doing something productive over the summer.
• Showing how CLC’s solution works. The copy outlined that students can earn up to 18 credit hours attending CLC over two summers.

4. Show Your Superiority

The copy did this by:
• Including a chart showing the cost difference between CLC and public universities for the same number of credits.
• Showing other benefits—scheduling options, small classes, personal attention from professors, etc.

5. **Ask for the Order**

The call to action in this example was “talk to your kid about enrolling.” It was reinforced throughout the copy with contact phone numbers and urls to learn more. This piece could have been strengthened with a final reminder call to action: *Talk to your kid today about applying to CLC.*
Storytelling

We build creditability by telling stories about our students’ success. (These stories can be used as evidence to prove our superiority—step 4 in Bly’s copywriting model.) Materials prepared by the Public Relations and Marketing department will often include profiles and success stories that show the impact of the college on real students.

Stories are powerful because they engage the reader into wanting to know what comes next or how things turn out. The best marketing stories present people the reader can identify with.

Components of a story include:

1. A theme or main message. In the case of CLC, we want the story to convey something important about the college.
   
   Example: Suzie, who never did well in high school, took an art class at CLC and discovered her talent for drawing. Now, she wants to become an illustrator of children’s books. Theme: CLC helps students discover a career path.

2. Plot and structure: something needs to happen, usually involving a conflict, either within a character or with the outside world. A plot involves an introduction of a situation, rising action, a climax and a resolution.

   Example (about a nurse who completed an AAS in registered nursing at CLC): A middle-aged bedridden hospital patient complains to his nurse of severe chest pains. Quickly responding, she monitors his blood pressure and pulse, which are dangerously low. All signs point to a heart attack.

   The nurse calls for an EKG and critical care team. They arrive stat! and immediately hook up electrodes to the patient’s chest. His heart wave pattern is far from normal. The nurse orders the team to start defibrillation. As the patient’s body jerks in response to the electrical shocks, the line on the monitor returns to a normal pattern. Another life saved.

   Theme: CLC graduates are well-prepared with the skills needed on the job. Plot: A patient encounters a crisis, the CLC-trained nurse immediately takes proper action. The crisis is averted.

3. Characters—stories are about someone. For a reader to identify with a student’s story, the story needs to present a believable, real person.

   Example: Mary Smith, a solid B+ student at Grant Township High School, thought she would earn similar grades in college. School had always come easy for her, and her GPA had gotten her a full scholarship to Northern Illinois University.
At NIU she enjoyed her independence—having the freedom to stay up as late as she liked and sleep in, cutting classes. One party night a week turned into almost every night.

“I thought college was like high school, and I could rely on my smarts to get me through without really working hard,” she told her parents after her fall grades came as a shock to them both.

4. Setting—where is the action occurring? To be drawn into a story, we want to know where it is occurring.

Example: About to begin a presentation culminating a semester’s work, Edward Roberts nervously scanned a conference room filled with his professors and fellow honors’ students. His presentation was the last of the morning, and the students were restlessly shifting in their seats. The smells of pesto and pepperoni reminded everyone that a pizza lunch was waiting.

5. Style and tone—the words used. Style and tone should match the subject matter, audience and CLC’s brand voice.

Example: Struggling to focus as she studies for a test, 25-year-old Marjorie Brent covers up the practice answers and concentrates hard. Then she goes back and repeats the process. The technique is just one of the skills she learned attending a College of Lake County Study Zone session.
Web Resources

Copywriting
http://www.directcreative.com/10-little-known-formulas-for-successful-advertising.html
http://copyranger.com/21-incredible-copywriting-formulas-i-use

Story
http://www.studyzone.org/testprep/ela4/h/storyelements.cfm
http://users.aber.ac.uk/jpm/ellsa/ellsa_elements.html
http://amharte.com/2011/07/13/4-basic-elements-of-a-story/
http://learn.lexiconic.net/elementsoffiction.htm
http://journalism.about.com/od/writing/a/featurecomponents.htm
http://hrbstaff.ednet.ns.ca/ldownie/Eng%202011%20seven_key_elements_of_literature.htm
Elevator Speech

(Third-person version)

One Sentence:
The College of Lake County is a two-year community college offering associate degrees, career certificates and other academic programming leading to a better future for district residents.

Two Sentences:
The College of Lake County is a two-year community college offering associate degrees, career certificates and other academic programming leading to a better future for district residents. Our programs provide students with strong preparation for university transfer or career entry and contribute to our local economy by ensuring a competitive workforce.

Three Sentences:
The College of Lake County is a two-year community college offering associate degrees, career certificates and other academic programming leading to a better future for district residents. Our programs provide students with strong preparation for university transfer or career entry and contribute to our local economy by ensuring a competitive workforce. Graduates go on to attend major universities throughout the nation and to enjoy successful careers in almost every profession.

(First-person version)

One Sentence:
We are a two-year community college offering associate degrees, career certificates and other academic programming leading to a better future for district residents.

Two Sentences:
We are a two-year community college offering associate degrees, career certificates and other academic programming leading to a better future for you and your community. Our academic programs offer a solid foundation for university transfer and career entry and support our local economy by providing a skilled workforce.
Three Sentences:
We are a two-year community college offering associate degrees, career certificates and other academic programming leading to a better future for you and your community. Our academic programs offer a solid foundation for university transfer and career entry and support our local economy by providing a skilled workforce. When you graduate from CLC, you will enter the ranks of alumni who have gone on to attend major universities and enjoy successful careers in almost every profession.