

September 3, 2024

Esteemed Board of Education Members,

As we close out the Labor Day weekend with appreciation for our members' advocacy for and dedication to our students, our faculty from historically oppressed groups, our community, and our broader democracy, we look forward to a new academic year with better learning and working conditions on campus.

We are writing on behalf of faculty to express our support for improving labor relations, which sadly have deteriorated dramatically and rapidly over recent years, at our beloved Lane Community College. (See also the appendices.)

For instance, during the 23-24 academic year, LCCEF classified professionals nearly went on strike after mediation stagnated when LCCEF had not gone to mediation over bargaining for approximately 10 years. During the same year numerous unfair labor practice charges were filed by LCCEA due to LCC retaliation against faculty union members and representatives; direct dealing by LCC with faculty members; and unlawful interference by LCC with the union, which went to a four-day hearing in May after more than *two decades* without a single unfair labor practice hearing.

We are heartened that the [LCC President's draft goals](#) include improving labor relations.

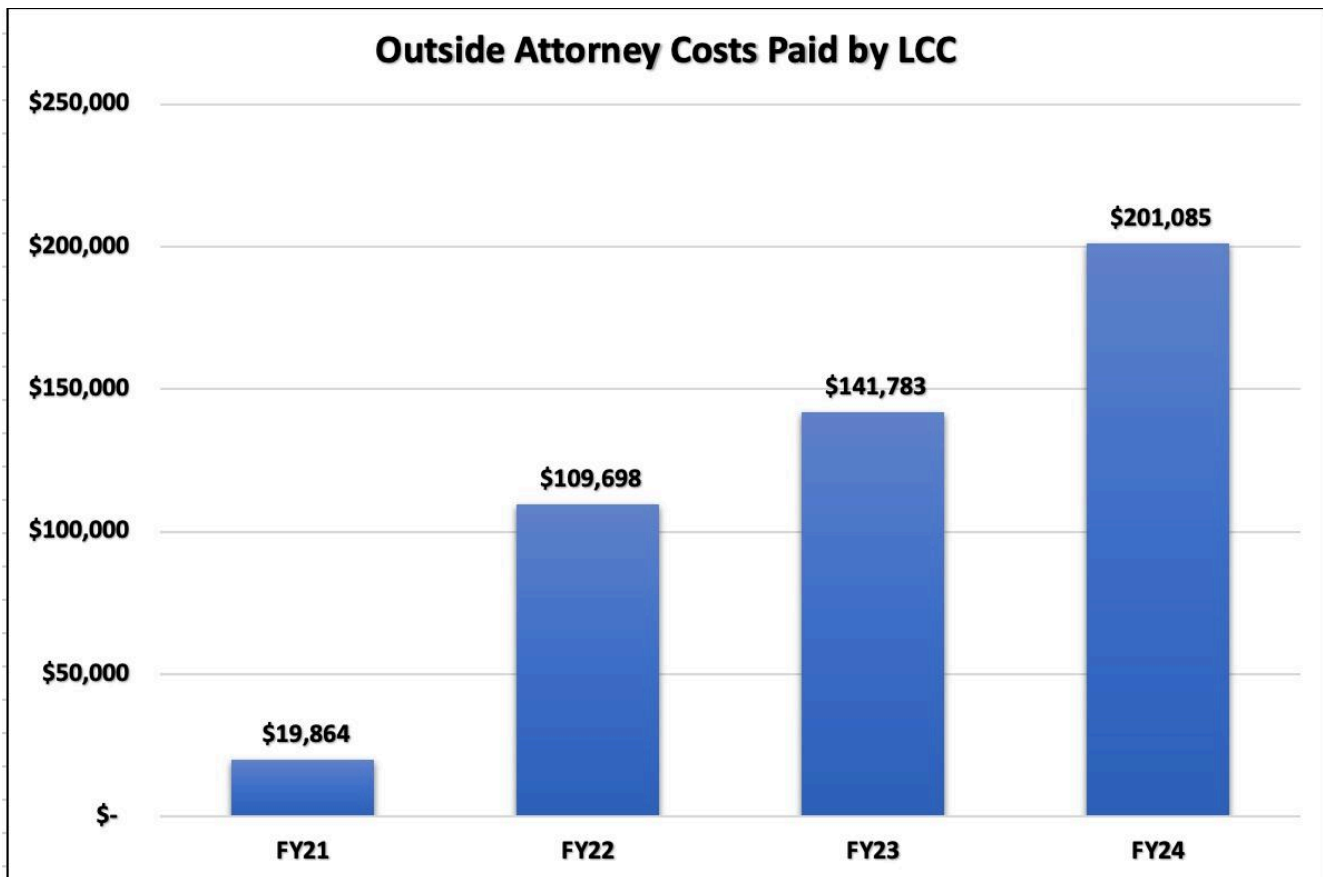
However, we are *deeply concerned* that the steps outlined to foster positive labor relations will not only contribute to further deterioration of labor relations and increased conflict (and likely continued escalating legal fees incurred by LCC), the steps and metrics outlined in the draft goals will most likely also result in additional unfair labor practices by LCC.

We ask for your leadership and direction to change this course.

The facts illustrate the significant increase in labor strife as well as the dramatically increasing amounts that LCC is spending on outside attorneys for faculty labor disputes*. (*No data is publicly available on outside attorneys for other issues.)

As you will see on the chart below, the amount that LCC has paid to attorneys for labor disputes with faculty has increased tenfold since FY21. (Data Source: Information provided directly to LCCEA by LCC Administration and HR). These are precious taxpayer and student tuition dollars that could be devoted to the college mission rather than legal fees.

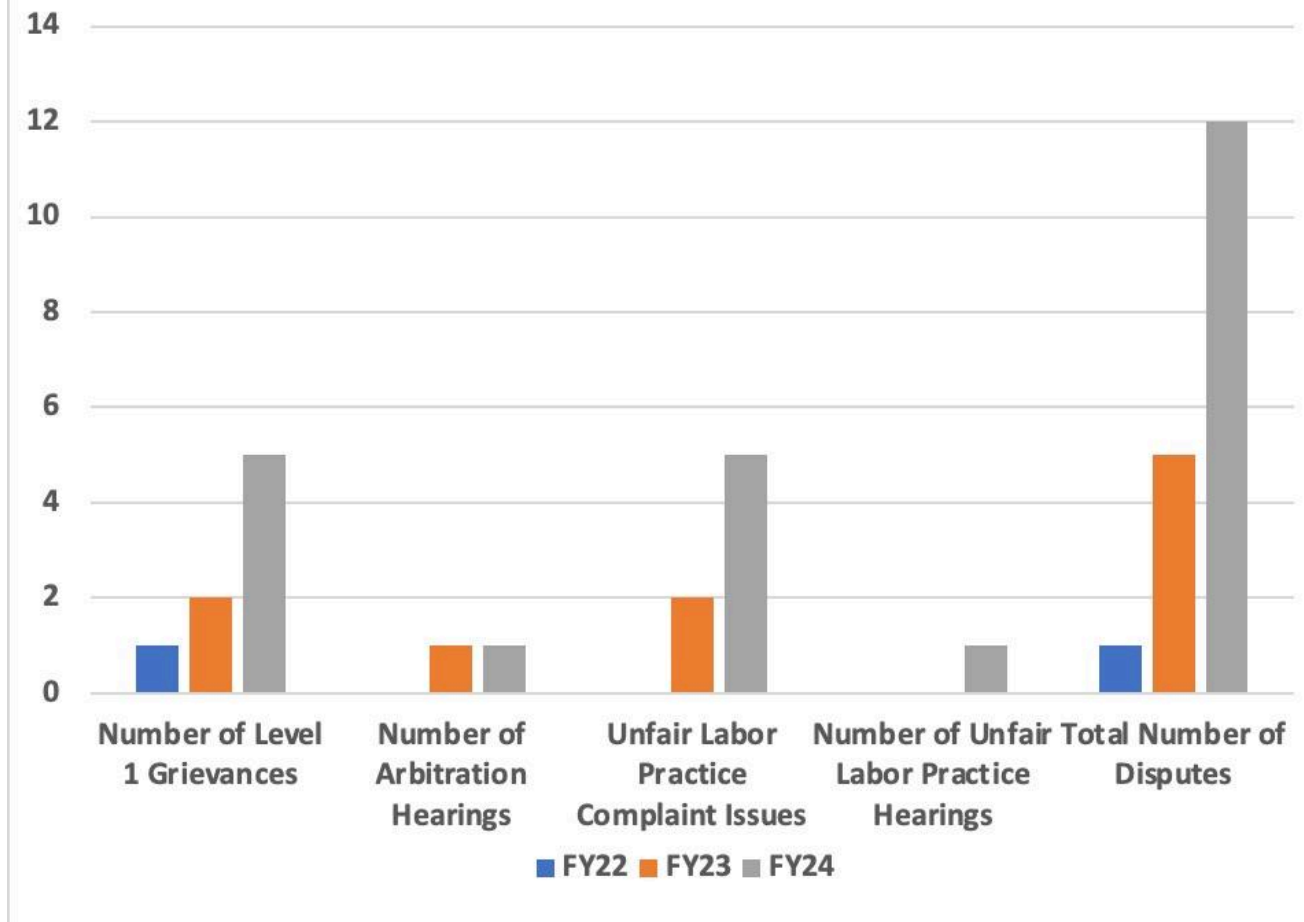
In addition, LCC has been represented by at least five different attorneys over this time period, including at least one who declined to continue representing LCC after their experience working with the college representatives. Currently, LCC is represented by an attorney based in the state of Wisconsin. All these factors contribute to instability in labor relations, rather than collaboration and productive resolutions.



In addition, the number of issues that have escalated to level one grievances (i.e., formal contractual violations), unfair labor practice complaints filed with the state, and/or arbitration or other hearings have also increased dramatically from *one* in 21-22 to *twelve* in 23-24.

Escalated Labor Disputes with Faculty	
Year	Total Number of Disputes
FY22	1
FY23	5
FY24	12

Escalated Labor Disputes with Faculty



Please note that over these years, the number of informal level issues that have arisen has remained roughly the same. Likewise, the leadership of LCCEA and teams working on these issues have remained the same as has our goal of proactively preventing issues from happening and productively and collaboratively resolving issues at the lowest level when they do occur. We have experienced a marked difference in the management approach, which has led to fewer meetings and discussions, far fewer issues resolved at the informal level, and ultimately increased escalation and legal fees that the College must bear. Every hearing over this time period has resulted in a favorable outcome for LCCEA, further underscoring the need for collaborative problem solving and a management commitment to resolve issues at the lowest level.

Steps to improve labor relations should necessarily include **working collaboratively and directly with the unions**. Circumventing the unions to engage the “college community” in discussions and “dialogue” about labor relations through “meetings,” “surveys,” and “monthly updates” is not only counter-productive and divisive, it is likely to be found unlawful under Oregon’s Public Employees Collective Bargaining Act.

We ask you, the members of the Board of Education, to allow for more time to amend the goals and to provide leadership to encourage collaboration and dispute resolution at the lowest levels.

We recommend the following as steps and metrics for improving labor - management relations.

- President should commit to provide leadership to administrators and managers, setting the expectation and directive for management to (1) collaborate with the unions; (2) to work productively to seek to resolve issues at the lowest level possible; and (3) to follow all legal obligations, including but not limited to: providing notice to the unions whenever there is a change that could impact employee working conditions, meeting to bargain in good faith, meeting to resolve contract issues (i.e., grievances), etc. Evidence could include memos to management staff documenting the new expectation for collaboration.
- Decreased legal costs incurred by LCC with evidence including regular updates on legal bills
- Reduced litigation; significantly reduced number of issues going to arbitration or other hearing(s)
- Required regular training for managers and administrators on state labor law and immediate discontinuation of all unfair labor practices
- Required, jointly union-management developed and provided training to managers on the contracts

As leaders for the faculty, we are deeply committed to productive labor relations. Productive labor relations are also positive for our campus, our students, and our community.

Productive labor relations also require a demonstrated commitment from management and your explicit direction and guidance to set the tone and expectations. In short, we need a willing partner.

As the supreme governing body at Lane Community College, elected to represent the people of Lane County, voters and community members are counting on you as our Board members to provide direction to the President and to the entire campus and to create the college our community deserves.

While unions enjoy near highest public approval ratings since the 1960 [according to a recent Gallup poll](#) and new unions in higher education [have surged tremendously](#), the timing could not be more apropos for you to provide leadership and direction with a renewed focus on better labor relations.

Thank you for your consideration and for your service on the Board.

Most sincerely,

LCCEA Officers, *representing the part-time and full-time faculty of Lane Community College*

Adrienne Mitchell, LCCEA President

April Myler, LCCEA Secretary

Wendy Rawlinson, LCCEA Treasurer

Wendy Simmons, LCCEA Vice President At-Large

Christina Howard, LCCEA Vice President for Career Technical Faculty

Rosa Lopez, LCCEA Vice President for Learning Advancement

Peggy Oberstaller, LCCEA Vice President for Part-time Faculty

Kate Sullivan, LCCEA Vice President for Transfer Faculty

and

Ken Volante, OEA Representative

Appendices: July 2023 LCCEA Report & April 2024 LCCEA Report

