

**Los Angeles Valley College**  
**Computer Science and Information Systems Department**

**Advisory Board 2023 Meeting Minutes**

**April 21, 2023 At 10:00 AM**

**Meeting Participants**

- Dr. Michael Jordan, LAVC Vice President of Academic Affairs
- Alexander Auerbach & Co, Public Relations, Sherman Oaks, CA
- Denise McGee, LACCD Personnel Commission
- Albert Saryan, Application and Programming Manager, LACCD
- Ellie Rabani, LAVC CalWORKs Director
- Professor Clark, CSIS Professor at LAVC
- Professor Sefiani, CSIS Professor at LAVC
- Professor Herrington, CSIS Professor at LAVC
- Joe Cummings, President/CEO of Royal Staffing company
- Nino Shtromberg, LAVC Alumni & CalWORKs Coordinator
- Professor Keshishian, CSIS Adjunct Faculty at LAVC
- Professor Mehrak Amirfazlian Adjunct Faculty at LAVC
- Josie Stein, Adjunct Faculty at LAVC
- Danica Brizuela, CSI Professionals Incorporated
- Chris Barkdull, Test Out/CompTIA Representative
- Lisa Mitchell, NASA – NCAS - Nasa Community College Aerospace Scholars
- Professor Eva Bitar, Adjunct Faculty at LAVC and TV Production coordinator at LA Mayor's Office
- Dr. Odemaris Valdivia, Adjunct Faculty at LAVC
- Dr. Michael Rahni, Chair and Professor CSIS Department. LAVC
- Ani Davoyan, representing LAVC's Academic Affairs Department

## Summary of Meeting Activities

1. Dr. Jordan welcomed everyone and thanked them for their participation. He stated that the CSIS department is strong and healthy, and that student demand exceeded the average for all credit programs in fall 2022. He expressed appreciation for the advisory board members and their feedback, which helps the department ensure that it is current and offers the most relevant programs for students.
2. Participants introduced themselves and gave the committee a summary of their role within their organization.
3. Dr. Rahni, the CSIS department chair, gave a detailed overview of the department's achievements, programs, and activities. He talked about his interest in the cybersecurity field and his goal of making LAVC a hub for cybersecurity for all the campuses and beyond. He also discussed the strong demand for data science and analytics careers.
4. The host presented a PowerPoint overview of the department's certificates and degrees. The data was based on the information on LAVC's website.
5. The advisory board members reviewed and discussed the current and proposed courses and programs. They also offered their insights on the current job market.

## Recommendations

- The advisory board members recommended that the department offer more courses in data science and analytics, Cisco Networking credit and non-credit certificates, and Cyber Security courses and certificates.
- They also recommended that the department partner with more industry organizations to provide students with internship and job opportunities.
- Finally, they recommended that the department continue to offer its free tutoring, field trips, counseling, workshops, and other student services.

## Next Steps

- The CSIS department will review the advisory board's recommendations and make plans to implement them.
- The department will also continue to work with industry partners to provide students with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in the workforce.
- Finally, the department will continue to offer its free student services to help students succeed in their academic and career goals.

## **The Detailed minutes of the meeting:**

The meeting was hosted and its minutes was prepared by Professor Shirin Herrington, Faculty of CSIS Department.

**Dr. Jordan**, LAVC Vice President of Academic Affairs, welcomed and thanked everyone for their participation. He stated that LAVC had a very healthy and strong CSIS department, and in fall of 2022, student's demand exceeded the average for all of our credit programs. The department has been healthily recovering from the pandemic during which they have awarded 34 degrees last year. He expressed appreciation for the critical role of the advisory board members and their feedback and how they can help the department to ensure that we are current and have the most relevant programs for students. He would like the department to develop new programs due to upcoming employment opportunities in the field of technology.

Participants introduced themselves, and gave the committee a summary of their role within their organization.

**Alexander Auerbach & Co**, Public Relations, Sherman Oaks, CA

Sole practitioner, puts together teams to work with his clients. He consults with companies, usually large companies, national and international on marketing, branding, crisis communication, and investor relations. He works with tech startups. From his prospective, he is here to provide some insight for staffing needs and practices, both official and unofficial.

**Denise McGee**, LACCD Personnel Commission

She does exam and recruitment for the entire careers/positions at the district. She is here to provide some information about our testing

<https://www.jobapscloud.com/LACCD/jobboard.asp>

**Albert Saryan**, Application and Programming Manager, LACCD

He is the application and programming manger at the LACCD. He oversees teams that support the district and applications such as the student systems, the web services, canvas, and all the learning management systems. He also stated that there are a lot of advantages from his perspective to be part of this team. LACCD's information technology has seen a lot of shifts and changes lately. And some of the feedback he has

gotten from this committee actually helps drive some of the discussion related to opportunities like interns and internship programs.

**Ellie Rabani**, CalWORKs Director

CalWORKs Dept. provide resources and services to struggling students at LAVC. They work with many refugees coming from other countries and CalWORKs office is where students start their academic journey. Majority of their students are asking for CS and COAT related certificates.

**Prof. Clark**, CSIS Professor at LAVC

He started by thanking the advisors for their attendance as well as their important role for faculty since we apply their recommendations in our classrooms.

**Prof. Sefiani**, CSIS Professor at LAVC

He has been with LAVC for 25-year teaching CS related courses.

**Joe Cummings**, President/CEO of [Royal Staffing company](#)

Specializes in accounting, finance, human resources, customer support services and clerical administrative positions throughout the LA and Ventura county, and other areas.

**Nino Shtromberg**, LAVC Alumni & CalWORKs Coordinator

She holds an AA from LAVC, B.S from CSUN and currently perusing her Masters in Educational Technology. She mentioned about the students who apply to CalWORKs and some of them are professionals in their countries, looking for something in the same field. They can't get job because they don't have the certificate or specific education. So, it is a great opportunity for them to start at LAVC and working with a great network of people. They have a student work program that allows them to place students in different departments.

**Prof. Keshishian**, CSIS Adjunct Faculty at LAVC

He is a software Engineer at Google. He is currently at Google assistant team, working on server side and other areas. He mentioned about the next week's Boot Camp.

**Prof. Mehrak Amirfazlian** Adjunct Faculty at LAVC

She was happy to hear about the Boot Camp and will let her students know about the upcoming program.

**Josie Stein**, Adjunct Faculty at LAVC

**Danica Brizuela**, CSI Professionals Incorporated. Job placement and Visa assistance agency. She was representing her VP. Marge Ordiales. She is also a student at LAVC.

<https://www.csi-professionals.com/>

**Chris Barkdull**, Test Out/CompTIA Rep

Testout was acquired by CompTIA, company who provides the certification test and training form courses such as Network Plus, Security Plus and etc. Testout is actually the platform that provides the contents for the classes. They have had a lot of successes with their classes, and having to shift to online allowed students to do labs online instead of the traditional labs. It has been very beneficial to students.

<https://www.cyberseek.org/>

<https://www.comptia.org/content/it-careers-path-roadmap>

[https://www.comptia.org/content/lp/your-next-move-\(test\)](https://www.comptia.org/content/lp/your-next-move-(test))

<https://www.comptia.org/content/it-salary-calculator>

<https://www.comptia.org/content/lp/apprenticeships-for-tech>

**Lisa Mitchell**, NASA – NCAS - Nasa Community College Aerospace Scholars

Recruits students from community college for their internship program

[lisa.mitchell@nasa.gov](mailto:lisa.mitchell@nasa.gov)

**Prof. Eva Bitar**, Adjunct Faculty at LAVC, works at Mayors office in TV production

She teaches at LAVC and also helps film makers to make it easy for them to film LAs

**Dr. Odemaris Valdivia**, Adjunct Faculty at LAVC

Teaching under COAT, teaches photoshop, windows, she is fulltime faculty at Santa Monica College

**Dr. Rahni**, CSIS Department Chair

Dr. Michael Rahni was asked for his opening remarks. He gave the members a detailed overview of the department's achievements, programs, and activities.

He thanked everyone for their attendance. He stated that all his completed work was based on recommendations received from the Advisory board meetings and the department faculty members. He talked about his interest in the Cybersecurity field and that he would like LAVC to be a hub for cybersecurity for all the campuses and beyond. [www.mynextmove.org](http://www.mynextmove.org) and [www.onetonline.org](http://www.onetonline.org) show strong demand in cyber security and data science and analytics. The department has done very well. It is working to make sure students graduate and have good jobs. Based on the feedback he receives and placement data; the numbers are good and students are happy. We are glad to provide the foundation for students to get into the job market and advance in their careers.

He continued by saying that we offer a number of certifications. We got the approval for AWS that was based on a grant and prof. Clark is teaching those courses. He has started talking with department members to offer Data Science courses. We are almost there, he has submitted his proposal to offer a certificate in Data Analytics to our curriculum committee. He has been talking on behalf of the department with a number of big industry partners, such as Cisco, Google support, different academies based on their platforms, and also with Oracle, Microsoft, and Intel. We are an accredited partner of Microsoft and we can do testing in our Professional Development Department. So, we are really advancing in many directions, and it is because of our students.

The host, continued with a PowerPoint to give the members an overview of the departments (CS, CIS, COAT) certificates and degrees. The data was based on the information on LAVC website. CS is part of the STEM and STEM students are very interested in the Computer Science field Also because of being part of this category, LAVC can offer CS student services such as free tutoring, field trips, counseling, workshops and many other services.

The certificates and degrees in this category include:

Computer Science Programming degree and Certificate, cloud Computing Certificate. Microcomputer Literacy certification, .Net Programming certification, C/C++ certificate is offered Non-Credit or low credit certificate.

COAT falls under Business and Entrepreneurships and Law category. The certificates and degrees in this category include:

COAT Administrative Assistant degree, COAT Computer App Specialist degree, CAOT Administrative Assistant certificate, Computer App Specialist certificate, General Office Assistant certificate, and computerized Bookkeeping certificate. Website Software Specialist is offered as Non-credit or low credit certificate.

Members were also able to view the classes that are included in LAVC/CSIS curriculum and catalog.

Also, members were represented with some numbers on Enrollment for different semester. The data showed the number up to Spring 2022.

The first question asked from the members:

*Let us know the required skills by the employees? What can we/Academic institution do to bring our skill sets to the next level? What technical/analytical/creative skills does an entry level person need to be hired at your company?*

Albert Saryan said from District perspective, they have different levels of technical staff, including programmers, business analysts, and etc. They all require a certain level of technical skills. When looking to hire programmers, they look at their technical skills, and their understanding of the technology, their programming language/coding skills, and other available

tools necessary as a programmer. But, they also look for a key component in terms of the analytical side in terms of understating the problem to be solved and understanding the requirements, understanding that when a problem is presented to a technical individual like a programmer, it is also important to understand where the problems originated from. He recommends that when we are teaching the programming classes, there should be some non-technical component. Whenever we interview individuals generally, the stronger candidates have a good balance between the technical background and also the analytical part. So, when we put individuals in a new environment, then they can pick up the technology pretty quickly or they come in with those skills. And then they have the analytical ability to understand the business part. That way, they can adapt easier to their work environment.

Armen Keshishian, agrees as well. He has experience working in different size companies, from Startups to mid level or large companies. From his perspective, larger companies they have more fundamental requirements. They are looking for the fundamental knowledge. Smaller companies they need someone who knows C.Shart.net working with restful services and very specific applications. Therefore, the candidates must know the languages so they can start performing quickly. Smaller companies don't have enough resources to spend on the new employees to give them opportunities outside their specific role/job requirements.

However, the bigger the company gets, the fundamentals subjects matters more. For example, in large companies, Algorithm, Data Structure, Programming matters. His course along with other faculty members who teach the Data Structure course, covers all the required subjects that are needed in the market. Whatever that is being offered in that courses, is exactly what the market is demanding nowadays.

He also talked about soft skills. Hiring managers are also measuring the communication and comprehension skills and abilities of the applicants. Can we help our students to learn how to communicate and express their thought process? Companies don't want to hire a genius coder but they can't communicate and tell us what is in their mind. This is a problem, because lack of communication can cause redundant work for others. When it comes to Google, they are not looking for specific AI skills for example, they are looking for problem solving skills, good understanding of compute or data structure when you know the fundamentals. And later, they put those good candidates with good understanding and all those skills into different teams and they teach them the required skills for the job.

Joe Cumming mentioned that biggest issue is finding a candidate who are willing to go and work at the company in person, like it was prior to Covid. Majority of them, 85 to 90 percent's wants to work remotely and/or hybrid. His answer back to those applicants is that they have tons of competition.

Denise McGee, also agreed with Joe Cumming on hiring. It is very difficult to get the qualified applicants who want to come into the office. Especially, in the IT area. It seems like we are getting less and less qualified applicants because we are not advertising that they can do

remote. Some campuses allow for remote work and some don't. So, the current requirement is for them to come to office and work. Therefore, there is a decrease in number of applications.

Also, on lack of soft skills, she agreed with Armen. It is a big issue. I sit in the interviews before the hiring interviews. An application can look fantastic on paper, but they can answer and communicate when they are asked questions. Currently, LACCD is doing the interview remotely, and the applicants, can't express themselves well and describe their jobs. There is a big disconnect of them being able to explain what they do or explaining their knowledge in person. There is different requirement for COAT vs. CS. With COAT, they need to know Excel and Word. We are finding they are not getting it or they just have basic skills. Colleges can give more than that because we are relying more heavily on those systems/applications, especially since some people are still remote. They have to know how to do it on their own. And we are not seeing that that the skills are quite up to par.

Joe Cummings continued by saying that there are so many free tutorials out there for applicants to use and learn Excel, Word, and PowerPoint. It is not difficult to find them on YouTube or other platforms.

Professor Clark said he was going to ask a follow-up question, but looks like Joe Cummings and Denise McGee kind of covered it. He was curious how things had changed since Covid, but understand that no one wants to be in the office. It seems to be the biggest challenge.

*Second question: Your opinion on current job market! Any recent changes? Are there any new trends toward certain degree or certificate program?*

Chris Barkdull said that being part of CompTIA now, there are some amazing tools that they offer and they are free. One of them is called [IT career path planning tool/road map](#) - and it is free. So, if a student wants to be a network specialist, it tells them what companies are looking for as far as certification or if you want to be Cybersecurity specialist, etc. There is also a resource they called it [cyberseek.org](#). It also pulls up a map you can see. For example, it shows the different jobs in different states and their requirements He provided the links for faculty to share with their students. The biggest interest is in Cybersecurity because there are thousands of jobs every year that are unfilled and there is a big demand for it.

Albert Saryan, also said that Data Science, in conjunction with Cybersecurity are also areas of interest for LACCD. Data Science and Data Analytics can help the district with understanding and analyzing our existing data with respect to our students. Cybersecurity is also big and in demand. We were able to see how competitive it was when we were in the process of hiring an information security analyst. When asked if they have opening for Cybersecurity related positions, he said that they have limited openings but it fills up very quickly. Our Chief Information Security Office didn't exist 5 years ago, but now we have one.

Denise McGee said that they don't know ahead of time when something will open. But, currently, they have an open position for someone with CAOT degree, and instructional Assistant



position. We have open positions but more at the higher level, so your students probably wouldn't qualify for those types. If students are interested in government jobs, they should go on their websites and look for existing positions and place an interest card with them. Just like us, when the position comes open, you will get an email. No need to check backing in every day. She also mentioned they currently have 5 open entry level positions that can use CAOT degrees.

Ellie Rabani mentioned if we can use our students in the IT dept at LAVC. It would be a great internship opportunity for them. Get paid while getting experience.

The host asked all the members of Advisory board for their collaboration and to email her if at any time, there are any Internship opportunity in their perspective industry.

Lisa Mitchel found it interesting hearing the conversation on lack of soft skills among students while still at community colleges. It is right in line with what they find with their students which are essentially our students as well. Student seem to have a very hard time with soft skills, such as knowing when to talk, when to turn on their camera, writing their resume, producing an elevator speech. Nasa program includes all these skills in their program. NCAS has changed their program since Covid. They have 3 missions. Originally, they had an online course, and then students went on to NASA Center and they participated in a robotics competition. That has changed because of Covid. They developed a virtual challenge for students. But now that we are going back to the cents on in-person. We have brought back the in-person component. But our activity manager didn't want to lose the virtual component and wanted to continue to engage students and make their engagement with NASA last longer so hopefully that would inspire them to stay in school and to complete their education and train at a community college and transfer to a 4-year college.

So, mission one is still the online course. It has been changed so that we introduce student to all of the mission directorates at NASA, so they get a broad sense of everything that NASA does, because most people think that at NASA we just do space. But there is a broad spectrum of things that they do, including climate and earth science as well as aeronautic/airplanes.

Mission two, is the virtual components. Students have two different activities that they can participate. One is a career simulation where they have to apply for positions, and then they have to complete a specific mission based on a robot, and the robot can be any of NASA's robots that are currently in use anywhere in our solar system. The other simulation is building a mission to the Moon or Mars, and they can focus on a human component where they would eventually create an outpost for astronauts to live or visit, or then can use a rover.

Mission 3, is the onsite portion, and students will go to a NASA center if they are invited. The funding is not as robust as it used to be, so they have to be selective.

So, in general, students will be focusing on aeronautics research mission directorate. They are researching what advance air mobility is about. Advanced Air Mobility is NASA's current mission

for Air MD, which involves drones and moving cargos and emergency information and supplies via drones. So, the drones can be small, like the ones that can buy like at BestBuy or Walmart. Or they can be big ones that will eventually act as taxis and move people from one location to another within a certain range from vertiports. So, students are researching that for two weeks in a virtual component, and then the third week they go on the center and work with NASA personnel. Last year, one of the scientists was super interested in what one team came up with as a solution to a problem. So, he is continuing to research based on that student's idea.

*Question: does CompTIA's simulation program provides enough experience for students?*

*So what degrees or certificates are favored among students and faculty?*

Joe Cumming said it depends on the position. So, having a degree or certificate places them in a better position.

Denis McGee, agrees with Joe. When she recruits, she looks at the basic minimum and that is all it takes for them to move forward in our exam process. But the ones who have the experience and who have the technical trainings, they go further and do better than those who just have one or the other. Which will I rather have, our raters tend to look for those who have the experience, the hands-on experience. That can tell them what they are doing and what they have done. Not that the certificates are invalid, but they want to know that they can work on the jobs as opposed to just getting that schooling. But if they have both, it definitely does make a difference on how far they go in the process.

Albert Saryan, agrees as well. From hiring perspective, hands on experience is positive aspect. It gives the candidates bit of an advantage verses somebody that doesn't have it. He thinks having certificate is also very helpful. It depends on who we are recruiting. It all depends on the position. Certificates do provide areas of focus, and it depends on what we are looking for as well. If there are no hands, the certificates do help. As for course, he has observed that courses offered at LAVC, does provide hands on type exercises and experiences. So, certificates in AWS and Data Analytics will go a long way, especially for an entry level position. It is a competitive field, and majority of schools within our district have the standard computer science. But in addition to that, certificates do help. The AWS certification is very valuable, at least from our system side. Therefore, certificate and experience are always helpful. But for entry level, we like to give the students the opportunities. The discussions we are having is very positive and helpful.

Dense McGee, students need to know how to work with others and how their job effects the other. They need to work on their own, plus in groups.

Alex Auerbach, believes that it might be useful going forward if the school's culture was not just about how to get your job. But how to succeed in it after you are there. Candidates understanding of her or his position in the entire organization matters with their success. Because they add much more value to the work that they produce and they contribute to the

success of the organization. So if you have someone is great at Java but that is all she or he can do versus someone who is really great at cyber security, but also realizes that the reason this has to be strong is that our key relationships with our supply chain and our customers depend on it, and the more the better job we do at explaining to our business partners why we are a trusted company, the more successful we are going to be. That second person will have a better chance of moving up in the company.

There is one point that he thinks might be helpful. A lot of people hear make very objective hiring decisions, which is wonderful, but a lot of positions are filled through who you know. Creating mock networking organizations where people learn how to do it. How to have a casual conversation that says to the other person, hey, this is one smart person. I really ought to bring them into this situation or they truly have a kind of global understanding of their communication. Skills are remarkable for someone who is not in a communication role that is likely to lead to opportunities in their career. So, combining the technical training with communication skills, networking skills, the human interaction skills, and the global understanding of what the mission of the organization is about, could be helpful to your students.

*Host asked the faculty, about students, and their preference between online versus in person classes?*

Prof. Clark categorized student in to two, students who prefer online because of its flexibility, and students who prefer in-person. Pandemic caused the student from the second group move more into the first group. More students realized they might be able to get what they need online as well. And that is what is going on right now. But where what the makeup is, depends on discipline. With computer application classes, a lot more students are more comfortable and familiar with being in an online environment than say in a dance class.

Joe Cummings, asked to what is the percentage of classes we offer online vs. in person.?

Prof. Clark, it varies by discipline, by department. But if you are talking about us, there are more online classes right now that there are on campus classes, and that is at least in part, because when we offer for example, the same section of a class both online and on campus, the online class fields first and sometimes the one on campus doesn't fill at all.

Joe cummings mentioned maybe that is where the program is starting. When they finish school, they re still looking for jobs that are more remote than in person.

Dr. Rahni continued by saying that what happens is he goes to administration to get additional hours. We call FTE to have new courses, and always include on campus courses. However, then as we get close to the start of the semester, the numbers are not there. Then I have to request cancellation. That is not what we do. We usually want to have more on campus classes. We offered 7 on campuses classes last semester, but all got cancelled.

Joe cummings agreed that if don't offer the online classes, then they go somewhere else.

Dr. Rahni, said we offer almost all the CS courses in our department so we have student from other LACCD college taking our courses but because they live far away, they prefer online. But we encourage them to come to our campus that other colleges don't; we offer free one on one free tutoring, in addition to on campus tutoring center. We give them the support, but because our 3-D labs provide them enough work and experience where they don't need to attend in-person classes.

Dr. Valdivia said, that this is a problem going across the whole State of California. It is bigger than what we can discuss. But in another meeting with Chancellor's office, I brought up the same topic, that administration cancels in-person classes when they fill out. based on her observation, maybe they can offer one in person class between the 3 geographically closed campuses, so student have an option of attending the in-person class without having to drive long distances. They also stated that CA has lost 2 million students and LACCD is trying to attract them back. With one of my classes, we accommodate students by having my in-class lectures streamed online and that way, we give the students the option of attending the class online or in-person.

She continued by saying when it comes to work, we have to offer program that could serve the students who wants to work remote or in-person. There is a component that we can help the industry where we can transition student who can work in both modes. We need to work with industries to facilitate this process.

Dr. Rahni, continued by adding that Administration's support is fabulous. Dr. Nalepa, LAVC VP and LAVC President always supported me – allowing in-person classes to continue even with low enrollment.

Prof. Sefiani continued by saying the trend for students and employees are the same after pandemic. My students also prefer online vs. in-person classes.

Prof. Eva Bitar said that they, in the city of LA, most of the people after Covid, didn't want to come back to their job which was an opportunity for the city to actually give up some real estate, and they actually offered an incentive program for people to work from home. The majority of our employees have not gone back to work. Only essential employees have had to go back. City is saving a ton of money. It is a new way of operating. Many things have changed. I think we as educators, we have to be flexible with how times has changed. And Covid changed the formula. Whether it is our classes, or its for people coming to a campus or go to their work – it may be the best thing to have is to have these centers instead of large real estates, where employees come couple of days to work. Saving on driving is a good benefit if you can do the same work from home without having to be at work.

*Last question was to find out how do we enhance our community partnership between our school and your organization? Do you provide any training, internship opportunities?*

Joe Cummings said: [www.rooyalstaffing.com](http://www.rooyalstaffing.com)

Denise McGee said, we don't deal with internships. That is something that has to go thru HR. we deal with just classified, and regular hiring.

Chris Barkdull said, as for internships, one of the wonderful things that working for large company like CompTIA provides, is they provide several programs regarding internships. They can work with schools and businesses in bringing internship to their business – CompTIA doesn't offer the internship but can work with business to establish it.

<https://www.comptia.org/content/lp/apprenticeships-for-tech>

Alex Auerbach wanted to the underscore the need for students and candidates to understand that they are not just doing a job for an organization, but they are there to enhance the value and performance of that organization.

Josie said her experience been that students enjoy in-person classes and keep asking her for more in-person classes. There might be other components such as economy in this equation for students to take only online classes.

The meeting adjourned at 12:18 pm by the chair thanking everyone for their attendance.