

Spielvogel's sense of know

Educated guesses not good enough for new LMC president

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BENTON TOWNSHIP — In some ways, the life of Lake Michigan College's new president reads like a classic slice of Main Street USA.

"My parents owned a little weekly (newspaper) for 42 years," Jennifer Spielvogel recalled Wednesday. "She was the editor, he was the publisher. We lived above the newspaper in an apartment for many years — right on Main Street, Stryker, Ohio. They were high school sweethearts. They lived a house apart in Elwood City, Penn., and shared a paper route when they were children."

Eventually, Spielvogel's father, Regis, decided it was time for he and his wife, Lee, to leave Elwood City — where he worked for its daily newspaper — and buy one of his own, which he accomplished at 29.

"That town I grew up in only had 1,200 people," Spielvogel said. "But I know the small town atmosphere, and the community, and (how) everybody knows each other. Sometimes, that's good, sometimes that's bad, but I recognize that — knowing your neighbors, knowing the people in town. Everybody's been so nice ever since I got here."

Spielvogel said she believes that her small town roots and passion for what community colleges do will serve her well as Lake Michigan College's president.

"It just feels really very comfortable — small town, nice institution on the move, lots of energy around the projects that are going on," she said, settling into her first week on the job.

Spielvogel got her first glimpse of that energy several years ago when she consulted LMC about institutional effectiveness — an issue she's focused on for much of her career.

"They (LMC) were trying to figure out, 'What kind of institutional research office might we need?' So when the presidency came open, I thought, 'Is that a possibility? I know the college a little bit,'" she said.

Spielvogel comes to LMC from Cuyahoga Community College, where she served as vice president of evidence and inquiry since 2007. She replaced Bob



John Madill / HP Correspondent

Jennifer Spielvogel, who had been dean of evidence and inquiry at Cuyahoga Community College in Cleveland, Ohio, is the new president of Lake Michigan College.

Harrison, who retired last December after leading LMC since 2009.

At Cuyahoga, Spielvogel worked in an environment that included 3,000 employees and 30,000 students spread across four campuses in the Cleveland area.

Spielvogel's job required analyzing data and breaking it down into simple terms for Cuyaho-

ga's president, Alex Johnson — to help him decide what types of projects the college would rally around, she said.

"At Cuyahoga, it really was about the metrics. He would pick five or six things every semester, or at the end of every year, that we would look at," Spielvogel said. "He was very comfortable coming down to my office and saying, 'Can we really

do this? Can we get to this number?'"

More two- and four-year colleges are adding similar positions, out of recognition it's important to have someone who can interpret data properly, Spielvogel said.

"I'd never been to a community college until I started at

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Cuyahoga, and I really, really got hooked on the mission of community colleges. I was recognized through the community college world as somebody who knew data, could talk data, and help people understand data," she said.

Carrying out her duties meant negotiating a complex chain of command.

"It was complex because there were four campus presidents and four deans of students. Any time you wanted to make a decision, they all had to agree," she said.

By contrast, at LMC "there's only one vice president of student services, only one person



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Lake Michigan College President

that does marketing," Spielvogel said. "It's easier to develop that relationship pretty quickly."

As Harrison's successor, Spielvogel is keenly aware she's following someone credited with lifting LMC's visibility and long-term viability.

Notable achievements of Harrison's tenure included the addition of many new programs – such as enology and viticulture, for example – as well as an extensive building and renovation

program.

In his final month as president, Harrison helped secure a \$17 million capital outlay grant through the state that will help LMC pursue a major upgrade of its 45-year-old main campus at Napier Avenue.

"He really left the college in a great position," Spielvogel said. "I don't know yet what my mark will be, but what I'm sensing is a need for some focus. If we can think in focused areas, like stu-

dent success, we can 'bucket' what we're doing in two or three areas. And then I think it may not feel like it's so overwhelming that we're doing so much."

Spielvogel said she expects to continue building on those achievements, while taking a closer look at LMC's operations and studying what types of things the college can do better, she said.

"It's the three E's that I'm going to focus on," Spielvogel said. "The first one is the student experience. The second one is campus and community engagement, and the third one is institutional effectiveness. Accountability is a word that people will hear a lot from me. How do we know that what we're doing is working? What's the evidence of that?"