Chancellor Lee Lambert  
Interview on “Wake Up Tucson” Radio Program  
November 25, 2014

[music]

>>Bill Buckmaster:  This is Bill Buckmaster ... helping put food on the table for those in need. Tuesday at noon on Tucson’s AM 1030 KDOI The Voice.

[music]

>>Announcer: Hey, if we can get any reviews about Chef Loretta she fed two thousand people at Flowing Wells High School yesterday, our good friends at The Gap Ministries so

>>Announcer:  Good job, Loretta.

>>Announcer: She did her Louisiana Thanksgiving. Nice. For two thousand people. She got 167 turkeys I think, Joe.

>>Announcer: Excellent. I think that it was your social media’ing that put it right over the top. Thanks team!

>>Announcer: Thanks Tucson

>>Announcer: Your social media problem saved Thanksgiving for two thousand people.

>>Announcer: It’s a new..

>>Announcer: Thank you Joe Higgins.

>>Announcer: Kudos to our good friends at Gap Ministries.

>>Announcer: So let’s go right to the phones. Chancellor Lee Lambert from Pima Community College, thanks for holding, sir. I appreciate your coming back on.

>>Lee Lambert: Well thank you, Joe and Chris, and good morning to you both.

>>Announcer: Good morning. Chancellor, let’s start out with the probation discussion because you’ve been reviewed, you’re in kind of a waiting period. How does that look for Pima Community College going forward?

>>Lee Lambert: Well so at this point in time we have received the draft Self-Study, we are going through that report to make any corrections, you know, errors of fact. As a result of the timeline of the report being delivered to us late Thursday of last week, it changes the timeline for the process going forward.
We will not know what that new timeline will look like probably for a few more weeks at the outermost, I would imagine.

>>Announcer: Everything looking good, preliminary-wise? I mean everything...

>>Lee Lambert: I think, you know, I’m still optimistic that the College is going to come off of probation and I think we are going to be stronger and better for the fact that we have been on probation. It has allowed us to take a critical look at where we are, and in many ways, it shows that the College is a good place but, at the same time, that we have a lot of work to do to be a great place.

>>Announcer: What’s one of the areas of improvement that came out of the probation that will make the College stronger in the future?

>>Lee Lambert: At this point I’m not in a position to talk the specifics as it relates to what may or may not be in the report. I will say this: based on our own self-analysis we know that we’ve got to be clearer about our mission, and what it means and how do we evaluate it. In other words, in short, I like to frame it as “How do we know we are fulfilling our mission?” Right now we don’t have the system in place to be able to tell the community clearly based on data and evidence, that we are fulfilling our mission. I think that’s one area that you’re going to see the College emerge with much better clarity.

>>Announcer: So the mission, let’s talk about that a little bit. Is it a combination of workforce readiness into trades and technology type jobs and getting folks ready for college at a big 4 university? What do you say the balance is?

>>Lee Lambert: Right. You hit on some key elements. One aspect is the transfer to the university, another aspect is preparing folks to go into careers, and another aspect is preparing folks who need to address some deficits in their skills, we might refer to that as some remedial education. If you take those three areas, there are other areas, then how do we know how people are performing in those areas, and how can I tell the community, you know, we trained, I’ll use just an example, a hundred students for aviation, and how do we know that all hundred of them got jobs and how are they performing in their jobs when they leave us.

>>Announcer: Sure.

>>Lee Lambert: That’s what we need to be able to report on, and that kind of data collection is not always easy to get our hands on, especially after they leave us. But that’s an aspect of being able to show we fulfilled our mission. We’ve actually trained people for the workforce and that they are getting jobs in their chose fields - in some cases we can tell you that and in some cases we can’t tell you that.

>>Announcer: We’re on with Chancellor Lee Lambert from Pima Community College. Chancellor I’m looking at enrollment at ASU and U of A – biggest enrollment at ASU in history, right? I think this is the largest in the country right now. U of A again busting at the seams. How is enrollment looking at Pima College both for those two tracks, or three tracks, we talked.
Lee Lambert: I think this dials-up to a much larger issue when you bring up the enrollment piece. You can’t compare community colleges to a university, a four-year college, in terms of enrollment. They are able to draw from within and outside of the state, do heavy recruitment across the country as well as across the waters, and community colleges are not as aggressive as that. So that’s one of the reasons that you can’t compare. Then, in many cases, they get to choose who comes in and who doesn’t come in and so that creates a different kind of dynamic.

But with that said, our enrollments have been on a downward trajectory over the last few years. We are at a point now, our enrollment levels are such that we haven’t seen since the turn of the century. This raises a lot of questions in terms of the sustainability of the institution long-term.

I want to emphasize this. Right now we are in a healthy financial position but if we don’t start to plan for re-engineering the institution, re-positioning the institution based on the realities of enrollment, based on the realities of state funding and federal funding, that outlook may not be so healthy two- to three-years out.

[Announcer]: I was reading your budget letter of November 18th and what you’ve just said, pretty much, is what’s in that letter…

[Lee Lambert]: Right.

[Announcer]: ... to your staff.

[Lee Lambert]: Absolutely. I don’t look at things, you know this is the way I look at life. I don’t look at life as positive or negative, it just is. The choices you make will define whether they are positive or negative, right? Seeing a College at an enrollment level that was at … point … beginning … century [audio interference] is not a bad thing in and of itself, but are you willing to re-set the institution consistent with that so that you can reposition and potentially grow again in the future. The growth may not come from the areas that we may have, in the past, enjoyed.

The other thing to keep in mind is, there are a lot more competitors – online institutions have grown significantly during that period of time. We have more for-profit institutions. You have a number of institutions who are offering programming at significantly lower costs that we are offering it at. So you can’t discount all of those other variables when you start to think about your enrollment.

[Announcer]: Right. Are we seeing less Pima County people overall just going for higher education? Are we seeing any of that trend?

[Lee Lambert]: I think what we are picking up is Pima County in terms of growth is not, I would say, is kind of flat or stagnant – not growing at a rate that is probably going to produce more students for Pima Community College in the short-term. So we have got to get more sophisticated about that also.

We have people in the community who already have their bachelor’s degree, their associate’s degree. We need to think about how do we reach out to those folks and try to re-engage them in some type of continuing education or something like that. So that may mean that we have to re-think our
programming to reach that population. We have a number of adults who really are under-skilled. How do we reach them when they are having to work one or two jobs so it is not easy for them to come to college. We have got to think about how we reach out to those folks. I think that the population is still out there, we have just got to get more sophisticated about how we offer our programs and services to reach folks.

I think we have to be willing to go outside of Pima County, throughout the state and in some cases to go across the waters as well.

[Announcer]: Yes, I saw that in your letter about reaching out to more students from Mexico. I know you’ve talked about students from China. How would those kind of dynamics play out?

>>Lee Lambert: So again, using data and let that data help inform the decisions we’re going to make, so there is a report called “Open Doors.” It is published annually by the Institute for International Education. It shows student mobility patterns on an international-level. What that reveals, very clearly, is where students are coming to the United States from across the globe. The top senders, no surprise, China, India, Korea, or South Korea I should say, Saudi Arabia. Mexico is up in that list. Brazil is up in that list. Turkey. That’s where, if you are going to get active and engaged in the international frontier you have got to be willing to go to the places where people are willing to come to the U.S. but also can afford to come to the United States.

>>Announcer: Sure

>>Lee Lambert: So that’s what guides an international business plan, if you will. And so for us it’s obvious, we share an important relationship and border with Mexico. That’s an obvious place we should be developing and spreading those relationships. The next obvious place, based on what I have shared with you, is coming from Asia. We’ve got to develop those relationships. ASU has done that very well. The U of A’s doing that. You have a number of other community colleges that have done this very well. Pima has been for the most part absent in its presence and I want to re-engage that for us.

It’s bigger than about – this for me is not about money. This is about raising the global competencies of our community. Our students today, if they don’t understand what it is like to work and understand other cultures from across the globe their chances of being competitive will be decreased. I believe we have a responsibility to make sure we raise their global competence. One way is to put them in an environment where they have to engage with people from other cultures

>> Announcer: Sure.

>>Lee Lambert: Educational facilities or institutions are a great place to create that type of engagement.

>>Announcer: Chancellor Lambert I will say we do this for a long time with a lot of other institutions, government institutions, and it’s refreshing that you are bringing these discussions forward and kind of proactively looking at the future of Pima College and looking where that needs to go.
We’re doing the business community every day because the market forces make us do that and it seems that you are kind of taking that step forward and saying, “Hey look guys. We’ve got to look at what we’re going to look like in the next decade or two. How do we fit into the economy, in the local world.” Really it’s a breath of fresh air, my friend, so keep it up.

>>Lee Lambert: Thank you.

>>Announcer: Alright.

>>Announcer: Hey Lee, thanks for all that you do. I know you have a mildly uphill battle but it’s needed to help our kids in this community and our adults so keep doing what you are doing.

>>Lee Lambert: I appreciate that and I just want to say our faculty, our staff, our administrators – we’re stepping up in a way to make sure that Pima stays not only relevant to the community but plays an important leadership role in this community. I want to thank them for that.

>>Announcer: I’m doing the lodging and resort associate career day today. It’s over at StarPass and Armando Trujillo is going to be there from the Pima Community College/NAU hotel restaurant management thing. There will be 150 kids coming...

>>Announcer: Nice

>>Announcer: ... to check it out. I do a class on sales and marketing and stuff, but again, how’s the hotel school side of things doing? I’m a hotel grad from NAU so ...

>>Lee Lambert: I think again that’s one of our strong programs at Pima Community College and when you look at the leadership that Armando plays both for us and for NAU in helping to train folks for that important industry sector. As you both are well aware, tourism is a big part of the global economy and therefore a big opportunity for individuals in this community if we can train them to take those positions that are available. I’m very pleased that we are part of that and we’re going to look over time to strengthen that as we go forward as well. The key to that is staying closely connected to the businesses and the community who play a big part – whether it is the hotels, the restaurants, the museums and all the destinations in this community. This community has so much to offer to people who want to come and travel to this part of the United States.

>>Announcer: It’s one of the few parts of our economy that didn’t get totally blown apart in the last 5, 6 years. It’s still hurting but not as bad as construction or things like that.

>>Lee Lambert: Correct.

>>Announcer: President, excuse me Chancellor Lambert, thanks for being on. Have a great Thanksgiving.

>>Lee Lambert: You bet. Same to both of you and enjoy your holiday.

>>Announcer: Alright. Good luck.
Announcer: Keep it up.

Lee Lambert: Bye bye.

Announcer: It’s seven thirty-seven in the morning.

Announcer: Did you smell that fresh air – that breath of fresh air?

Announcer: It’s interesting – government bureaucracy that’s willing to being reformed or being talked about. How much of that happens in this country?

Lee Lambert: There’s, there’s – when you read his letter – I read the letter about this and what he said is look, enrollment is down there might...

Announcer: Head winds in the local demographics. I mean how many people, you know the high schools are seeing this we’re seeing it in different...

Announcer: It’s a very breath of fresh air. Keep it up Chancellor.

[music]