

# Building Student Success through the Use of Collaborative Leadership: Team Integration at London American City College

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## Abstract

Sustainable collaborative leadership and organizational culture have become quite crucial in maintaining student success in higher education institutions. This research study explores how collaborative leadership can foster strong team integration in higher education, supporting student achievement. The purpose of this literature review is to examine the relationship between collaborative leadership practices, team integration, and student success. This supports the research to understand how a sustainable learning environment can be created. The study adopts a mixed-method approach, with a comprehensive literature review and quantitative research to support the paper. The reviewed literature has been synthesized to identify common themes and leadership practices that foster student success in educational environments. To complement the literature review, quantitative data have been collected with a structured survey, and qualitative insights were gathered from a few semi-structured interviews. The findings of the study focus on the importance of implementing sustainable leadership skills within higher education institutions to strengthen leadership effectiveness and achieve positive educational outcomes in the long run, when it comes to student success.

**Keywords:** Collaborative Leadership; Organizational Culture; Student Success; Higher Education; Institutional Sustainability; Team Integration; Educational Leadership

## Introduction

Team integration and customer success lie at the heart of the collaborative style of leadership. In the corporate world, the teams work together towards the common organizational goal, leading to the strengthening of the cross-team relationships. Collaborative style of leadership is a leadership theory where the firm encourages the team to work together within their respective departments, towards achieving the shared organizational goals. This literature review explores the concepts of team integration and student success within the framework of collaborative leadership, with a focal point on London American City College (LACC), Dubai, United Arab Emirates. LACC's review highlights how it has achieved measurable success due to its relationship-focused approach, maintaining cohesiveness amongst

all the teams.

In the current age where education has become quite important, shared decision-making guides the management in ensuring success for colleges. Collaborative leadership has the characteristics of shared responsibility, synergy, ambiguity, shared values, responsibility, and empathy. This is very important when it comes to achieving student success in the institution, as it leads to the creation of trust and long-term satisfaction. Educational institutions must focus on how to have successful collaborations that create a real impact. This is highly relevant in the higher education sector where student success is the ultimate goal for the management. Therefore, in this literature review, we will address how collaborative leadership fosters team integration and leads to the improvement of student-centric practices at London American City College.

## Purpose of the Review

The purpose of the literature review is to critically examine the role of collaborative leadership in how the higher education sector achieves its student-focused outcomes through the use of group integration. The review aims to provide a detailed analysis of collaborative leadership and its influence on student-centred goals. It will synthesize existing qualitative and quantitative research to identify the key themes and challenges associated with this leadership theory in higher education institutions. The review uses the case study of London American City College to explore how the leadership practices are being implemented by the departments in reality. It will depict how student engagement is a result of cross-departmental integration, striving to show the role of collaborative leadership. The institution's success depicts that achieving student success first starts with the firm's team.

## Structure and Theme

This literature review is structured around the educational themes of the role of collaborative leadership, team integration in higher education, and improvements in student-centric approaches. We will discuss the limitations of the theory and the institutional challenges. These will be the key themes around which subtopics will revolve in this review. The review will examine the research with the use of scholarly articles, theoretical applications, and case findings, to guide the interpretation of collaborative leadership theory. It will be analysed in our discussion in a manner to evaluate why this framework worked for our chosen firm, and how the team applied the relevant theory practices to succeed.

## Methodology

This research adopts the mixed-method approach, where the literature review consists of qualitative primary research as well as quantitative research to complement the literature review. The literature review synthesizes scholarly journal articles and publications on collaborative leadership and student success in higher education. This sets the theoretical base of our research. Coming to the quantitative aspect, a cross-sectional survey has been conducted using a structured questionnaire consisting of demographic questions and Likert-scale items, where three variables have been measured: Sustainable Collaborative Leadership, Organizational Culture, and Student Success. The target participants include faculty members,

administrative staff, academic coordinators, and student support staff involved in the higher education industry. To complement this survey, we also conducted four to five semi-structured interviews with selected academic members to gain deeper insights into perceived impact on student success and sustainable leadership practices. The quantitative data will be analysed using descriptive statistics such as percentages and means to examine the relationship between the variables used. The qualitative data will be analysed with thematic analysis to identify recurring themes and patterns, along with exploring participants' perceptions and experiences. The findings from both the quantitative and qualitative analyses provide a comprehensive understanding of how collaborative leadership and sustainable organizational culture lead to enhanced student success.

### **Traditional Leadership vs Collaborative Leadership**

Traditional leadership was characterized by centralized decision-making, mainly where the overall decisions were made by the top management and tasks delegated to the rest. The top-down decision-making in the past meant that limited inputs came from the other faculty (other management levels) or students. In the higher education sector, over time, we have observed how team integration has developed. Academics must be prepared to provide quality learning outcomes, collaborate to identify and analyse real-world issues, and use practical knowledge to solve issues, but these changes do not come easily; they have to be led in the higher education industry (Hofmeyer et al., 2015). Collaborative leadership offers clarity and shared governance, bringing in fresh viewpoints to the table. In practice nowadays, higher education firms understand the diverse student needs, changing e-learning practices by having online learning hubs, student government/council, advisory councils, student affairs, faculty meetings, and departmental heads representing their discipline in the executive meetings. This creates a forum where feedback can be exchanged, communication can be transparent, improvements can be continuous, and collaboration can be effectively achieved.

### **Collaborative Leadership**

Collaborative leadership is about creating a work environment where all the members of the management contribute towards the decision-making process, prioritizing teamwork towards the common organizational goal. A positive relationship has been observed between the effectiveness of team cohesion and team performance in various settings like firms, sports, and education (Croy & Nathan, 2018). This suggests that unity within teams can affect productivity in an overall positive manner. Having a shared vision will allow each member of any higher educational sector to contribute towards making responsible decisions. Let us discuss the features of collaborative leadership theory below-

- **Sharing decision-making and shared vision-** Collaborative leadership is about having a shared vision. Having a shared vision leads to collaboration amongst the team where each idea is appreciated and incorporated into the decision-making.
- **Shared responsibility-** All the teams under this model share their responsibilities with each other, fostering interdependence. Each team focuses on what they are best at, being a leader and a follower

at the same time. Collaborative leaders must let go of a level of control and must be open to sharing the leadership with the team (Burns & Mooney, 2018).

- Mutual trust and respect- The aim of this leadership theory is to create an environment where each one feels valued. Each member must feel comfortable in sharing their thoughts and approaches for the team to succeed. Collaborative leaders aim to minimize power differences and empower others with authority to take decisions (Burns & Mooney, 2018).
- Shared intelligence- Each member of the teams must feel appreciated for their work and their strengths. In the workplace, people with higher intelligence seek to learn and adapt faster, which leads to superior professional performance and high career progression (Rowe et al., 2024). Each individual shares his/her knowledge and experiences to achieve the goals. This aids in easing the problem-solving process.
- Shared empathy- To achieve a successful collaboration, the teams need to listen each other in an empathetic manner. This helps to attain long term trust, allowing creativity to enter inside. This fosters deep listening and creates ongoing communication.
- Synergy- The whole team can come out with huge results together, than doing alone. They come out learning new things and bringing in multiple ideas on the table.

Through these features, we realise that authority is distributed amongst the teams and diverse perspectives are included within the planning process. Team integration is strengthened with collaborative leadership, where relationships are built and interdependence is formed. It creates room for empathy and inclusivity, instead of direct control over a mission. In higher education, team integration for academics and student affairs, is what raises the opportunity for the institution to succeed.

## Thematic Literature Review

### Organizational Profile: London American City College

London American City College is an established premier sector university college, located in the United Arab Emirates. It is accredited by several international accrediting bodies and has a decade-long collaboration with its global partners. The college provides high-quality education at affordable rates. The goal of London American City College is to provide fully accredited, world-class American bachelor's and master's degrees to students all around the world (*About London American City College (LACC), United Arab Emirates*, 2017). They prepare their students to become professionals in this dynamic economy. LACC encourages students to think differently and develop their management potential in the external business environment.

LACC's team functions on cross-functional collaboration among academia, career services, student affairs, and quality assurance. The academic department integrates with the student affairs to coordinate on the academia related activities and student tutoring services. The student affairs coordinates with the academic department to provide services like mental health support, and extracurricular activities. Regardless of its strengths, LACC faces several challenges due to its overall size, and in some parts of the administrative structure. With students from around the world, they need to focus on having stronger coordination within the management levels. Strong coordination would help in eliminating any

communication gaps. To ensure successful functioning, LACC practices collaborative leadership with the management levels and the student body.

### **Collaborative Leadership Theory at LACC**

Working within the higher education sector, I have come across many practical concepts which we have studied in our business courses. Let us look in deep for two of the course concepts below, in the context of London American City College-

- London American City College fits in the Miles and Snow's Strategy typology, under the frameworks for strategy and design. In the Miles and Snow's typology, it fits under the analyzer strategy. Under this strategy, the firm tries to keep a stable business whilst also innovating on the other end (Daft, 2021). LACC aims at providing academic excellence to nurture the student's knowledge and bring in new areas to achieve growth in student services. For instance, the firm introduced its new system of inviting mentorship from global industries on the zoom platform, as part of its career initiatives. Although physical career fairs have been taking place for long, the blended approach provides much more educational growth.
- In an educational viewpoint, where the outcomes are relatively controlled and identifiable, research observed that higher team cohesion improved the student learning outcomes and grades (Senior et al., 2012). Empowerment is power sharing, where the authority or power is delegated to the other levels of the management in the organization (Daft, 2021). Empowering the employees is about giving them three elements that help them to act freely to fulfil their jobs, which are, information, knowledge and power (Daft, 2021). Firstly, LACC provides all the employees with access to the firm's information through annual meetings and monthly progress reports. Then, it conducts training programs to help the employees develop their skillset and gain knowledge, allowing them to progress in their career paths. Lastly, it provides its employees the authority to influence the work process by giving them the appropriate power through self-directed working teams.

### **Team Integration and Shared Governance Across Academic Departments**

Working collaboratively to equip and empower than to control is a different way of problem solving which means that we need to build new ways of working together (Johnson et al., 2021). Some ways to do this is by building networks with our colleagues, through general coffee breaks. Community hubs can be formed, which would help the educators to engage with students on research-based projects. More feedback can be collected, beyond surveys, like having student advisory council where the student representative can take part in the departmental meetings providing direct student feedback. Inter-university activities can be formed where collective events can be coordinated, raising student awareness and engagement. But each of these cannot be done by one department alone. It needs interdepartmental collaboration. LACC considers the expertise of all its employees, starting from event planning, vendor support, event coordination and mainly, student involvement in the process via the appointed student government body.

Leadership can either support or hinder the alignment of objectives. An employee who is a part of a department which is characterized by a high level of interdepartmental collaboration has high chances of accessing diverse knowledge (Dai et al., 2025). This is important, as this is the place where more innovative ideas can be generated frequently. For instance, a specially abled student needs some level of assistance to come out as a successful student. LACC supports its special needs students by providing the appropriate mentoring services and learning assistance. The team must work on innovative ideas to make learning easier for their special students. Implementation of cross-departmental professional development has led to improvements in the teaching approaches for special students (Pilloti et al., 2023). Some suggestions include collaborating with speech and language pathologists, reading specialists, and special educators, bringing in expertise from different fields (Pilloti et al., 2023).

### **Student-Centered Practices and Collaborative Impact**

The political debates concerning academia has been on a rise due to the increasing cost of pursuing higher studies (Santos & Filner, 2023). The tuition fees seem to increase, and low-paid adjunct faculty have become the norm, alongside graduates teaching in many courses (Santos & Filner, 2023). This works in alignment with LACC's leadership team of working towards student retention. The team has members who work specifically on measures to retain the students, not just market the services. They provide passes for educational events, book fairs, research events, timely academic advising, tutoring support, mentorship training, career development workshops and flexible learning choices. In line with the above research, the goal of this institution is to provide accredited degrees at affordable costs, which can be earned by all students from different background and various income levels. The student success metrics are measured using satisfaction surveys, exit surveys, degree-related surveys, and instructor surveys. Collectively with these reports, data-driven decisions are formed.

A management team that focuses on creating impact through student-centered practices has a higher opportunity to achieve collective success. One such practice at the collegial level is that of the research experience. Faculty members sense that undergraduate students wish to do research with them, for reasons like building their resume, gaining skills to land a job, or generally exploring their interests (Livny, 2023). The research experience for the bachelor's and master's students is what helps in increasing the connection between the educators and learners, both gaining back something useful. LACC's curriculum involves co-op education where they train their students to learn about career-related aspects like perfecting the resume and being ready for interviews. With this, the students are motivated to search for internships, adding to their degree credits as well. And for the faculty, they get to build partnerships with new employers, strengthening their career services.

### **Challenges of Collaborative Leadership in Private Colleges**

Colleges have been seen as organizations that are difficult to lead, and higher academia presently faces difficult environments leading to new challenges in leadership (Burns & Mooney, 2018). The institution needs proper resources to facilitate the use of digital tools in education. If there is a lack of resources, then the team despite its efforts, will be left behind. Digital resources like Google workspace, Microsoft Teams,

student information systems and student course portals are all required to maintain the functioning of data sharing and real-time coordination. Almost all universities operate their courses and assignments online, with a blended approach of teaching in person. For instance, universities provide access to scholarly articles and peer reviewed journals through their digital libraries. A physical library would provide all the resources, but a digital library will provide all the worldwide available articles. Digital leaders must function within all these areas and motivate their team members to apply personal knowledge and enable internal knowledge sharing (Okunlola & Naicker, 2025). In relation to our case, LACC had to appoint multiple digital marketers specialising in different aspects of digital media, to support the digitalization process of the courses.

The advent of digital transformation in the knowledge economy, is a crucial challenge faced by the higher education sector as it needs to shift away from the traditional decision-making process. Many parents have stated their distress with the design of the current curriculum and the way the educational services are delivered (Sevate & Hofisi, 2024). On a positive note, this depicts openness to change on behalf of the parents. But, for the colleges, this is the moment where they need to have serious change in study structure. This needs an allocated time of a few months to plan the curriculum, think of new approaches, add to the current learning outcomes, train themselves in using the new technology and delivering the new curriculum, measuring the progress achieved after a semester trial and making the appropriate improvements.

There are a few barriers to the implementation of the collaborative model. A prominent challenge to the collaborative model approach is the resistance to change by the teams. Faculty members could be afraid of implementing new models that require transparency with the other departments. If there is not a visible support from the top management, this can lead to an unsustainable team integration. A research based on analysing shared vision in a school, stated that although their teachers experienced teamwork positively, they faced a lack of communication sometimes, which affected their overall transparency and continuity (Toikka & Tarnanen, 2024). Alongside, the researchers faced many overlapping concerns like other meetings, which affected their allotted time (Toikka & Tarnanen, 2024). Time constraints with rising workload could make it difficult for the team to fulfil their existing tasks and reduce the attention span per task. For instance, LACC's team implements a monthly responsibility sheet outlining the work to be done by each of the members and preventing any high workload pressure.

## Organizational Culture and Leadership at LACC

Organizational culture plays a crucial role in either supporting or conflicting with the collaborative values. Working together as a team is an interaction that provides the space for more ideas to come into being. The current traditional classrooms, which focus on individual study, are paving the path for more interactive learning approaches that focus on telling and doing the task (Reitman et al., 2025). This builds a need for developing the concepts for measuring collaborative learning practices which happen through the interactions between learners, educators and the global environment around them (Reitman et al., 2025). LACC has been long working towards an integrated and collaborative culture, where the educators can connect with all the students situated globally, on campus, and online. They connect with students on

zoom and allocate tasks by placing them in the breakout rooms, raising student engagement. Organizational teams usually operate in a system of collaborative and competitive team dynamics between departments (Yan et al., 2024). LACC navigates this by appreciating each team and focusing on how a group of departments achieved a specific goal in their annual meetings. The right level of team competition in the organizational culture leads to newer innovations. A firm must handle this level of competitiveness in a standard manner to ensure that internal competition doesn't backfire in the form of departments being against each other.

A learning organization is one where employees can fortify their competencies to shape their future path by encouraging active participation, collaborative initiatives, and having team-based knowledge sharing (Naqshbandi et al., 2024). LACC's culture supports the collaborative values by recognizing team achievements, utilizing their strategies, and applauding the group in their meetings. If a firm's culture is driven by competition and there is no clear transparency within the departments, then it can lead to a conflict with the values. If a team is conflicting with values, then they will not be able to succeed with the student community. This is because they are reluctant to cooperate and dismiss diverse viewpoints. For instance, LACC still faces some challenges in terms of overlapping goals amongst the departments due to the integration of teams.

## Research Gaps

### **Literature Gap 1- Theoretical Gap: Limited Research on Sustainable Collaborative Leadership in the Higher Education Industry**

Even though all of the previous studies have extensively examined leadership styles like transformational leadership, for instance, there is limited research explored sustainable collaborative leadership in the higher education industry. The existing literature emphasizes either employee outcomes or the performance of an organization. There have been very few studies that depict how leadership practices focus on characteristics like collaboration, shared responsibility, and how the variables combined allow an institution to foster student success.

### **Literature Gap 2- Population Gap: Limited research involving private higher education stakeholders like LACC.**

Previous research has shown the importance of organizational culture in nurturing the behavior of employees and how an institution can maintain long-term development. But fewer studies have examined how organizational culture links leadership practices to student outcomes. More intensive research is needed to understand how collaborative leadership and a supportive system lead to enhanced perceived student experience throughout their educational journey.

## Interpretations and Findings

### **Respondent Profile**

A total of 120 respondents took part in the survey. Their positions are diverse, including students, faculty, academic team members, administrative staff, and a few members who are indirectly related to the education domain. Most participants depicted active participation within their institutions' daily

operations, with the major representation being the students. In addition, five semi-structured interviews were conducted with some selected academic leaders and administrative staff members to gain deeper insights into how sustainable collaborative leadership and organizational culture lead to perceived student success. The participants for the interview were selected based on their leadership responsibilities within their institution, allowing us to gather rich perspectives that complemented and supported the survey findings.

**Table 1: Participants Profile**

| Data Collection Method     | Participants                                                                                          | Sample Size |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Survey                     | Faculty Members, Administrative Staff, Academic Coordinators, Department Heads, Student Support Staff | 120         |
| Semi-Structured Interviews | Academic Leaders and Selected Staff Members                                                           | 5           |

## Findings on Sustainable Collaborative Leadership

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Sustainable Collaborative Leadership**

| Statement                                     | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|-----------------------------------------------|------|--------------------|
| Leaders encourage teamwork across departments | 4.33 | 0.52               |
| Leaders involve employees in decision-making  | 4.50 | 0.55               |
| Leaders communicate openly                    | 4.17 | 0.75               |
| Leaders promote collaboration                 | 4.17 | 0.75               |
| Leaders encourage innovation                  | 4.17 | 0.75               |
| Leaders foster shared responsibility          | 4.50 | 0.55               |

When it comes to interpretations, the highest mean scores were recorded for leaders who involve employees in decision-making ( $M = 4.50$ ,  $SD = 0.55$ ) and leaders who foster shared responsibility ( $M = 4.50$ ,  $SD = 0.55$ ), suggesting that participants strongly believe that leadership fosters team responsibility and encourages participation. Next, participants also strongly agreed that leaders encourage teamwork across departments ( $M = 4.33$ ,  $SD = 0.52$ ), showcasing a team-focused environment. The remaining statements indicated that leadership practices such as open communication, collaboration, and innovation were present in the environment and positively perceived. In short, the findings indicate that sustainable collaborative leadership is well emphasized within teams, with a focus on shared decision-making, teamwork, and collective responsibility.

Coming to the interview findings, it supports the survey results by showcasing the importance of shared decision-making, communication, and teamwork. The participants focused on leaders who try to

encourage employee involvement and other leadership characteristics to build a strong sense of departmental collaboration. The common themes were focused on shared decision-making and open communication.

## Findings on Organizational Culture

**Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Organizational Culture**

| Statement                         | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|-----------------------------------|------|--------------------|
| The institution promotes trust    | 4.50 | 0.55               |
| Collaboration is encouraged       | 4.50 | 0.55               |
| Employees feel valued             | 4.17 | 0.75               |
| Staff work effectively together   | 4.33 | 0.82               |
| Continuous learning is encouraged | 4.17 | 0.75               |
| Communication is open             | 4.17 | 0.98               |

When it comes to interpretations, the highest mean scores were observed for the institution promoting trust ( $M = 4.50$ ,  $SD = 0.55$ ) and collaboration being encouraged ( $M = 4.50$ ,  $SD = 0.55$ ), suggesting that agreement between trust and collaboration is a crucial component of an organizational culture. Next, participants also strongly agreed that staff work effectively together ( $M = 4.33$ ,  $SD = 0.82$ ), showcasing that teamwork is well established. The remaining statements indicated that participants generally perceived the institution as valuing the employees, with continuous learning and open communication. In short, the findings indicate that organizational culture within the institution possesses the qualities of trust, collaboration, effective teamwork, employee support, and continuous learning, building a strong base for student success improvement.

Coming to the interview findings, it supports the survey results by describing the organizational culture as being supportive and focusing on aspects like teamwork and trust, which allow all of the members to address education-related challenges in an effective manner. The common themes here include cross-department collaboration and continuous learning.

## Findings on Student Success

**Table 4: Descriptive Statistics for Student Success**

| Statement                                 | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|-------------------------------------------|------|--------------------|
| Collaboration improves student support    | 4.67 | 0.52               |
| Communication enhances student experience | 4.67 | 0.52               |
| Leadership improves engagement            | 4.33 | 0.52               |
| Positive culture contributes to success   | 4.67 | 0.52               |

| Statement                                | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|------------------------------------------|------|--------------------|
| Institution supports student achievement | 4.67 | 0.52               |
| Sustainable leadership improves outcomes | 4.67 | 0.52               |

When it comes to interpretations, The highest-rated statements were collaboration improves student support ( $M = 4.67$ ,  $SD = 0.52$ ), communication enhances student experience ( $M = 4.67$ ,  $SD = 0.52$ ), positive organizational culture contributes to student success ( $M = 4.67$ ,  $SD = 0.52$ ), the institution supports student achievement ( $M = 4.67$ ,  $SD = 0.52$ ), and sustainable leadership improves student outcomes ( $M = 4.67$ ,  $SD = 0.52$ ), suggesting that the educational institution supports the development of students through a supportive organizational culture and team focused leadership. The one remaining statement indicated that respondents do perceive the practices of leadership as positively impacting the involvement of students in the learning process. In short, the findings indicate a strong positive perception of student success in an institution.

Coming to the interview findings, it supports the survey results by revealing that effective collaboration amongst all of the members helps to improve the student experience by ensuring that both academics and administration are properly aligned. The common themes include fast response to students and enhanced student services.

## Relationship Between the Variables

The study examined the relationship between sustainable collaborative leadership, organizational culture, and how it leads to student success in the higher education industry. The findings from the survey responses and semi-structured interviews depicted a positive connection between the variables.

**Table 5: Relationship Between Study Variables**

| Relationship                                                  | Finding               | Interpretation                                                                                                                               |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sustainable Collaborative Leadership → Organizational Culture | Positive relationship | Collaborative leadership practices contribute to building teamwork, transparent communication, and shared responsibility in the institution. |
| Organizational Culture → Student Success                      | Positive relationship | A supportive organizational culture improves student experience through improved coordination, communication, teamwork, and support.         |
| Sustainable Collaborative Leadership → Student Success        | Positive relationship | Leadership practices that encourage collaboration and a sense of belonging contribute to improved student outcomes.                          |

## Summary of Findings

The findings of this study indicate that collaborative leadership plays a crucial role in fostering an organizational culture that improves student success in higher education. It demonstrates a high level of consensus from the respondents, as also reflected in the relatively low standard deviations from the table results. The survey and the interview results showcase that practices like shared decision-making and open communication build a positive educational environment. It also indicates that a culture built on trust and continuous learning improves student-related services and administrative staff coordination. Overall, the study depicts that the development of collaborative leadership practices and a strong organizational culture led to improvement in student engagement and the long-term success of the institution. In short, more intensive research is needed to build an understanding amongst the above variables to improve student outcomes and collaborative leadership practices.

## Discussion

Throughout this literature review, we can interpret how the themes apply to London American City College. The themes consisted of collaborative leadership, team integration in higher education, and improvements in student-centric approaches. These are a part of LACC's institutional goals. LACC relies heavily on interdepartmental collaboration and fostering a team-based approach. The literature review emphasizes how cross-functional coordination raises the likelihood of achieving success in student outcomes. Some gaps faced by LACC have been in the limited resources it has, given the rising number of students. Digital tools helped LACC to reduce some of the barriers, like communication gaps across the departments. LACC's current practices focus on long-term success with shared governance.

The collaborative leadership theory for building student outcomes worked well for LACC, as seen from our literature review. Whilst many areas of collaborative leadership can be taught, research found that team and team projects create a setting to refine additional leadership behaviors (DeAngelis et al., 2024). By connecting leadership and teamwork, teams can be seen as a crucible for learning skills which would have a positive impact even beyond a group setting (DeAngelis et al., 2024). LACC has excelled in this area, which can be seen through the recognition of their students' achievements. The leadership model aligns its mission and objectives naturally. The theory assists them in distributing tasks amongst all the departments, encouraging joint planning. Their focus on community engagement and global exposure allows for more mutual planning and open communication. Some members of LACC's staff hold cross-functional roles, which builds interdependence naturally. With such a leadership theory, they have been able to create a cohesive system instead of having a strict authority like many other colleges. The supportive culture, in turn, works towards strengthening the future of its students.

The specific practices at LACC have been able to reflect the literature. Let us discuss a few examples. The coordination between the academic department and the career services department showcases the literature's theory of student success depending on how close-knit the team is. LACC conducts networking events and alumni mentorship workshops, providing the teams with opportunities to enhance student outcomes. The organizational structure at LACC allows the management to communicate openly with the top executives easily, without having to go through many intermediaries. This reinforces the attachment

of student success with LACC's collaborative leadership. But LACC still needs to work on a few aspects to align wholly with the literature. For instance, it needs to work on raising its staff capacity and having clear communication channels, contradicting practices in structured collaboration. The literature emphasizes careful analysis of performance metrics, an aspect where LACC is still focusing. This suggests that whilst LACC is doing well in practice with the theory, it has a lot of room for improvement to utilize the advantages as stated in the literature review.

## Critical Analysis

Whilst the current literature research provides big insights into understanding collaborative leadership in higher education, there is a prevalent gap when it comes to the medium-sized, privately owned, and internationally affiliated colleges. The majority of the research emphasizes large public colleges or globally renowned institutions where they have a clear structure, a high number of employees, and easy access to worldwide resources. The existing research presumes established systems for integration and collaboration, overlooking the barriers found in medium-sized colleges. Medium-sized colleges like London American City College, which follow a lean structure and some form of informal communication channel, still work towards achieving higher quality in education. Research must aim to assist such institutions where barriers can be visible. There is less research available on how this leadership theory works in colleges where there is constraint in resources or minimal formal structure. This is an opportunity for further research into how small- to medium-sized colleges work towards team integration whilst handling communication channels and measuring the success of their student-centered practices. There is a need for empirical studies on team integration in higher education in regions like the Middle East where the education industry has been growing rapidly. More studies can be investigated on such leadership theory practices differ between public and private institutions. Lastly, there can be research into analysing the impact of team collaboration on student engagement. These are areas which provide opportunity for further research into a leadership philosophy and an institutional strategy towards student success.

The sources used in the literature review provide a balanced perspective for examining how student success is achieved through the practice of collaborative leadership in higher education. A strength of my sources is that they provide a variety of fresh perspectives, all the way from theoretical models to applied models on team integration and student success. A minimum of 15 peer-reviewed scholarly articles have been used, and most of them were published in recent years, making the literature review up to date. The literature review reflects the current shifts, and most of the sources provide a case analysis to examine team dynamics relevant to the chosen case, London American City College. Some limitations of the sources are that they do not provide a clear reality of medium-sized educational institutions. The literature review hence adapts the concepts to LACC's operations. Some of the sources are quite conceptual, requiring more evidence to show its practical applications. These suggest that more investigative research is required to target the collaborative leadership practice in medium-sized affiliated colleges.

## Conclusion

Collaborative leadership plays a crucial role in creating the team culture and academic growth at London

American City College. As we have observed from the literature review, collaborative leadership integrates the college's departments together and creates a cohesive system which focuses on student centered practices. This creates open communication and shared responsibility. Digital transformation has brought the teams closer to each other, leading to more innovation. Initiatives like mentorship and digital coordination tools drives the student retention strategies at LACC. Key findings from the literature review focus on the value of integration and student-centeredness. LACC's literature review focuses on how departments work together to support student engagement initiatives. Whilst there are certain challenges that may exist, firms which focus on collaborative leadership can navigate complexities much easier. The findings of the literature review support that collaborative leadership is crucial in fostering team integration and improving the learning experience of the students. The review identified areas where LACC can achieve growth and how it can turn its weaknesses into strengths. The findings and strategies discussed throughout, are very crucial when it comes to analysing how the first step of student success starts with the higher education management being held together as a team. In short, the literature review examines how collaborative leadership amongst the teams has been able to contribute to institutional success and student-centered practices at London American City College.

### Future Recommendations

Some recommendations for strengthening collaboration at LACC and other educational institutions include having a common digital platform where communication becomes easier amongst the teams. Leadership development training workshops can be conducted for the staff and faculty to understand how collaborative leadership works in practice. The academic department can invest in feedback systems and include the varied perspectives of different students in their decision-making process. A new governance committee can be formed where the members work on resolving any interdepartmental conflicts and issues. The collaborative leadership can be extended by partnering with academic institutions or other employers, increasing the opportunities for college students. Data-driven decisions can be formed through the use of digital measures and key performance indicators to track outcomes and student satisfaction rates. Student success can only be achieved when the required resources and team integration are embedded into the educational ecosystem. London American City College has many opportunities for further improvement as discussed in the previous section. LACC's continuous student success is a factor of collaboration and institutional resilience.

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