Lane Tech & The LTAA
The School of Champions is better than ever! Ranked 3rd in the state by US News & World Report in 2018 AND 2019, Lane is known for its rigor. That means we are beating out elite urban schools like Whitney Young, and suburban schools like New Trier and Stevenson whose budgets per student are more than double what Lane gets. Lane has the largest Advanced Placement program of any high school in the country. In fact Lane received a special award last year from the National College Board for its AP Program. These are amazing achievements for a school that is the size of Lane! Current enrollment is over 4,500 and includes 7th and 8th grades in the LTAC or Lane Tech Academic Center. National testing scores are at an all-time high for the school, despite the fact that 44% of the student body qualifies as low income.
After some volatility, (4 principals in six years), the leadership of the school has found its bearings under the direction of Principal, Brian Tennison. With the help of 6 assistant principals, he manages a budget of more than $26M and a personnel roster of more than 350 faculty and staff. Tennison has taught in the CPS system for 20 years including a dozen years at Whitney Young High School and a stint at the Central Office. He is all about putting the students first in every decision the team makes. The teachers are innovative, dedicated to their students, and highly-motivated. In fact Lane has a 94% return rate for faculty!
Yes... classes like woodshop, electric shop, foundry, and print shop are gone now, but Lane is still on the leading edge when it comes to “tech” that is relevant for today’s work world. The computer science department at Lane is one of the largest and most highly-regarded in the CPS system. All students are required to take at least one year of computer science so that they are digitally literate. Robotics and the Makers Lab teach students CAD as well as how to use various hand tools, 3D printers, laser cutters, CNC machines and more. Students are building engines, motors, and sensor networks that have practical use in a variety of places including Wrigley Field and the Goodman Theater. Another unique learning environment is the Aquaponics Lab, which provides an opportunity for budding urban farmers to understand the ins and outs of agri-business and techniques that will have a positive impact on the environment. The next major 21st Century Shop in planning stages right now will be a “ThinkLab”, which will focus on engineering, artificial intelligence and tech business incubators. These types of classes are ensuring that Lane students will graduate with a well-rounded education, prepared for college and the types of professions in high-demand throughout the world today.
Some things never change. Lane continues to be the place where students venture beyond the borders of their familiar, often homogeneous neighborhoods and stretch beyond the boundaries of what they ever imagined possible. Exposed to different races, ethnicities, religions and cultures, Laneites graduate better prepared for a global community because they have already had diverse experiences. Just like when we attended Lane, many of the students are immigrants, from low or moderately low income families, many single-parent families and are often the first in their families to attend college. Empathy, Respect and Kindness are core values of the school. There is virtually no gang activity, and the most frequent police reports are for lost or stolen phones and back packs. With the exception of passing periods, the atmosphere at Lane is quiet and calm.
In addition to the melting pot at Lane that we are familiar with, there are many more special education students enrolled in the school now... around 220 in classrooms composed of students with autism and an array of severe and profound disabilities, and many more special education students that are mainstreamed into the regular education program. But even if their disabilities are significant, students can be included in classes like PE, robotics, drama, music and art with their regular ed peers.

In 2017 the LTAA partnered with architectural firm HKS, Inc. to research, design and build an award-winning sensory space intended to provide additional therapeutic supports to these students.

Lane also fields a very competitive Special Olympics team, and hosts a Best Buddies program. The residual benefit? Many regular education students are not only prepared for a world with people of all abilities, many have been inspired to pursue careers in social work, occupational or physical therapy, special education and the bio-sciences.
While football is no longer the powerhouse it was years ago, (programs are dwindling everywhere due to costs and safety concerns), other sports like golf and hockey have returned, and new sports have emerged for both boys and girls. Lacrosse, volleyball, water polo, softball, rugby, and girls wrestling have been added to traditional sports like baseball, basketball and the like. Recent City Championships include boys soccer, girls soccer, boys track & field, girls lacrosse, competitive cheer squad, boys 16” softball and girls volleyball.

Not to be outdone, academic teams have also fared well. Robotics teams have gone to nationals 3 years in a row and the debate team brought back a 1st place trophy from national competition in 2018 and 2019! The mock trial team has taken the city championship two of the last three years, and the JROTC Leadership and Academic Bowl team advanced through city and state to take 8th place in nationals last spring with a team composed of freshman and sophomores!
All of this activity and achievement is happening in a building we all know and love, and that will serve students long into the future thanks to a massive renovation in 2015/16. Years of water damage and neglect were addressed with a new roof, drainage system, replacement of over 2400 windows, lintel work and general masonry. Inside the facility, the auditorium was completely renovated with a new ceiling, historically accurate paint scheme, new motor for the fire curtain and state-of-the-art lighting and AV systems. Classrooms impacted by water damage were repaired and the beautiful mahogany relief sculptures in the library were properly restored to their original glory. Construction of the building was originally completed in 1934 with a budget of $6.2M, while the recent renovation cost about 10x that amount!
The Lane Tech Alumni Association is an independent 501(c)(3) established in 1986 to keep alumni connected and to support Lane students. The organization is autonomous from Lane Tech, CPS, and the State Board of Education. While we enjoy positive collaboration with the administration and faculty, they have no influence on how our organization is governed, but are especially helpful in guiding our philanthropic programs to ensure maximum impact. There is no CPS high school alumni group more active, or offering a more robust collection of programs for students, teachers and alumni. From our very beginning, the LTAA Scholarship Program has been the hallmark philanthropic project for the LTAA.
In fact, this year we will reach the $2-million-dollar mark in scholarships provided to deserving Lane Tech seniors! These scholarships are mostly unrestricted and frequently fill financial gaps for students who would otherwise have to work more hours, take out more loans, or perhaps even stay at school for holidays and breaks. What is most poignant is that these scholarships come from alumni, retired faculty, or in honor of them by their loved ones. They are “family” gifts that are personal, meaningful, and highly coveted by the student body.
But before these students can apply to the LTAA for a scholarship, they need to determine where they will attend college and for many, that selection process is limited by geographic reach. In collaboration with the Lane counseling department, the LTAA is able to expand that vision for up to 48 Lane seniors each fall with a college bus tour. On these Midwestern tours, students can visit a series of colleges and universities they might not have considered otherwise, and develop a real strategy for their college applications.
The third leg of our philanthropic stool is the LTAA Faculty Innovation Grant Program. It enables teachers at Lane to procure materials and services not typically available through CPS, to enrich the classroom experience. Whether academic, athletic or arts/culture-related, these signature programs attract the best and brightest students and are critical in preparing them for college. In just 10 years, we have surpassed the quarter-million-dollar milestone in grants awarded to Lane Tech teachers for programs like robotics, debate, athletics, music, computer science, art and many other enrichment activities, keeping Lane in a position of dominance among Chicago high schools.
LTAA members enjoy print or digital versions of our triannual magazine, Lane Tech Today, which is full of information about what’s happening at the school, with fellow alums, and other “Lane-centric” topics of interest. The LTAA also boasts a rich network of social media platforms that inform, engage and excite members and non-members alike. We also have a modest office and archival storage unit off-campus at 3525 W Peterson, where our Director of Alumni Relations, Joanna Perez ‘95, keeps our engine humming.
While the LTAA does not directly manage reunions, we take an active consulting role with reunion committees by providing classmate databases, communication strategies, and coordination of school tours. We also offer archival materials for research and advice on venues and activities. Plus we promote class reunions in our print materials and on our social media platforms to increase the success of these important events.
Another regular activity of the LTAA is the Clocktower Club... a free-wheeling, ever-changing group of thirsty Lane Tech alums who bleed myrtle and gold! Whether celebrating at Oktoberfest, taking a private tour of the 606 Trail in Chicago, or joining forces for a service project like the Lane Tech Food Pantry Drive this February, these all-class reunions are intergenerational, fun, and low-or-no-cost.
Another way the LTAA keeps our alumni family together is through signature events. 2020 will mark the 4th year in a row that Laneites from all over the country will converge on Mesa, AZ to enjoy some pre-season baseball and sunshine. We also host Alumni Night at Wrigley for hundreds of graduates, close out the summer each year with a golf outing, and greet every autumn with our student-alumni art exhibit, Tribe, at Lane’s “Gallery 2501”.
The LTAA will occasionally champion a special project outside the regular cycle of activities. One such project currently underway is the research, design, funding and installation of a new Vietnam marker in Lane’s Memorial Garden. Adding 2 names to the list of classmates who were killed in Vietnam, as well as acknowledging all who served, the memorial will be installed and dedicated this spring with the help of LTAA affinity group, the JROTC Alumni, Cavalry.
Folks often think that the LTAA is some bureaucratic arm of the school, but nothing could be further from the truth. We are not nameless or faceless. Along with our Director, we have an operational board composed of 20 alumni representing 5 decades of classes. We also rely on a small but mighty volunteer corp who with our staff and Board, work tirelessly to plan and execute a respectable non-profit business plan and portfolio of programs. And we are proud of the results! In fact, we have received calls from other CPS schools including Payton, Jones and Schurz, asking us how we do it.

Each one of us has our own personal mission story... a transformational experience that motivates us to give back to Lane.
What is your story? We encourage you to join if you’re not already a member, or renew your existing membership. Come join us at some of the activities we mentioned and make an unrestricted donation so that we can continue to build and grow our very special organization. Help us celebrate our unique heritage and continue the legacy of excellence at Lane for many years to come!

Thank you.