

C. Related Educational Activities

Overview

Of the programs that MSA labels as related educational activities and ABHE labels as alternative academic patterns, LBC has five: alternative delivery modes, basic skills, certificate programs, non-credit offerings, and experiential learning. One of these programs, experiential learning, will be examined briefly, while three others will be shown to be in compliance with the appropriate standards and fundamental elements. Of LBC's two alternative delivery modes, this section of the self-study document will show that the on-campus Degree Completion Program is in compliance, while its online version is addressed in LBC's substantive change documents previously submitted to MSA and ABHE.

Standards

MSA Standard 13

Institutional programs or activities that are characterized by particular content, focus, location, mode of delivery, or sponsorship meet appropriate standards.

ABHE Standard 11

The institution's academic programs are appropriate to the achievement of its mission and to the level of educational programs offered, with some programs oriented specifically to full-time vocational ministry but all programs enabling students to achieve a biblical worldview.

Alternative Delivery Modes

Overview

LBC recognizes that education is not limited to traditional aged students during traditional college semesters and settings. To see the college's mission statement accomplished in the lives of the greatest number of individuals possible, LBC continues to seek alternative ways in which individuals can obtain a biblical education. Currently there are two alternative delivery modes in place at LBC: the Degree Completion Program (DCP) and Biblical Online Education. DCP was started as an on-campus program in 1994. Biblical Online Education began in the fall of 2006 with two DCP Online pilot courses and one graduate pre-requisite course. Plans are for DCP to be the first full program that LBC will deliver through an online format once all approvals are in place. Therefore, this section addresses how these two alternative delivery modes meet the following standards which seek to ensure that all of LBC's programs are appropriate to our mission statement and goals.

Compliance Documented

It is the finding of the self-study process that LBC is in compliance with the stated standards and subsequent elements. Data sources demonstrating this compliance include: DCP catalog, DCP student handbook, DCP faculty handbook, DCP policies and procedures manual, DCP assessing prior learning manual, DCP outcomes grid, and DCP enrollment reports. Data

concerning the projected DCP Online can be found in LBC's feasibility study of online education and LBC's substantive change document for biblical online education.

Analysis of Key Issues

A complete and full analysis of DCP Online as LBC's first biblical online education endeavor can be found in the Substantive Change Documents submitted to MSA and ABHE in 2006. Issues addressed in those documents include enrollment projections, costs, financial aid, length of courses and program, staffing, assessment, program review, and the online program's impact on the on-campus program.

Basic Skills

Overview

LBC encourages all academically qualified individuals to take advantage of its educational programs. The Reaching Academic Potential (RAP) Center supports LBC's mission to train young men and women for full-time Christian ministry by providing qualified students with academic assistance in basic skills.

A focus group was tasked with examining LBC's policies and procedures as they pertain to providing services to students to assist them in obtaining the basic skills needed to succeed in college. Since the primary resource provided to LBC students is the RAP Center, the focus group consisted of individuals associated with the center. The RAP Center exists to support students in reaching academic goals that will allow them to serve in full-time Christian ministry. While this group found that LBC was generally in compliance in all critical areas as outlined by the appropriate standards and their fundamental/essential elements, the study group also determined that more could be done to better service the needs of LBC's students. In addition, it appears that several established policies and procedures are not consistently followed in other offices, affecting the efficient operation of the RAP Center.

MSA Fundamental Element

Underprepared students may benefit from basic skills or developmental courses provided by an institution as part of its academic offerings. When offered, such pre-college level courses, taken prior to or concurrent with enrollment in degree credit courses, can prepare the student for success in achieving his or her educational goals.

Compliance Documented

It is the finding of this self-study process that LBC is in compliance with the stated standards and subsequent elements in the area of basic skills. Data sources demonstrating this compliance include: undergraduate catalog, admissions criteria document, transfer work policies, English as a second language policy, and the RAP website.

Analysis of Key Issues

Procedural Needs in RAP

During the course of this study, the focus group found that, while the current policies in place are in compliance with accreditation standards, many issues exist concerning the implementation of those policies. [Appendix 4.C.1](#) contains a summary report to be sent to the Academic Administrative Leadership Team (AALT). This report addresses each of MSA's three main fundamental elements found under Standard 13 by first showing compliance and then raising the issues that still need to be addressed to better serve students seeking to reach their academic potential. It is recommended that the RAP director follow through with the AALT in addressing these issues.

One of the issues raised by the focus group is the identification and retention of at-risk students. In the fall of 2006, LBC began using Noel-Levitz's Retention Management System. This system identifies specific students with specific needs and whether or not they are likely to seek help on their own. Since this is a brand-new procedure for LBC, the success of using this system has yet to be evaluated.

As LBC begins to offer online courses, it is noted that the substantive change documents for Biblical Online Education do not address how the college will assess and meet the needs of at-risk online students. This issue needs to be addressed.

Personnel Needs in RAP

Based on college preparatory testing (SAT and ACT scores) and high school grades, an increasing number of applicants qualify for "study skills" (SAT combined scores between 880-760 or ACT composite scores between 17-15). This increase in the number of students served required the expansion of the RAP Center facilities. While still located within the library, the center is about five times the size of its previous facility, which now houses the office of the director of the program. The increase in the number of students served has also concomitantly resulted in an increase in related RAP secretarial tasks for the director, part-time staff, and student tutors, tasks which are not related to the staff's primary reason for seeking employment in the center (using their tutoring, teaching, and counseling skills).

To retain and recruit tutors, the director must be able to assert that the job description is primarily tutoring. To alleviate the present problem, secretarial support is needed and could be accomplished by hiring a full-time secretary. In addition, to recruit additional tutors, LBC Graduate School students in the Master of Education program could be encouraged to apply and complete their internships through the RAP Center. This could become a cost-effective means for the RAP Center to obtain qualified tutors, since internships are not paid positions. In addition, graduate students would be provided a convenient placement both in terms of location and availability of day/evening work hours.

Key Strengths Noted in This Section

1. Within the last five years the Reaching Academic Potential Center has moved into expanded facilities, greatly enhancing its ability to meet the needs of the diverse population of students who utilize its services.

2. Reaching Academic Potential Center personnel have suggested some creative solutions to their personnel needs.

Recommendations for Growth and Improvement

The following recommendations for consideration are being made by this study group:

1. The Reaching Academic Potential director should address the concerns expressed by the focus group with the Academic Administrative Leadership Team during the 2006-2007 academic year.
2. The Reaching Academic Potential Center should expand personnel, either full-time, part-time, or through use of graduate assistants, so that additional services can be extended to the degree completion and graduate programs.
3. The college should monitor the success of the retention management system and evaluate its effectiveness on a yearly basis.
4. The college should investigate the services necessary for future online programs.

Certificate Programs

Overview

Recognizing that LBC's mission can be achieved in other ways beyond degree-granting programs, the college offers numerous certificate options. LBC offers certificate programs through the Institute of Biblical Enrichment, traditional undergraduate school, Degree Completion Program, and Graduate School. The expectations for each certificate program offered at LBC are articulated in the catalogs for each school or program through which the certificate is offered. The format for designing, approving, and revising all programs, including certificate programs, is outlined in the academic affairs section of the college's policy manual.

Compliance Documented

It is the finding of this self-study process that LBC is in compliance with the stated standards and subsequent elements. Data sources demonstrating this compliance include: undergraduate catalog, degree completion catalog, graduate catalog, and LBC's policy manual.

Non-Credit Offerings

Overview

The Institute of Biblical Enrichment (IBE) is a non-college credit CEU-granting academic program of LBC. The goals and mission of the IBE are consistent with those of the college. Specifically, the IBE exists for the purpose of educating primarily Christian men and women to live according to a biblical worldview as lay people who serve their church and area organizations as volunteers.

The director of the IBE, Mr. William Kabasenche, has been in his position since 1984, providing continuity as the program has grown both numerically and geographically with the addition of branch and extension campuses. Facilitating the IBE's growth has been a variety of certificate programs in biblical studies, lay counseling, and youth ministry. Each certificate program has its own advisor. These advisors are recognized professionals in their fields who assist the director in the evaluation and improvement of their specific programs, including course development.

The IBE program is evaluated not only by the director and his program advisors but also by the students enrolled in the program. The criteria for evaluation are quality control of the program, student satisfaction, and positive faculty/course topic endorsement.

All faculty selected to teach in the program maintain the same doctrinal position as the college and must exhibit previous teaching experience.

Students receive CEU credit at a ratio of 1 CEU for every 10 hours of organized learning experience according to nationally recognized continuing education criteria.

Compliance Documented

It is the finding of this self-study process that LBC is in compliance with the stated standards and subsequent elements. Data sources demonstrating this compliance include: undergraduate catalog, IBE brochures and flyers, and IBE course syllabi.

Experiential Learning

Overview

LBC recognizes that not all learning occurs inside a formal classroom setting. Learning occurs through any number of life events. According to MSA's *Characteristics of Excellence*, experiential learning generally refers to knowledge or skills obtained outside of a higher education institution. This section of the self-study report will address the related educational activity of assessing prior learning experiences as it relates to the following MSA and ABHE standards. Currently the only program that accepts prior learning experiences for credit is LBC's Degree Completion Program (DCP).

Compliance Documented

It is the finding of this self-study process that LBC is in compliance with the stated standards and subsequent elements. Data sources demonstrating this compliance include: the DCP assessing prior learning manuals and the DCP outcomes grid. LBC's DCP follows nationally recognized standards set forth by the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL). In addition, the DCP director is certified in assessing prior learning through a program sponsored by CAEL and DePaul University.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this section:

1. What evidences exist that current guidelines are sufficient to ascertain that the level, quality, and quantity of learning documented in prior learning petitions are college level?

Are the evaluators of the petitions trained sufficiently in the criteria for granting college credit?

2. What evidences are there that the prior learning assessment program at LBC is meeting the needs of the degree completion student?

Analysis of Key Issues

Quality Prior Learning Assessment Program

A focus group of the four primary faculty evaluators of prior learning was conducted in November of 2005. Prior to the meeting, the evaluators were each given a copy of the prior learning assessment (PLA) handbook for review. They were asked to answer three questions concerning the handbook and an additional seven questions concerning the prior learning assessment process ([Appendix 4.C.2](#)).

Overall, the evaluators felt the PLA handbook was complete, adequate, and helpful. Nevertheless, they did make suggestions for improvement. The evaluators felt the handbook was clear and easy to follow but was too lengthy a document. The third question focused on that very issue. The focus group felt that, despite the original desire to have one exhaustive handbook for convenience, the handbook has grown significantly over the years and should be divided into two: one for students and evaluators and one for policies and procedures. In addition, the group made twelve other minor recommendations to be addressed.

All four evaluators in the focus group indicated that they were satisfied with the PLA process and felt very comfortable with it. All four indicated that the personal training and ongoing assistance that they receive from the program director is sufficient.

Utilization of Prior Learning Assessment Program

The DCP sets as a goal that at least 30% of all DCP students will apply for credit for prior learning and that 70% of those applying will agree their petitions for credit were fairly reviewed and they were satisfied with the results. As of May 2004, the last time the results were tabulated, 34% of all DCP students had applied for some form of credit for prior learning. Of those applying, 95% agreed their petitions were fairly reviewed and indicated they were satisfied with the results (see DCP's COAP in Assessment Documents Notebook.) Nevertheless, an informal survey of other Christian institutions offering prior learning credits through their Degree Completion Programs indicated that around 40% of their students apply for prior learning credits. Considering this fact, the DCP should consider raising its goal of students applying for prior learning assessment to 40%. Likewise, considering the current high percentage of satisfaction (95%), the DCP should consider raising its satisfaction goal to 85%.

A topic not addressed by this study group but that has been discussed at the administrative level over the past couple of years is whether LBC should consider offering experiential learning assessment options to all students. The college recognizes that a discussion of this issue needs to be given a higher priority for two reasons: the continuing focus on evaluating the achievement of learning outcomes instead of seat time, and the current state and federal calls for ease of transferability of college credits of all types.

Key Strengths Noted in This Section

1. LBC's Degree Completion Program has set and met high standards, including the certification in prior learning assessment held by the director.
2. The four primary evaluators of prior learning have expressed a high degree of satisfaction with their training and the assessment process.
3. LBC's Degree Completion Program has exceeded its prior learning assessment goals, especially in the area of student satisfaction with the process.

Recommendation for Growth and Improvement

The following recommendations for consideration are being made by this study group:

1. The Degree Completion Program (DCP) should follow the 13 minor recommendations made by the focus group in revising the current APL handbook.
2. The DCP should consider raising the goal so 40% of all students in the program will apply for prior learning credits.
3. The DCP should consider raising the goal so 85% of those applying for prior learning credits will agree their petitions were fairly reviewed and they were satisfied with the result.
4. The college should examine if assessment of experiential learning should be extended to all undergraduate and graduate students.

Page intentionally left blank.