



May 15, 2007

Ms. Jean Avnet Morse, Executive Director
Commission on Higher Education
3624 Market Street
Philadelphia, PA 19104

Dear Ms. Morse:

Lancaster Bible College and Graduate School expresses its deep appreciation to the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools (MSA) and to the Association for Biblical Higher Education (ABHE) for the quality and professionalism of the members of the team that visited our campus to review the current status of our institution. The joint team visit was particularly appropriate because the College values both associations in their common and distinctive roles in higher education today. The collegiality of the team members was evident and profitable as they reviewed the documents thoroughly, interviewed College personnel, and evaluated objectively the various programs, policies and procedures, structures, resources, and personnel of the institution.

Particularly helpful was the format of the final report. It followed the design of the College's self study closely, and confirmed in large measure those findings. Especially noteworthy was the leadership of Dr. George Miller representing MSA and the cooperative assistance rendered by those team members representing ABHE. The team members involved themselves energetically in their assigned tasks and interviewed a diverse number of College personnel. They also availed themselves of the opportunity to interact with members of our Board of Trustees who were invested in the self study process.

The College agrees with and is already seriously addressing the seven recommendations made by the team. The substance of these recommendations had been identified as areas needing attention by the College in its self study.

The following are our affirmations of these recommendations made by the team and include some steps we have already taken towards addressing those recommendations. Some of these steps were initiated based upon the self study process and were already in place prior to the team visit. It was reaffirming to have the team objectively confirm these findings in the review.

1. *The Team recommends a better coordinated planning and budgeting process possibly on a three-year cycle that integrates budgeting with the planning process.*

Integrating planning and budgeting has been a priority since the last decennial visit. Significant progress has been made to link the planning process with budget formation. We accept this recommendation as an opportunity to better coordinate planning beyond the current year's budgeting cycle. Specifically, the Committee for Institutional Effectiveness and Planning (CIEP) will be charged with establishing a three-year budget cycle that takes into consideration projected enrollments and CIEP-approved planning initiatives.

- 2. While there is evidence that the Comprehensive Outcomes Assessment Plan (COAP) and the CIEP are integrated, the links appear more apparent in the use of retention data, graduation rates, attrition and relevancy of the program. A challenge will be to link student learning outcomes to the strategic planning process. The new director of Assessment and Institutional Research will become a member of CIEP which will certainly help in this regard. The Team strongly recommends special attention be given to this effort and yearly assessment of success be monitored internally.***

The implementation of LBC's Comprehensive Outcomes Assessment Plan (COAP) has been in process for a number of years. Each year we dig down a bit deeper in our knowledge and practice of assessment. All academic departments and programs have developed COAP grids and have begun collecting data. LBC concurs with the team's recommendation that the next logical layer is to introduce student learning outcomes more overtly into the planning process. This is one of the main responsibilities of our new Director of Institutional Research and Assessment.

- 3. Although there is no evidence of a current conflict of interest issue on the Board, the Board of Trustees has discussed on numerous occasions a formal conflict of interest policy. The Team recommends that such a policy be finalized and adopted.***

We accept this recommendation and the Board has already begun working on a conflict of interest policy. This policy will be adopted this year.

- 4. The Team recommends that the college document and demonstrate how assessment results are used to improve teaching, learning, and institutional programs and services.***

The Comprehensive Outcomes Assessment Plan (COAP) that was adopted by the College in 2000 has proven to be an excellent tool in documenting assessment results that are improving teaching, learning, and institutional programs and services. All departments have made some progress in utilizing the COAP. Some departments have been documenting aspects of the assessment loop that are being closed in many areas. Nevertheless, it is acknowledged that a more systematic and organized effort is needed to ensure that all departments (academic and academic support units) continue to progress in the area of assessment. The newly created Office of Institutional Research and Assessment is charged with assisting departments across campus in understanding how to link data with decision-making. The Director already has plans in place to move each department along in following their COAP or whatever other means of assessment planning is appropriate for them.

- 5. The Team concurs with the present plan to form a committee for Institutional Research and Assessment and recommends that this group be charged to act as a resource to the campus for assessment activities, give thoughtful feedback and suggestion to plans and reports submitted, and act as ambassadors for assessment to campus groups.***

The new Director of Institutional Research and Assessment is currently forming an assessment committee. This committee has broad representation from key areas across the academic and academic support units. It should be up and running in Fall 2007.

- 6. While some direct forms of assessment are being used, with pre- and post-tests developed and administered in the Biblical Studies department, the Team recommends that LBC expand current direct assessment to include some nationally-normed tests (such as Academic Profile, MAPP, or CLA) and/or more course embedded assessments using rubrics designed by the department to assess student success.***

This is a logical step in the process of collecting meaningful assessment data. It is also consistent with our own self-study recommendations. Plans for this upcoming academic year include adding one nationally-normed test for each division and to have each instructor work with his or her division or department to develop an embedded assessment for at least one course.

7. The Team recommends that LBC follow its self-study recommendation to simplify and focus on the assessment process and continue to implement assessment plans and review assessment data. As data becomes available, it should be used to modify and improve teaching, curriculums, and courses to better achieve learning outcomes. Each department or unit could designate two or three outcomes to assess in each cycle, with both direct and indirect forms of assessment.

As planning was the focus in our 1997 decennial self-study, outcomes assessment is our main focus moving forward. As is evidenced in the recommendations we made for ourselves, we are determined to continue to connect assessment of student learning outcomes with planning and decision-making through the collection and analysis of data.

Summary

Lancaster Bible College and Graduate School believes that the peer review process is the best approach possible in assisting colleges in the pursuit of quality and excellence. The past two years of MSA staff guidance and preparation, together with this recent joint team review, have been one of the most effective and helpful experiences that Lancaster Bible College and Graduate School has ever undergone. We wish to express our appreciation to all who had a part in helping us pursue our goals and remain true to our mission.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter W. Teague, Ed.D.
President

jmh

cc: Dr. Ralph E. Enlow, Executive Director, ABHE