

Chapter 8 – Standards 11a & 11c

Academic Programs and Procedures and Curriculum

Overview

The academic programs of Lancaster Bible College and its division Capital Seminary and Graduate School (referred to collectively as LBC) are created to educate students in fulfilling the mission of the institution. This can only be accomplished through academic programs containing appropriate content and rigor. With rapidly changing student populations and delivery formats, LBC has made many changes to maintain the integrity of its academic programs. This section of the self-study report will examine key factors that affect the creation, assessment, and departmental structures of academic programs at LBC.

While a strong biblical education is at the crux of an education from LBC, an equally strong background in the Arts & Sciences is necessary to enable a student to turn that knowledge of the Bible into a worldview and to use that worldview in serving Christ in the Church and in society. Therefore, LBC's core knowledge and skills include elements of proficiency in knowing and interpreting the Scriptures, as well as the demonstration of critical thinking skills and proficiency in acquiring, evaluating, communicating, and applying information.

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.

Compliance Documented

In keeping with a comprehensive report with a focus on key issues, the reader is directed to our Compliance Index showing evidence of our compliance with all appropriate essential elements of [Standard 11](#). We track the assessment and planning aspects of this standard through LBC's assessment and planning database where each program has a workspace which includes curriculum maps, programmatic student learning goals, evidences of the accomplishment of these goals, analysis of the evidences, and action plans based on the analysis of the evidences. (See [Social Work](#) [Appendix 2A] and [Education](#) [Appendix 2B] workspace examples. See additional evidences in [Standard 11 documentation](#).)

The remainder of this chapter includes additional evidences of compliance within the framework of the key issues we have chosen to focus on in this study.

Research Questions

With the purposes of advancing institutional self-understanding and self-improvement in mind, the following research questions guided the study group in preparing this section:

1. What evidence is there that LBC faculty give adequate oversight to curriculum for fast-developing programs and delivery methods to ensure equal academic content and rigor appropriate to that degree level? How effective is our process of determining rigor?
2. Considering LBC's desire that some of our academic programs seek professional accreditation, to what extent do the faculty within those programs have the necessary autonomy to achieve the mission and goals of the college within the program in light of specific professional accreditation standards?

3. How are we diversifying the curriculum for high-achieving as well as academically at-risk students?
4. Is rigor sufficient for students' academic/professional goals, and how is that rigor assessed and remediated?
5. Does course content encourage proficient use of technology by both the instructor and student?
6. Are students exposed through general education curriculum to a diversified set of world views?
7. Does curricular content support student growth in oral and written communication?

Analysis of Key Issues

Arts & Sciences

The foundation of general education comes from courses within our Arts & Sciences Department. This knowledge base, including the accompanying skills and abilities, is then built upon and applied to specific majors or concentrations. Therefore, while the assessment of general education also occurs in the majors, most notably through capstone courses or projects, the Arts & Sciences Department is responsible for providing and assessing the effectiveness of “content and rigor characteristic of higher education, and a level of analytical research and communication skills needed for life-long learning commensurate with the level of education offered” (Essential Element 1 of Association for Biblical Higher Education Commission on Accreditation [ABHECOA] Standard 11a). The current Mission and Objectives of the Arts & Sciences Department can be found in [Appendix 8A](#).

In response to the recommendation made by the 2007 Self-Study Evaluation Team, the Arts & Sciences Department made great strides in addressing “leadership, planning, resources, and implementation of rigorous assessment of the learning that occurs in the core.” A new chairperson

was put in place at the start of 2008-2009 and this individual continues to lead the department. The new assessment and planning database was used by the chair and her team to create curriculum maps for all rostered courses, identify measurements of the general education objectives, and to record assessment data gathered from all Arts & Sciences faculty from a representative cross section of offered courses. One method by which assessment data is recorded is through Assessment Annotations. The [Assessment Annotation form](#) (Appendix 2N) was developed internally to document course-embedded assessment of learning outcomes. When an instructor from any discipline, location, or delivery format conducts a course-embedded assessment activity, it can be recorded on the annotation form. This form allows the instructor to map the assessed outcome to one specific course outcome and to any other higher level outcome as appropriate (i.e. program, general education, Bible & Theology, and/or institutional). By filtering all completed annotations, evidence can be compiled to support the accomplishment of the Arts & Sciences Department outcomes. Evidences gathered through other measurements including information literacy exams, PRAXIS II exams, and internal studies can be found in the [A&S Assessment & Planning Workspace](#) (Appendix 2C).

The recent key initiatives undertaken by the college have provided the Arts & Sciences Department with some challenges. The following outlines the strategies already undertaken to address these challenges as well as future steps.

Move from Regional to National

As the self-study group considered LBC's new positioning as a national institution, it examined the general education core to ensure that it meets best practices standards as defined by the

institution's accrediting boards. This study group also examined LBC graduates' ability to gain admittance into seminary/graduate programs.

The general education core is undergoing significant revision to enhance learning for all students and to ensure high-achieving students' opportunity for more advanced learning in the Arts & Sciences disciplines. Currently, high-achieving students frequently turn to extra-curricular activities to enhance their educational experience. LBC, in the distant past, did have honors classes available for high achieving students. Due to retired leadership and absence of a critical mass of students participating, the honors program was discontinued. As LBC continues to experience rapid growth, the feasibility of an honors program or honors sections of courses should be revisited.

LBC is now the second-largest independent Bible college holding accreditation with the Association of Biblical Higher Education (ABHE). ABHE standards include a recommendation for best practice that requires students to pursue general education study beyond survey level courses. As LBC starts to take a national stage due to its size within ABHE, the Arts & Sciences Department reviewed this best practice standard in order to identify necessary changes. The decision to change the general education core was also made in consideration of middle level education majors who take multiple courses in their area of disciplinary specialization.

Prior to the fall 2016 introduction of the newly revised general education core, students only had to take one advanced course titled HUM 422 Christian Perspectives. While instructors sought to teach this course at an advanced level, the course enrollment caps of 25 students (and sometimes higher) often limited their ability to introduce assessments that measure learning at the higher levels of Bloom's taxonomy. In addition, a lack of disciplinary prerequisites and an interdisciplinary model's challenge in the LBC context also made the course difficult to teach (see

Appendix 8B: [HUM 422 Christian Perspectives Revisions](#)). Beyond the design weaknesses in HUM 422, a lack of prerequisites for 300 level courses in the Arts & Sciences Department caused instructors to simplify course material and assignments to meet the needs of students who had not taken a survey level course in a discipline prior to taking a 300 level course. In essence, nearly all Arts & Sciences courses regardless of prefix were being taught at an introductory 100/200 level because students were not gaining the necessary prerequisite knowledge of disciplinary principles to go deeper in any given field. In particular, this curricular design created an ineffective learning environment for middle level education students who must take multiple courses in a discipline to meet the requirements of the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

In keeping with a Standard 11a Essential Element requiring “Evidence that course sequence progresses from foundational to advanced studies appropriate to the degree and level of education offered,” the Arts & Sciences Department arrived at a solution to the concerns about the capstone course and ambiguous system of course prefixes. A new Arts & Sciences core will apply to all incoming freshman starting in the fall of 2016. The new core requires students to take at least one 300-level and one 400-level course. The Arts & Sciences Department plans course revisions to more clearly distinguish between survey level and 300 level courses, which will create opportunities for advanced tracks of disciplinary study. In March 2016, the Academic Council approved the Arts & Sciences Department guidelines for 400 level courses ([Appendix 8B: HUM 422 Christian Perspectives Revisions](#)). The guidelines address the problem of high course enrollment caps, outline key characteristics of instructional approach in the 400 level courses, and indicate a minimum amount of reading and writing required in the course. Within the revised core, some tracks will be focused on disciplinary depth of study. For example, students will take a 200 level history course to be followed by a 300 and 400 level history course, with the 300 and 400

level courses designed to advance students' discipline-related knowledge along with their critical thinking and information literacy skills. However, because of the scheduling complexities faced by students, some core tracks will be unified by a progression of critical thinking and information literacy skills embedded into the 300 and 400 level courses without the additional layer of disciplinary depth of study. These core tracks will be more interdisciplinary in nature.

The self-study group also assessed how successful LBC graduates are in obtaining admittance into seminary/graduate school programs. If students attend an undergraduate school with a national reputation, one of the assumptions students make is their admittance to graduate schools of their choosing. The 2016 survey of LBC alumni administered by the Self-study Steering Committee indicates that our graduates are able to apply successfully to seminary/graduate schools without the need for remedial credits. Thirty percent of alumni responding to the survey attended or are attending a graduate institution other than our own Capital Seminary & Graduate School (21% indicated they attended or were attending Capital). Ninety-five percent of all respondents indicated they did not have to take any additional undergraduate course(s) to gain full admission to their graduate programs. (See [Appendix 8C](#).) These data are just one indication that “curriculum content and level of education [are] appropriate to the degree offered” (Essential Element 7 of ABHECOA Standard 11a).

Technology Education

At the time of the 2007 self-study, an emphasis on the need to assess technological proficiency in higher education was just starting to emerge, and the Arts & Sciences Department was tasked with leading the initiative to teach technology to students. Due to the ever-increasing demand for and diversity of technology skills within career fields and changes in LBC's institutional structure,

Arts & Sciences' revision of departmental student learning outcomes (SLOs) determined embedding technology requirements within the general education core is an inadequate means by which to assess proficiency.

LBC has now moved to a vertical structure organizing majors into seven different departments rather than one Professional Division. Because these departments are now more homogenous in focus since they are divided by discipline, the College found it logical to assign responsibility for assessing students' technological awareness to the various departments. The departments can construct assessment measurements more authentic to the students' future career needs. For example, the students in the Communication program need to know how to use broadcasting equipment, graphic design software, and web-writing interfaces, while the students in Education programs need to know how to use Smartboards and other instructional technologies.

While the shift in responsibility decentralizes technology learning, current patterns of technology usage on campus indicate a collegial, cooperative relationship between the Communication program and other programs that is giving students access to the equipment necessary for their learning needs. Likewise, the ability to serve LBC in these areas has increased substantially with the addition of the Charles Frey Academic Center. The Arts & Sciences Department, under the auspices of the Communication program, has added nearly a quarter of a million dollars of new equipment to operate four new communication spaces. Those include an online radio station, a television studio, a digital audio recording suite, and a Communication Lab designed as a fully configured classroom dedicated for communication students with robust computer stations equipped with the newest Adobe Creative Suite.

Rapid Growth and Expansion

Over the past 10 years, LBC has grown from a single location in Lancaster, Pennsylvania with headcount enrollment of just under 1000 undergraduate and graduate students to over 2000 students in seven locations (strategically reduced to five with the closure of the Springfield, VA and Indianapolis locations after 8/2016). Just a few years ago, LBC's enrollment was comprised of approximately 85% undergraduate students and 15% seminary/graduate students. Additionally, 40% of the enrollment was comprised of students considered to be non-traditional learners. Now, LBC's student population consists of approximately 75% undergraduate students and 25% seminary and graduate school students. There has also been a marked increase in the number of non-traditional learners, who now make up 55% of LBC's enrollment. Most of this growth and change in the ratio of traditional students to non-traditional learners can be attributed to the opening of new locations, the rapid growth of our online education programs, the addition of new programs, and the acquisition of academic programming from Washington Bible College|Capital Bible Seminary. While Chapter 9 of this report will discuss additional locations, the following sections will discuss the other three growth factors.

Online Education

Online education, facilitated by the Office of Digital Learning, has become a cornerstone of our academic programs. With the rapid growth of our non-traditional student population, online education has assisted in meeting the needs of these students while upholding student learning outcomes for courses and curriculum. The Office of Digital Learning has accomplished its mission and objective to be an integral part of LBC's course offerings and to provide high-quality effective

education that is easily accessible. A full review of online education at LBC can be found in Chapter 9 of this self-study.

Capital Seminary and Graduate School

In the fall of 1996, LBC's newly created graduate school first began offering graduate courses. In January 2014, LBC launched our new division, Capital Seminary and Graduate School (Capital) with the goal of serving adult learners at the graduate level. In place of the traditional delivery model, we developed a program that leverages technology to bring seminary and graduate education to life-engaged adult learners. Students no longer have to relocate to gain seminary and graduate-level credentials.

This is accomplished through a hybrid course structure that combines online participation with short, concentrated residencies where students interact face-to-face with faculty and classmates. Moving to this delivery model and using LBC's multiple locations as class meeting sites for residencies has directly increased enrollment by a factor of two. Data that supports the effectiveness of the blended delivery format can be found in Chapter 2 of this self-study document.

With the increased enrollment in our seminary and graduate programs, administrative structures have been reorganized. Formerly, seminary/graduate education was an entity unto itself, creating its own curriculum and academic policies. LBC's academic programs moved to a vertical integration; now, all academic and curricular decisions are made within the new academic department structure. The current departments that oversee seminary and graduate school academic programs include Bible & Theology, Church & Ministry Leadership, Counseling & Social Work, and Education. Former Seminary and Graduate School academic administration and faculty now report through each department to the department chair.

As a part of this process, the seminary has been embedded within two departments, Bible & Theology and Church & Ministry Leadership. To ensure that the uniqueness of a seminary education will be maintained, a Seminary Leadership Team was formed which consists of the Provost and the chairs and associate chairs of these two departments.

New Programs

Our rapid growth is due not only to the expansion in locations and delivery formats but also to the addition of new programs. As reported in our MSCHE [2012 Periodic Review Report](#) (Appendix 1C) in response to a 2007 Self-Study suggestion, LBC has taken steps to ensure that adequate consideration is given to adding new programs. These steps include a full analysis of anticipated impact on the college community (human resources, student services, and financial resources). New programs are [evaluated after the first three years of operation](#) (Appendix 8D) and fall into a [six-year evaluation](#) (Appendix 8E) cycle that all existing programs follow. This evaluation cycle reassesses the impact of the program on college resources and confirms the program's relevancy to the mission of the college. Part of the process of initial new program approval ensures that the program has "curriculum content and level of education appropriate to the degree offered" and that it includes "a process of regular review by faculty to ensure that curricular objectives for each academic program are being realized" (Essential Elements 7 and 5 of ABHE Standard 11a).

Administrative Structural Changes

To accommodate this rapid growth, LBC's academic administration has developed new structures to give adequate oversight to the curriculum. In 2015, academic administrative structural changes were made so that each academic program and its curriculum now resides under one of seven departments. For the previous 20 years, these programs were overseen by separate entities on

campus (i.e., traditional undergraduate programs were overseen by the Vice President for Academic Affairs [now Provost] while the seminary/graduate and adult education departments were overseen by a different vice president). Under the current vertical structure, each program, from undergraduate to graduate/seminary to doctoral level, including adult accelerated and online undergraduate programs, is now administered through one of the seven academic departments. As previously noted, each department chair still reports directly to the Provost and is a member of Academic Council. However, each chair now represents all offerings within his or her department, not just undergraduate programs and courses. The new structure greatly enhances each department's ability to provide "Objectives consistent with the institution's mission and improved accessibility to learning opportunities" and "Clearly defined learning outcomes that are designed, approved, administered and evaluated under established institutional procedures." (Essential Elements 1 and 2 of ABHECOA Standard 11d).

Impact of Rapid Growth on Remedial Education and Assessment

As the study group considered the rapid growth of LBC, it also considered remedial education availability for various student populations and faculty assessment practices.

A focus on adult learners has driven much of LBC's most recent growth and expansion. One of the key changes to occur within the adult learners' Accelerated Undergraduate Degree model in the past ten years is the removal of the requirement that students have transferable college credits in order to enroll. The program now accepts students with no previous college credits. Anecdotal evidence from instructors and Writing Center staff indicates the adult learner population, especially students attending during the timeframe covered by this self-study, frequently struggles with academic writing.

In keeping with Essential Element 6 of Standard 11b regarding “A system of ongoing program review and assessment of outcomes that results in program improvement,” and Essential Element 2 of Standard 11d, “Clearly defined learning outcomes that are designed, approved, administered and evaluated under established institutional procedures,” the self-study group compared the English course requirements for the Accelerated Undergraduate Degree (AUD) students and the Traditional Undergraduate (TUD) students. AUD students are required to take two courses focused exclusively on academic writing (LAN 101 English Composition and LAN 151 Research and Writing) in comparison to the TUD sequence of LAN 101 English Composition and a subsequent Writing Intensive course that reinforces writing skills but does not include extensive instruction in writing skills (see Appendix 8F: [Writing Intensive Guidelines](#)). The lack of parallel structure in the required English courses makes sense since Writing Intensive requirements are difficult to achieve in the accelerated delivery model of AUD. However, a secondary lack of parallel structure in the English sequence was detrimental; namely, no AUD developmental writing requirement equivalent to the developmental requirement in the TUD program existed. To address faculty and Writing Center staff concerns that adult learners lack writing proficiency and adequate opportunity to remediate writing skill deficiencies, the AUD program instituted a writing placement procedure and added LAN 060 Introduction to English Composition as a curricular option in fall of 2015. AUD applicants must now submit a writing sample, which is scored by an individual who does not otherwise participate in AUD recruitment and admissions. If the student needs remedial writing instruction, the student must take LAN 060 online prior to enrolling in other courses.

As rapid expansion has taken place, making LBC a multi-location institution, it is important to examine the consistency of academic rigor and assessment standards at various locations and across delivery modes. Conflicting student perceptions gained from survey data and anecdotal

evidence gained through the study group's informal discussion with colleagues who teach in TUD, AUD, and online contexts along with the study group members' own experiences with all three contexts indicate additional research is needed to assess academic rigor, particularly as it relates to consistent assessment of student work. In 2013, the Office for Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) completed a study comparing Arts & Sciences course GPAs across the Lancaster, Capital, and Philadelphia locations. Insufficient data was gathered to measure GPAs of students taking classes through online programs. The study found location did affect GPA, but AUD enrollment compared to TUD enrollment did not necessarily affect GPA. As a result, representatives from various locations and delivery modes need to create means by which to communicate the level of rigor expected as a whole at LBC.

The same study found Arts & Sciences full-time faculty awarded slightly higher GPAs than adjunct faculty, a finding that contrasts with the student perception of more lenient grading from adjuncts (Appendix 6D: Academic Rigor Report). The lack of unity in research data and student perception indicates a need for more research of full-time and adjunct faculty assessment practices. Finally, in a cross-departmental comparison, the OIE discovered Arts & Sciences traditional faculty did award higher GPAs for traditional students (3.0) than the Bible & Theology department faculty (2.8). These findings seemingly support the student perception in the Academic Rigor report that of all courses offered, the Arts & Sciences at times are the least rigorous. Additionally, of possible concern is the finding that student GPAs in the 2013 Academic Rigor report averaged in the low B range, which indicates Arts & Sciences courses may be at risk for grade inflation, particularly in junior and senior level courses (Appendix 8G: [A&S courses GPA analysis report – 2013](#)).

The Changing Face of the Bible College Student

As LBC continues to make a biblical higher education available to nontraditional students by way of accelerated and online programs, a concern that must be addressed is the need to have comparable learning outcomes and measurements for identical courses no matter what the delivery format. During the fall of 2014, the OIE initiated a blind grading study for several sections of THE 105 Prelude to Biblical & Theological Studies. The goal was to obtain a random sample of final papers from as broad a range of sections, instructors, and delivery formats as possible. [This study](#) (Appendix 8H) brought to light the vast differences that exist between course requirements across different sections of the same course, most notably the final project. Such diverse requirements for the final project make it virtually impossible to conduct a valid and reliable study that adequately compares the learning outcomes of one course across different learning locations and delivery formats. While the need for academic freedom is acknowledged, consideration should be given to establishing a consistent final project across all sections and delivery formats of courses bearing the same course ID and having the same course description and student learning outcomes. This requirement would not unduly infringe on the academic freedom of the individual faculty members because they would still be free to adjust any other requirement and teaching methodologies, as long as the student learning outcomes of the course are met.

Biblical Worldview and the Changing Face of the Bible College Student

LBC is preparing students to live and work in an increasingly globalized culture and in neighborhoods and work environments more diverse than ever before. Essential Elements 3 and 4 of ABHECOA Standard 11a call for a program of general education with “Evidence that the integration of curricular components enables students to achieve a biblical worldview” and “A

curriculum taught with sensitivity to the cultural context in which students serve.” While a biblical worldview would be consistent with our institutional mission, this self-study group studied the diversity present in the general education curriculum. A wide range of recent Arts & Sciences Department syllabi from a number of disciplines represented within the core were assessed to determine whether the student learning outcomes and assignments reflected a curriculum designed to expose students to a diverse set of worldviews. The findings demonstrate Arts & Sciences courses across the disciplines are designed to incorporate an analysis of worldviews; whether shaped by biblical worldview, field of study, or a comparison of several different worldviews.

Upon further investigation, the group discovered results from a randomly sampled group of 35 sophomores, juniors, seniors, and alumni indicates that the majority of students felt that Arts & Sciences courses integrated a biblical worldview, but they did not feel their courses helped them relate better to people of different races, religions, or nations. When asked if biblical integration in their Arts & Sciences courses was evident, 24 respondents indicated biblical integration was present in nearly every course, ten indicated its presence in some courses, and one indicated its presence in only a few. When asked if courses helped the students relate better to people of different races, religions, or nations as a result of the course, 24 participants indicated *no*, eight indicated *yes*, and two were undecided. The Arts & Sciences Department should consider more fully examined ethnic and religious perspectives in its courses (Appendix 8I: [General Education Survey Data](#), Appendix 8J: [General Education Survey - Open Answer](#)).

Though students indicate a lack of diversity in the Arts & Sciences core as it relates to different races and religions, diversity in the curriculum is one area where it is important to consider the student experience outside of the general education core. The annual Missions Conference is a one-week annual event requiring the attendance of all traditional undergraduate students. The

Missions Conference provides exposure to diverse cultures. The main speaker each year has a minimum of three sessions with students and all speakers are specifically qualified to challenge students to think critically and to think beyond their ethnocentric Western perspectives. The speakers from 2012 – 2014 had diverse experience in international ministry and study with one spending time in long-term ministry in Indonesia and Thailand, one leading a mobilization organization for college students transitioning to lives abroad, and one holding a D.Min. degree in Cross-Cultural Studies. In 2015, the speaker was an Egyptian native, and in 2016, the speaker was a Brazilian native who had lived long-term in South East Asia and India. In addition to the main speakers, each Missions Conference has three days of breakout sessions led by individuals who have lived all over the world and work with diverse populations.

Our students are also exposed to diverse cultures through LBC's partnership with Compassion International. This partnership, an educational vehicle, provides students the opportunity to sponsor a child in poverty, thus promoting an awareness of global poverty, encouraging humility, and training students to be global citizens. This partnership is multifaceted; Compassion Alumni and speakers come to LBC throughout the year, letter writing campaigns happen monthly, and awareness is developed through Compassion's extensive library of videos and print resources. Students are also given the opportunity to visit a Compassion site and, if possible, their sponsored child through a Journey Team trip. For students who desire a deeper involvement, internships are available through Compassion at LBC or at their Global Headquarters located in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Beyond the Missions Conference and the Compassion International project, all traditional undergraduate students are also required to engage in a cross-cultural experience to meet graduation requirements. The Academic Council approved a clear set of guidelines in 2010 to

delineate the features of an experience meeting the cross-cultural requirement (Appendix 8K: [Cross-Cultural Experience Guidelines](#)). Some majors have developed student cross-cultural experiences specific to their programs. Counseling students and Church and Ministry Leadership program students take TraveLearn trips coordinated by the respective academic departments. Other students meet the requirement by traveling with the institution's Journey teams. From 2011-2015, LBC sent out 37 Journey teams comprised of 374 students to 13 countries. Usually, staff and faculty provide leadership on these trips, modeling cross-cultural awareness to students. (Appendix 8L: [Journey Teams at a Glance](#)).

In addition to preparing students for a more globalized world, LBC also realizes the job market requires students to demonstrate academic excellence on transcripts and a robust array of extracurricular involvement. Again, the group tasked with looking at the general education core also investigated supplemental opportunities providing significant experiences. The group discovered that the enrichment and leadership opportunities provided by extra-curricular campus organizations compliment the skills and abilities developed in general education. Information provided by the Student Services office reveals 14 different student organizations who collectively provide over 100 leadership opportunities for students (Appendix 8M: [Student Organizations](#)). These organizations span a number of interests including student leadership on the yearbook and campus fine arts magazine, student government associations, student athletic advisory committee, student social work organization, and student missionary fellowship. Additionally, students involved in these organizations are responsible for the planning and implementation of high-profile campus events including the annual Missions Conference and Shadey's Rugged Run, a large community event that attracted 730 participants in 2015. Although these experiences are outside

of the classroom, the organizations provide students, including at-risk and high-achieving, with opportunities to use knowledge gained in courses in practical applications.

As more students enroll in majors designed to prepare them for careers beyond full-time church ministry, the majors themselves have begun to create opportunities for students to engage campus leadership positions related to the major and provide valuable training experience. Sport Management majors provide leadership for Shadey's Rugged Run as noted above. Business Administration majors are able to assume management positions in on-campus retail operations including our two cafés and our creamery. In addition, a scholarship program for our new Communication major attracts promising high-achieving incoming freshmen to this program who are then able to participate in relevant extra-curricular opportunities for additional skill acquisition experiences which provide them with a competitive edge in the job market ([Appendix 8N](#)).

Professional Accreditations

Generally speaking, professional or specialized accreditation gives additional credence to the level of academic rigor within an institution. Professional accreditors are able to focus on a more delineated set of knowledge and skills so their requirements tend to be more numerous, more specific, and more strict. As LBC expands its number of majors for students seeking employment outside of full-time church ministry contexts, the number of professional accreditations sought has increased. The ability to offer professionally accredited programs provides further "Evidence that course sequence progresses from foundational to advanced studies appropriate to the degree and level of education offered" (Essential Element 6 of ABHECOA Standard 11a). Currently, the following programs are professionally accredited or are seeking such accreditation.

- Social Work: Council on Social Work Education ([accredited](#) [Appendix 8O])

- Worship & Performing Arts: National Association of Schools of Music ([accredited](#) [Appendix 8P])
- Sport Management: Commission on Sport Management Accreditation [candidate]
- Education: Not professionally accredited but graduates must meet more rigorous requirements imposed by the Pennsylvania Department of Education to qualify to seek certification.

[Appendix 8Q](#) summarizes the admissions requirements of these and two other programs, the five-year BS/MA Professional Counseling and the BS/MEd Professional School Counseling programs.

Academic Rigor

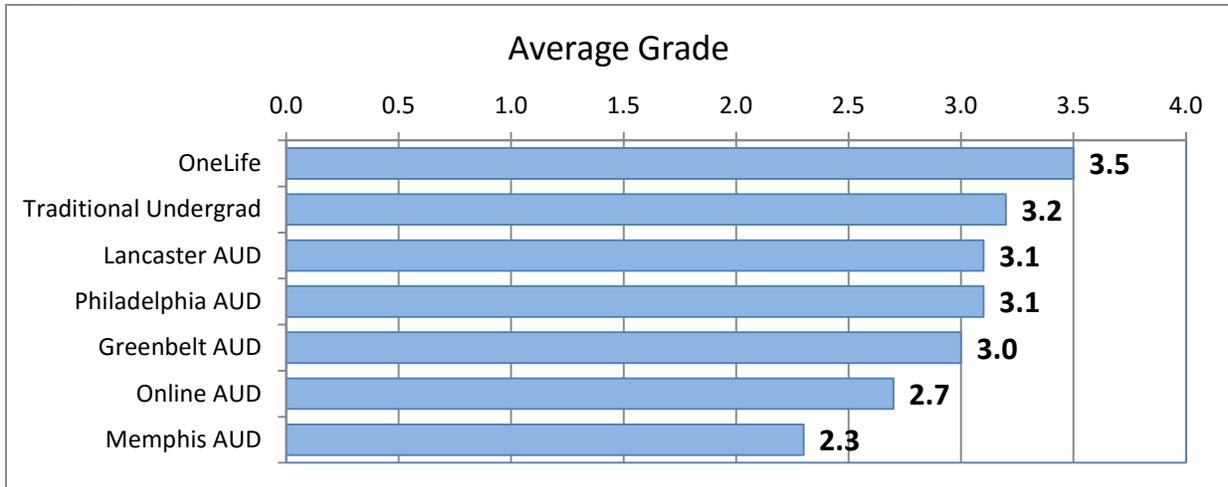
“Relative to this standard [11a.1], an accredited institution is characterized by evidence that academic programs exhibit the content and rigor characteristic of higher education, and a level of analytical research and communication skills needed for life-long learning commensurate with the level of education offered” (*ABHE Commission on Accreditation Manual*, 2015, p. 29).

During the spring of 2015, the Office for Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) initiated a [correlational study of BIB 105 final grades](#) (Appendix 8R) over the previous three academic years. The goal was to examine academic rigor by finding possible correlations between final grades and the location and format of instruction; i.e. traditional undergraduate, Lancaster Accelerated Undergraduate Degree (AUD), Philadelphia AUD, Greenbelt AUD, and Memphis AUD. For the sake of comparison, the Spring 2015 final BIB 105 grades for the OneLife program were included. (OneLife is a gap-year program is described more fully in the next section of this chapter.)

These findings should be viewed with the following disclaimer in mind: The population sizes for both Memphis AUD (16) and OneLife (15) were much smaller than the other samples, having been drawn from just one semester. Therefore, the findings for these two venues should be viewed

with caution as the grades from this one semester may prove to be anomalous. Chart 4A shows the seven venues ranked according to highest average grades for BIB 105.

Chart 8.1



While Lancaster and Philadelphia AUDs have the same GPA, Lancaster is given the third spot due to a higher number of students receiving As.

As noted in Chapter 1, during an October 2015 faculty focus group discussion, several faculty members noted that syllabi from the two remote CUTS sites in Philadelphia and Memphis were not academically up to standard and were not representative of LBC’s Core Value & Goal #6, which reads “LBC is committed to developing students for a ministry and service mindset as evidenced by preparing them both academically and experientially to serve Christ in the Church and society.” These observations support our June 2015 [Analysis of Blind Grading Study](#) (Appendix 8S) in which “blind” graders found that several papers from one of the two additional locations were well below par, yet received above average grades from the course instructors. Both of these issues have been addressed by the changes in the status of PCUTS (see Chapter 9) and the new vertical academic structure that provides more direct oversight of these additional locations by the respective program coordinators.

With regard to OneLife students, the findings seem to indicate that they are awarded significantly higher grades for the course equivalents. At 3.5, the OneLife students earned the highest overall GPA among the venues. This was due to the awarding of As and Bs almost exclusively for this course and no Ds or Fs. Of the 15 students, nine were awarded As and five were awarded Bs with just one student earning a C. (OneLife does not award pluses or minuses.) However, as noted earlier, the population size for OneLife (15) was much smaller than the other groups, having been drawn from just one semester. Therefore, the findings should be viewed with caution as the grades from this one semester may prove to be anomalous. A separate study shows that students who participate with OneLife and choose to continue their education through LBC have no statistically significant difference in grade performance compared to students who start and participate in the traditional curriculum delivery method (see [Appendix 8T](#)).

While it is acknowledged that these studies must be viewed with some caution due to lack of adequate sampling and other issues, they do seem to indicate that academic rigor may be an issue, especially in our non-traditional offerings, and should continue being monitored.

Information Literacy and Communication Skills

The rigor of the curriculum as it relates to the expansion to multiple locations and an expanded focus on adult learners is referenced in the above sections of this chapter. However, the Academic Programs and Procedures Study Group also found it necessary to address rigor as it relates to information literacy and the students' ability to communicate in both written and verbal forms.

LBC uses the Standardized Assessment of Information Literacy Skills (SAILS) test as a nationally-normed, standardized instrument to measure student learning in information literacy skills. LBC

has established a trend of junior and senior student scores equal to or higher than the comparable average at all institutions utilizing the SAILS test.

- June 2010 and Fall 2012 SAILS – Test results for the Degree Completion Program (DCP) (now Accelerated Undergraduate Degrees[AUD]) students indicated that in a majority of categories measured, the students were performing better than their peers at other institutions (Appendix 8U: [Summary of June 2010 SAILS](#), Appendix 8V: [Fall 2012 SAILS Summary Report](#), Appendix 8W: [SAILS synopsis 2010-2011](#)).
- 2014 SAILS - The report showed student scores declined slightly when compared to the 2012 report; however, the relevant context is the pre-test scores, an indicator of skill after only a few weeks of exposure to the LBC curriculum, which are also in a slight decline. While the majority of students are not scoring at the 70% proficiency level set by the organization administering SAILS, comparison colleges also do not have a majority of students scoring at that level. Additionally, a significant number of LBC students are scoring at or close to proficiency with 18.2% of students taking the post-test in Spring 2014 and 16.9% of students taking the post-test in Fall 2014 scoring above the proficiency level with another 34.1% (Spring 2014) and 25.6% (Fall 2014) of post-test students scoring in the 60-69% range. Additionally, students achieved an average of 7.1 percentage points higher in the post-test group than the pre-test group, indicating the curriculum does support student growth in the information literacy skills supporting oral and written communication (Appendix 8X: [FALL 2014 SAILS Pre-Post Summary Report](#)).
- 2015 SAILS – The [Fall 2015 report](#) (Appendix 8Y) showed post-test scores still in slight decline though the overall change from the 2013 high of 59% is only a decrease of 1.4%. In spite of the slight decline, LBC’s post-test scores are still higher than the average of scores at

all institutions. LBC did see a significantly higher number of post-test scores above the 70% proficiency mark in Fall 2015 (27.6%) than in Fall 2014 (16.9%).

Reflections and recommendations regarding these findings can be found in the Arts & Sciences 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 Academic Assessment Cycles within their [Taskstream workspace](#) (Appendix 2C). While room for improvement remains, LBC is consistently seeing traditional undergraduate scores at the same level or higher than comparable institutions. The self-study group did note AUD students have not been assessed via SAILS since the fall of 2012 due to the lack of the cohort minimum of 50 students. The Arts & Sciences Chair is working with the Associate Dean of the AUD program to determine ways to increase incoming and graduating AUD students' participation or to find alternative means of assessing their information literacy skills.

As a result of discussions between the Library Director and faculty members about the information literacy needs of students, there has been a [significant increase](#) (Appendix 8Z) in the number of information literacy sessions presented by professional library staff in classes at faculty invitation. These sessions are starting to be held at our distant locations as well. Our Lancaster Library Director travels to conduct these sessions as there are no professional librarians at any of these locations. The Library Director's goal is to have information literacy sessions scheduled in every department/discipline and at all locations. Plans also include increasing the current information literacy assistance available to online students. (See Leveraging the Charles Frey Academic Center and the Teague Learning Commons in Chapter 7 for more analysis of our Library Services.)

The Arts & Sciences Department has also been proactively tracking students' progress through the English course sequence and has been determining where changes can be made in the curriculum in an effort to further improve information literacy skills. In the summer of 2015, the Arts & Sciences Department determined the English Composition sequence was not serving at-risk

students well. Thus, revisions to the developmental English courses are being piloted in an attempt to better serve at-risk students. LBC offers a traditional developmental writing course (LAN060 Introduction to English Composition) into which students who demonstrate underdeveloped writing skills (as measured by high school grades, SAT scores, and writing samples) are placed. LAN060 is a three-credit-hour elective course the developmental student must pass before being allowed to enroll in LAN101 English Composition. Some remediated students enroll in the compressed three-week summer school version of LAN060 (denoted LAN060E) and others enroll in the regular 16-week semester version; both versions use the same student learning outcomes (SLOs) and carry similar workloads. For a variety of reasons, we have identified that LAN060 is not serving our students as effectively as possible:

- On average, 25% of LAN060 students will go on to fail LAN101, indicating LAN060, in its current forms, may not be adequately preparing students for the demands of even the basic, first-year English course. Furthermore, as many as 69% of LAN060 students will earn a lower grade in LAN101 than they did in LAN060.
- LAN060's five basic SLOs do not seem adequately structured to prepare students for the 12 detailed LAN101 SLOs (see [Appendix 8AA](#)).
- The current LAN060 SLOs do not address the growing need to build and reinforce students' critical reading skills.
- When asked via survey, a majority of former LAN060 students indicated LAN060 was only slightly, somewhat, or moderately effective in preparing them for LAN101. In addition, almost 40% of respondents indicated that, given the choice, a one-credit-hour, lab-style, developmental writing course taken concurrently with LAN101 over the summer intensive

model, the traditional semester-long course, or a hypothetical two-semester long combined course would be preferable.

For these reasons in addition to current research in the developmental writing field, we piloted a new, concurrent, one-credit-hour, lab-style developmental course (often referred to as ALP [Accelerated Learning Program] courses) in the Spring 2016 semester with a more expanded pilot planned for Fall 2016 (see [Appendix 8BB](#) for sample LAN 061 syllabus). We have identified the following rationale for piloting the new course structure:

- Transfer of skills from LAN061 to LAN101 is immediate.
- Continuity of instruction exists as the same instructor teaches the ALP LAN061 and paired LAN101 course.
- The number of elective credits required that do not count towards degree completion is reduced.
- Institutions like City College of New York have documented a 25% higher pass rate from ALP courses as compared to traditional basic writing courses.
- The SLOs for LAN061 have been revised to more closely align with LAN101 (see appendices [8BB](#) and [8CC](#) for sample syllabi).

Additional problematic patterns were seen in the academic progress of students earning Cs in the English Composition courses. A student enrolled in LAN101 English Composition must earn a grade of C- or better to earn three hours of course credit. Students who earn this credit are then required to take one three-credit-hour [Writing Intensive](#) (WI) (Appendix 8F) course. While the numbers generally indicate students fare well in the ensuing WI course, as many as 15% are actually scoring lower in the WI courses than they did in LAN101. Additionally, instructors have reported anecdotally some students having completed LAN101 and now in a WI course do not

seem adequately prepared for the writing requirements of the WI course. It was proposed via an Action Plan ([Appendix 8DD](#)) to funnel all LAN101 students who earn a grade of C or lower into a revised version of an existing course: LAN205 Selected Topics in Critical Reading and Research. This will run as a WI course and focus on solidifying the reading, research, and writing skills crucial for college success. This track has the added benefit of ensuring these C- level students take additional WI courses (which, even though not required, are taken by approximately 31% of LBC students) and will be more prepared for the demands of 300 and 400 level WI courses.

An examination of syllabi in the Arts & Sciences Department indicates writing is embedded across the curriculum with substantial papers being written in many courses (Appendix 8EE: [A&S Syllabus Analysis](#)). Assignments requiring oral presentations are found less frequently on the syllabi. However, LBC continues to require the three credit LAN 104 Public Speaking course for all students, making LBC somewhat unique since many institutions have dropped a public speaking requirement from their core. Additionally, LAN 480 Advanced Public Speaking was recently approved and rostered to provide students additional opportunities to strengthen their oral presentation skills (Appendix 8FF: [Advanced Public Speaking Syllabus](#)).

As a means of examining academic rigor, the Office for Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) initiated a [blind grading study](#) (Appendix 8GG) of several sections of LAN 101 English Composition from both traditional undergraduate and from our Accelerated Undergraduate Degree programs during the fall of 2014. The following three findings seem related to the academic rigor of at least one Arts & Sciences course as taught through an alternative delivery method.

- The scores given by the blind grader to those in the AUD section were significantly lower than those in the traditional sections.

- The course grades earned by those in the AUD section were significantly lower than those in the traditional sections.
- While there seemed to be some inter-rater reliability among the five traditional sections, there was an extremely large discrepancy between the grades given by the adjunct faculty member teaching the AUD section and the grades given by the grader, with the grader scoring the papers an average of 29.4 points lower.

Transfer Students' Perceptions of LBC's Academic Rigor

In late January of 2016, the Office for Institutional Effectiveness conducted a survey of current students who had transferred in at least 30 credits when they enrolled at LBC. The purpose of this survey was to find out how transfer students perceive LBC's academic rigor compared to their previous institution(s). The majority of students (66%) answered "No" when asked if they found some of their LBC classes less than challenging. Students who had previously attended another Bible or Christian college responded this way at the highest rate (79%). The students most likely to answer "Yes" (that they did find some LBC classes less than challenging) was the group who had attended secular four-year colleges (43%). More than one-third (almost 36%) of students who transferred from community colleges think that some LBC courses are not challenging enough. Students were more likely to attribute a lack of academic rigor to individual instructors (69%) rather than to course material (46% [more than one answer was allowed]). Adjunct instructors were considered to be less academically demanding (adjuncts 56%, full-time 33%). Transfer students generally consider Arts & Sciences courses to be most likely to lack rigor (53%) and Bible & Theology courses to be least likely to do so (27%). Major Program courses fell in between (33%). The number of credits students transferred in did not seem to affect their perceptions on this issue. Members of a follow-up focus group also noted that it seems online courses are easier

due to lower expectations; however, they indicated that the rigor of an online course really depends on the instructor. Focus group members believed that adjunct and new instructors do not know how to “walk students through the material” as well as more experienced instructors do.

The data gathered from the focus groups seems to indicate that course rigor is dependent upon the instructor. More specifically, rigor depends on whether an instructor is an adjunct or a full-time instructor. As was noted earlier in the chapter, LBC has seen tremendous growth in the past ten years. This has led to an increase in adjunct faculty at all levels. According to the focus group data being considered, there seems to be a direct correlation between the rigor of a course and the faculty status of the instructor. For this reason, further consideration should be made of the adjunct hiring process. Also, the continued connection of adjuncts with full-time faculty within each department is crucial in addressing the concerns of the focus groups. (See the full report, including comments from the follow-up focus group in [Appendix 6D](#).)

Other Educational Offerings Issues - MOUs

LBC partners with certain institutions through memoranda of understanding (MOUs). This allows students to receive LBC credits through a transfer to LBC or through Dual Enrollment. Currently, MOUs are broken into two categories: dual enrollment agreements with local high schools and transfer agreements with other post-secondary institutions. This has led to questions of whom LBC partners with and what requirements these institutions have to meet in order to fulfill the conditions of an MOU. The current approval process is initiated in the Registrar’s office with a final approval from the Provost’s office. Depending on the structure of the MOU, academic department chairs are consulted in order to help determine course equivalencies. Other than these general guidelines, this study group found no set of written policies regarding the criteria an institution must meet to

qualify for an MOU with LBC. As it is anticipated that other institutions will continue to reach out to LBC, policies need to be put in place in coordination with the Provost's office and academic programs that assure compliance with accreditation. These policies will also guide LBC in assessing the value of institutional relationships that help LBC meet its mission and vision.

As of spring of 2016, LBC had 15 Memoranda of Understanding in place. Seven of these are specifically between unaccredited Bible institutes and our Accelerated Undergraduate Degree program. In the summer of 2015, the Office for Institutional Effectiveness conducted a study of students who had transferred to LBC from institutions not holding regional accreditations. (Two of the eight institutions were accredited with one of the national Bible college accreditors.) The items examined were 1) the number of transfer students from each school, 2) their SAT and ACT scores, 3) incoming GPAs, and 4) withdrawal rates. These items were compared with each other and with LBC averages, and a correlation was run. (In the interest of confidentiality, the full report with institutional names is not included but is available in the Document Roadmap, Standard 8.)

While it is acknowledged that accredited status should not be the sole determining factor with regard to transferring credits, based upon the findings of this 2015 report, this study group recommends that each of the existing MOUs regarding transfer credits from other educational institutions should be examined more closely in consideration of course and learning outcome equivalencies with our own curricula and standards. The study group also recommends consideration be given to establishing a more detailed set of policies and procedures regarding transfer credit, including the criteria for entering into any additional MOUs for transfer of credits from other educational institutions.

Other Educational Offerings Issues - OneLife Gap Year Program

As noted earlier in this chapter, another partnership that has led to a new delivery method is the OneLife gap year program. OneLife is based on the campus of LBC and is overseen and directed by LBC employees. This program allows students to earn college credit while learning practical life skills that are not normally addressed in a traditional undergraduate program.

OneLife was created and designed to meet the needs of two types of students:

- Students who know that higher education is in their future but are not sure what to major in or what career path to choose
- Students who may know their career path but who desire to take a break from traditional models of schooling in order to grow in their faith and learn practical life skills that will help them succeed in today's world

From its inception through the 2015-16 academic year, 80 students have been through the OneLife program and 74 (92.5%) of them have gone on to further higher education. LBC is not aware of any other self-identified gap year programs that offer 30 credits, which may make us unique in the marketplace. Currently, 44 OneLife graduates (55% of all graduates) have enrolled at LBC for the 2016-17 academic year.

After the first year of operation, LBC started awarding OneLife graduates our One-year Concentrated Bible Certificate for the 30 credits they were earning. However, since this program resides outside the traditional academic departments, those departments started to question the academic equivalency of OneLife delivery of curriculum versus traditional undergraduate delivery. To address this concern, the awarding of the one-year certificate was suspended and OneLife's executive director has been working directly with academic department chairs in order to verify that learning outcomes are being met. A study shows that students who participate in

OneLife and choose to continue their education through LBC have no statistically significant difference in grade performance as compared to students who start and participate in the traditional curriculum delivery method (see [Appendix 8T](#)).

Key Strengths Noted in This Section

1. The Arts & Sciences Department has proactively revised its core curriculum to support its revised student learning outcomes, which emphasize patterns of advanced thinking, and to follow the best practice recommendations of its accrediting boards.
2. The vertical integration model has allowed for consistency between degree levels and delivery models, especially in the face of growth and location expansion.
3. Online education as supported by the Office of Digital Learning has allowed LBC to continue to grow and support different delivery models, working diligently with the academic programs to assure academic rigor and student success.
4. LBC has a robust, holistic student experience providing opportunities to both at-risk and high-achieving students.
5. LBC is investing significantly in technology to meet the needs of students. The collaborative relationships between departments are allowing students from several majors to utilize the technology, maximizing the investments LBC is making.

Suggestions

1. The college should consider continued monitoring of the academic rigor of courses offered in non-traditional formats and at all locations.
2. Carefully monitor both student and instructor feedback and performance in the 300 and 400 level courses as the new sequence is introduced making modifications as necessary.

3. The Arts & Sciences department should continue to implement the suggestions made in this report regarding LAN 060 and LAN 101.
4. LBC should develop a plan to administer the SAILS test to AUD students.

Recommendations for Growth and Improvement

1. In the face of growing enrollment and location expansion, the college should continue to evaluate equivalency of curriculum, outcomes, and academic rigor at all locations, delivery formats, and in the acceptance of transfer credits. The academic administration should establish a detailed set of policies and procedures regarding transfer credit including the criteria for entering into any additional Memoranda of Understanding or future Articulation Agreements.
2. The Arts & Sciences Department should evaluate the new AUD writing placement procedures, particularly student grades and retention in relation to classes taken and the sequencing of those classes.
3. The Arts & Sciences Department should track GPA averages in courses across all locations and delivery formats. Trends of grade inflation should be investigated if seen by discipline, in particular courses, or with particular instructors, so rigor is encouraged in both course development and faculty professional development.