

Chapter 10 – Standard 11d

Alternative Academic Patterns

Overview

This chapter addresses Association for Biblical Higher Education Commission on Accreditation (ABHECOA) Standard 11d: Alternative Academic Patterns. Standards 11a and 11c are discussed in Chapter 8 while Standard 11b is discussed in Chapter 9.

As is mentioned in other chapters of this report, a significant portion of growth at Lancaster Bible College (LBC) in the past ten years has come via a few Alternative Academic Patterns as defined by ABHECOA. Since our last self-study, LBC has added four additional locations and two instructional sites, reaching a total of seven locations/sites (strategically reduced to five with the closure of the Springfield, VA and Indianapolis locations after 8/2016). Several of these new endeavors required establishing contractual relationships. We have also seen a substantial growth in our distance education endeavors, which were merely in their infancy when our last self-study was conducted. This chapter provides analysis of these two alternative academic patterns as well as our certificate programs and experiential learning assessment. This chapter clarifies how these alternative academic patterns have been impacted by “the changing face of the Bible college student” and our “move from a regional to a national institution,” two of the key issues we are tracking in this report.

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 Taskstream workspaces for our Digital Learning Services (distance education), and OneLife (an alternative delivery method). In addition, individual academic programs utilize Taskstream to monitor any offerings they may have at additional locations, other instructional sites, online, and/or through certificate programs.

While the appendices of this chapter include quite a few examples of evidences documented, one of the more notable ones is seen throughout this chapter. It is the fact that at LBC, alternative academic patterns fall under the oversight of the individual academic programs. This ensures that whether the student is taking courses online or at one of our additional locations, the learning outcomes, faculty, standards for instruction, academic rigor, and other components of the teaching/learning process will be equivalent.

The remainder of this chapter includes additional evidences of compliance within the framework of the key issues on which we have chosen to focus 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. How has the changing face of the Bible college student driven LBC to expand into a more non-traditional approach to biblical higher education? What additional characteristics of the non-traditional student need to be tapped and how can this be done?
2. What changes or additions to our alternative academic patterns need to be modified as we move from a regional to a national institution?

Analysis of Key Issues

Of the seven key issues our study groups were tasked to consider, the changing face of the Bible college student and our move from a regional to a national institution impact this chapter on related educational activities the most. To become a national institution, LBC is reaching out to offer a solid biblical education to students unable to commit to a move to the Lancaster area. Therefore, online education and additional locations are becoming increasingly more vital parts of our offerings. LBC no longer serves just traditional-aged on-campus college students. Since our additional locations and online education serve primarily adult students, the changing face of the Bible college student has caused us to further analyze the impact our alternative academic programs are having on the fulfillment of our mission and goals.

Additional Locations and Instructional Sites

In the past ten years, LBC has grown from a single location in Lancaster, Pennsylvania with a headcount enrollment of fewer than 1,000 undergraduate and seminary/graduate students to an

institution with over 2,000 students spanning seven locations (strategically reduced to five with the closure of the Springfield, VA and Indianapolis locations after 8/2016). All courses and programs at these sites fall under the oversight of the corresponding academic programs. Hence, the faculty of each program is charged with making sure that the courses and programs offered at these sites meet “standards for quality of instruction and academic rigor appropriate to the level of education offered” (Essential Element 3 of ABHECOA Standard 11d). Evidence of this can be found within each program’s Taskstream planning and assessment workspace. A full report on each of these five sites can be found in [Appendix 10A](#). In addition, a description of how these sites are provided with library services can be found in Chapter 7 under Leveraging the Charles Frey Academic Center and the Teague Learning Commons. Below are short descriptions of LBC’s geographical expansion since our last self-study, highlighting the current status of each location.

Greenbelt, MD Location

In January 2013, LBC acquired the academic programs of Washington Bible College/Capital Bible Seminary (WBC/CBS) and began offering those programs in Greenbelt, MD, and Springfield, VA. Since that time some right-sizing has occurred.

When LBC initially took over the educational programs of WBC/CBS in Lanham, MD, there were approximately 15 staff members and 15 full-time faculty servicing approximately 500 students. Within the first year of the transition, the undergraduate programs in the capital region were phased out and approximately 21 undergraduate students transferred to the Lancaster location, 20 participated in a teach-out program, and 40 transferred to other schools. The Greenbelt location opened servicing an exclusively adult student population (Accelerated Undergraduate Degrees and graduate programs) with 11 staff, 15 faculty, and 400 students. Within the next two years, due to

the move to a vertical academic structure overseeing all LBC locations, the Greenbelt site went through additional changes. Currently, there are four full-time staff, five part-time staff, and seven full-time faculty servicing approximately 300 adult students on site.

Philadelphia, PA Location

In February 2013, ABHE approved our substantive change request for an additional location at 1300 W. Hunting Park Avenue in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Further, a contract for services written between LBC and the Philadelphia Center for Urban and Theological Studies (PCUTS) was approved, formally solidifying a partnership between these institutions.

Through the following two years, the relationship progressed with steady enrollment and a healthy working relationship as teams from both institutions worked to recruit, enroll, admit, and graduate students. However, in the fall of 2014, the first signs of fiscal trouble appeared through lower enrollments at PCUTS. Through late fall 2014 and into early 2015, it became evident that emergency action would be required to preserve PCUTS' existence. ABHECOA Essential Element 11d requires that "an accredited institution's academic programs utilizing off-campus locations, distance education, or alternative academic patterns are characterized by objectives consistent with the institution's mission and improved accessibility to learning opportunities." In keeping with this standard, an assessment of the impact of the Philadelphia location on LBC's resources and its ability to fulfill our mission and goals was conducted. As a result, the Executive Committee of the PCUTS Board met with LBC's Presidential Leadership Team and a superseding Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed February 4, 2015, granting LBC decision-making control regarding finances and expense management, recruiting and enrollment, as well as staffing decisions to be mutually vetted. By agreement, LBC provided the necessary fiscal

resources to make PCUTS whole. Through the next several months, PCUTS was right-sized based on current enrollments. By fall 2015, after several meetings, the PCUTS Board, upon the recommendation of a board-appointed task force, voted to relinquish all administrative authority of the educational operation of PCUTS to LBC. A full report of this transition can be found in the PCUTS Narrative from the Provost's Office ([Appendix 10B](#)).

Springfield, VA Location – Now Closed

Upon acquiring the academic programs of WBC/CBS in January 2013, LBC assumed the remainder of the existing lease for the Springfield, Virginia site. LBC continued offering traditional semester-length courses for the students at the Springfield site. In the 2014-2015 academic year, we transitioned course delivery at the Springfield and Greenbelt, MD sites to an accelerated and blended model. Since these two academic sites are only 32 miles apart, the short distance and limited residency requirement of our course delivery model allowed students to choose courses at either site without negatively affecting their student experience. As we neared the end of our second full academic year with this delivery model, it became apparent that operating two academic sites in such close proximity was not necessary and was not good stewardship.

In keeping with Essential Element 1 of ABHECOA Standard 11d, an assessment of the impact of the Springfield location on LBC's resources and ability to fulfill our mission and goals was conducted. The leadership of LBC considered financial obligations connected to this site and the best approach for the school's mission, leading to an informed and strategic decision for the Springfield, VA site. In order to sustain the most effective service to all students, LBC decided to merge the Springfield, Virginia site into the Greenbelt, MD location, effective August 22, 2016.

The substantive change summary completed for MSCHE approval and the Teach-Out Plan are included as appendices to this chapter (Appendices [10C](#) and [10D](#)).

Indianapolis, IN Site – Now Closed

Beginning in 2012, LBC partnered with Crossroads Bible College in Indianapolis, IN to serve as an additional site. The on-site portion of Capital’s innovative Master of Arts in Ministry program is offered on the Crossroads Bible College campus. The offerings at this site are overseen by the Church & Ministry Leadership department to ensure that they meet “standards for quality of instruction and academic rigor” comparable to those offered on our main campus (Essential Element 3 of ABHECOA Standard 11d). In July 2016, in keeping with Essential Element 1 of ABHECOA Standard 11d, an assessment of the impact of the Indianapolis location on LBC’s resources and ability to fulfill our mission and goals was conducted. Limited enrollments and lack of clarity in the relationship with the host institution suggested our effectiveness at this location was waning. Therefore, effective summer 2016, by amicable agreement of both institutions, we no longer offer courses in Indianapolis. The handful of students were mainstreamed into existing cohorts at other locations.

Boca Raton, FL Site

Also beginning in 2012, LBC partnered with Spanish River Church in Boca Raton, FL, a church that has planted over 300 new churches around the world, to serve as an additional site. The on-site portion of Capital’s innovative Master of Arts in Ministry program with a Church Planting concentration is offered on the Spanish River Church campus. The offerings at this site are overseen by the Church & Ministry Leadership department to ensure that they meet “standards for

quality of instruction and academic rigor appropriate to the level of education offered.” (Essential Element 3 of ABHECOA Standard 11d).

Memphis, TN Location

Our Memphis location is the one remaining contractual arrangement for academic services LBC has. Therefore, this location will be covered in this next section.

Contractual Relationships - MCUTS

The Memphis Center for Urban Theological Studies (MCUTS) was founded in 2000 to offer biblical education for pastors and other church leaders in an affordable, accessible, and relevant urban context. MCUTS operated previously as an extension site of Creighton College (now closed) and later Belhaven University. The partnership between MCUTS and LBC was formalized in February 2014 but actual LBC degree programs were not offered at the Memphis campus until September 2014.

LBC provides administrative oversight through the guidelines enumerated in the [Contract for Educational Services](#) (Appendix 10E). The academic programs offered at the MCUTS site are identical to the programs offered at the originating site in Lancaster, PA and are overseen by the corresponding academic programs to ensure that they “meet standards for quality of instruction, academic rigor, and educational effectiveness comparable to those” offered on our main campus (*Characteristics of Excellence*, 2006, p. 58).

A review of mission alignment, faculty approval, training and evaluation, comparable syllabi and other course requirements, academic and student support services, facilities, and enrollment management can be found in [Appendix 10F](#). MCUTS has a clearly defined mission; competent,

committed staff; qualified, credentialed faculty; attractive, functional facilities; a strong financial base; and a well-served student body. There are just two areas that will need to be monitored: academic rigor and assessment of student learning.

It is the goal to maintain the same academic rigor at the MCUTS location as exists at our main campus. During an October, 2015 faculty focus group discussion, several faculty members noted that syllabi from the two remote CUTS sites are not academically up to standard and are 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."

In the past, there has been some basic assessment of institutional effectiveness at the MCUTS location related to employee and student satisfaction. However, there is a need to extend systematic and organized assessment of student learning realized beyond current student evaluations of faculty. LBC needs to replicate some of its current assessment procedures at the MCUTS location. Since the programs offered at MCUTS mirror the programs offered at the Lancaster site, the primary procedures for assessment of student learning will be program-driven. As of this writing, the appropriate programs are in the process of incorporating MCUTS and other additional locations into their assessment procedures.

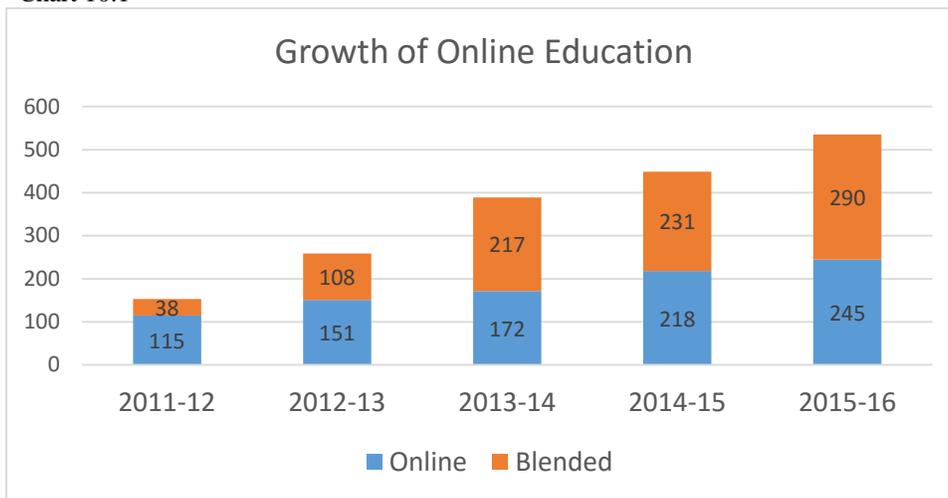
Online Education

Online education has become a cornerstone of our academic programs. With the rapid growth of our non-traditional student population, our Office of Digital Learning has assisted in meeting the needs of students while holding to the student learning outcomes for courses and curriculum.

More than half of all faculty are including online elements in their courses with fully online, blended, and supplemental formats. Nearly all students have at least one course with online elements. The appropriate academic program oversees all online courses and programs. The faculty of each program is charged with ensuring online versions of their respective courses have similar expectations of student learning, academic rigor, and educational effectiveness. Evidence of this can be found within each program’s Taskstream planning and assessment workspace. See an example [here](#) (Appendix 4B).

A February 2015 [report](#) (Appendix 10G) shows that our Office of Digital Learning has grown significantly over the past five years. This report also includes projections for the future of online education.

Chart 10.1



The chart illustrates the number of online and blended courses developed from 2011 through 2016. Blended courses are primarily offered in graduate programs.

Our own studies from the blind grading study referenced below, as well as many [national studies](#) (Appendix 10H), show online education is effective and comparable to learning in the classroom. A [blind study](#) (Appendix 8R) comparing final projects from an online Biblical Hermeneutics

course and its on-campus counterpart were studied. After doing an ANOVA analysis, no statistical differences were found in student achievement between the delivery formats.

An endeavor such as this requires “adequate staffing, facilities, and technology to support the programs.” (Essential Element 4 of ABHECOA Standard 11d). As our academic programs have become more dependent on online elements, related areas of concern have been addressed: instructional design demands, the need for additional faculty training, and inconsistent access to the Learning Management System (LMS). In response to a [six-year formal departmental evaluation](#) (Appendix 10I), to serve faculty better, and to keep up with the demand of our growing program, the department hired a second Online Instructional Design Specialist in June 2011. Faculty training opportunities were increased and a new online faculty orientation was developed to better train distance faculty, especially adjunct instructors. This course is available through our eCampus learning management system. Our Summer Institute offers in-person and streaming webinar training on topics such as Creating Multimedia with Office Mix, Creating Community of Inquiry, and PowerPoint2016 for the Modern Classroom. We also provide a monthly emailed newsletter with tips and training from our Office of Digital Learning. We are currently Beta testing (beginning in July 2016) a special 1-hour training module we developed on creating instructor presence in online courses. Further evaluations are necessary to ensure continuing faculty support.

Inconsistent access to the LMS was also a concern. As a result, a new host was contracted in June of 2011. To date, LBC has received excellent service with over 99.95% uptime, allowing further access for our non-traditional students.

Online Education and State Authorization

Offering “improved accessibility to learning opportunities” (Essential Element 1 of ABHECOA Standard 11d) across various states and territories, as well as globally, creates the necessity of following the regulatory requirements of over 50 entities. At one time LBC was authorized or exempt in all but six states. However, new regulations enacted by many states have reduced LBC’s ability to offer online education. Many more states are reevaluating their policies; some exemptions are being revoked and the costs of authorization are escalating. At the time of this writing, Pennsylvania is still not a participant in the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA). Therefore, LBC must examine the return on investment for each state, territory, and foreign entity while tracking changes as implemented. Ideally, we would like to be authorized in every state, territory, and globally so as to not limit our ability to offer interested students a Bible college education. However, since our current online programs are limited and attract a relatively small number of students from any one state, the required fees and time investment needed to keep abreast of all the individual sets of regulations, and to make application to all the different entities is challenging the resources of a college of our size.

The responsibility for state authorizations currently falls within the Office for Institutional Effectiveness, which consists of a full-time Associate Vice President and a part-time administrative assistant. Due to the increasing workload that state authorization is requiring, proposals to make the part-time assistant full-time and to create a new position of Institutional Research and Compliance Officer were funded in the 2016-2017 budget.

Certificate Programs

LBC offers certificates at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. At the undergraduate level, we offer the Concentrated Bible Course Certificate through the Bible & Theology Department. This certificate program offers students a year of concentrated study in Bible and theology courses from an accredited Bible college. This certificate is ideal for:

- A student anticipating a career other than full-time Christian ministry but is seeking biblical knowledge
- A missionary candidate who needs a concentration of Bible
- Anyone who wants to get in-depth Bible training in a short period of time

Courses for this certificate are available both on-campus and online.

The courses in the certificate program are part of a roster taken by students pursuing a degree. Therefore, these courses have the same “clearly defined learning outcomes that are designed, approved, administered and evaluated under established institutional procedures” (Essential Element 2 of ABHECOA Standard 11d) by the Bible & Theology department. The courses in this certificate are transferable to an associate or bachelor’s degree in Bible. The gainful employment data for this certificate can be found [here](#) (Appendix 10J).

At the graduate level, LBC offers six different certificates. Each graduate certificate is a 24-credit program for individuals who do not wish to obtain a Master’s degree. The programs are focused on specific areas designed to enrich and enlarge the ministries of local church and ministry leaders, Bible teachers, and local church lay leadership. The courses are regular seminary/graduate courses taught by Seminary and graduate school faculty and are part of degree programs with credits transferable into a degree program. Graduate Certificates are monitored under their corresponding

department. Therefore, these courses have “clearly defined learning outcomes that are designed, approved, administered and evaluated under established institutional procedures” (Essential Element 2 of ABHECOA Standard 9) by the Bible & Theology department. The following are the seminary/graduate certificates offered by the college:

- Bible Certificate
- Formational Children and Family Ministry Certificate
- Church Planting Certificate
- Leadership Studies Certificate
- Pastoral Studies Certificate
- Student Ministry Certificate

Evidence of the effectiveness of our certificate programs can be found within the Taskstream planning and assessment workspaces for these certificates.

Experiential Learning

Defining experiential learning as knowledge or skills acquired outside of a higher education institution, this section will not cover learning experience associated with our academic programs, such as internships, practica, study abroad programs, or Christian service projects. Currently, the only formal experiential learning assessment employed at LBC is for adult students enrolling in our Accelerated Undergraduate Degrees programs. We call this our Credit for Prior Learning assessment.

LBC follows the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning’s (CAEL) [Ten Standards for Assessing Learning](#) (Appendix 10K). LBC presents information on credit for prior learning to

students on the website and keeps up to date with the latest discussions on prior learning through organizations like the American Council on Education (ACE) and CAEL.

There are two primary documents that detail the exact procedures used by LBC for our Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) process: LBC's [Assessing Prior Learning Policies & Procedures Handbook](#) (Appendix 10L), and LBC's [Assessing Prior Learning Student & Evaluator Handbook](#) (Appendix 10M). A summary of our Experiential Learning Guidelines can be found in [Appendix 10N](#).

Key Strengths Noted in This Section

1. LBC has put significant resources into maintaining, supporting, and growing our contractual relationship partnership with MCUTS.
2. LBC has worked to maintain appropriate rigor and contact hours of our online courses so that they are comparable to our on-campus offerings.

Suggestion

1. As LBC continues to expand its ministry beyond Lancaster, PA, it will be necessary to address maintaining a sufficient staff to accommodate the growth in alternative academic patterns.

Recommendations for Growth and Improvement

None