

Chapter 4

Educational Offerings

Overview

The academic programs of Lancaster Bible College (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.

Standards

MSCHE Standard 11

The institution's educational offerings display academic content, rigor, and coherence that are appropriate to its higher education mission. The institution identifies student learning goals and objectives, including knowledge and skills, for its educational offerings.

A reading of this chapter also lends support to our compliance with Standard 7.

MSCHE Standard 7: Institutional Assessment

The institution has developed and implemented an assessment plan and process that evaluates its overall effectiveness in achieving its mission and goals and its compliance with accreditation standards.

Compliance Documented

In keeping with a comprehensive report with a focus on key issues, the reader is directed to our Documentation Roadmap showing evidence of our compliance with all appropriate fundamental elements of [Standard 11](#). Primary documentation of evidence can be found in LBC’s assessment and planning database where each academic program, including those offering graduate education, has a workspace which includes programmatic student learning outcomes, mapping of those outcomes to higher level outcomes, course mapping to programmatic outcomes, evidences of the accomplishment of these outcomes, and analysis of the evidences, all of which point to “educational offerings displaying academic content, rigor, and coherence appropriate to [our] higher education mission.” (See [Social Work](#) [Appendix 4A] and [Education](#) [Appendix 4B] workspace examples.) The accomplishment of higher level outcomes can be found in the [Arts & Sciences](#) (Appendix 4C), [Bible & Theology](#) (Appendix 4D), and [Institutional Effectiveness](#) (Appendix 4E) workspaces. Just one of many examples can be seen in an Academic Rigor Study discussed in this Chapter.

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

Research Questions

“The primary purpose of the self-study report is to advance institutional self-understanding and self-improvement” (*Self-Study: Creating a Useful Process and Report*, 2006, p. 4). With that purpose 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?

Analysis of Key Issues

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 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. To bring seminary and graduate education to life-engaged adult learners, LBC developed 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 for residencies has directly increased enrollment by a factor of two. Data that supports the effectiveness of the hybrid delivery format can be found in Chapter 7.

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. This team 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 [2012 Periodic Review Report](#) (Appendix 1D) 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 4G) and fall into a [six-year evaluation](#) (Appendix 4H) cycle that all existing programs follow. This evaluation cycle re-assesses 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 "sufficient content, breadth and length, and conducted at levels of rigor appropriate to . . . the degree offered" and that it is "designed to foster a coherent student learning experience and to promote synthesis of learning" (*Characteristics of Excellence*, 2006, p. 43). Likewise, the

six-year evaluation provides the opportunity for the optional evidence of “completed analytical program reviews [of educational offerings]” (*Characteristics of Excellence*, 2006, p. 45).

Administrative Structural Changes

To accommodate this rapid growth and 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 with vice president overseeing traditional undergraduate programs and another the seminary/graduate and adult education departments. Under the current vertical structure, each program, from certificate to 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.

One of the main challenges LBC encountered in moving to a vertical structure was integrating silos that previously existed when the non-traditional and graduate programs operated separately from traditional programs. Before this change, decisions about curriculum in non-traditional programs were made independently of academic departments. This led to inconsistencies in curriculum and outcome disparities between programs. To address this challenge, the administration changed the reporting structure of key academic positions in non-traditional programs to now report to their specific academic department chairs. This allows academic departments to manage all programs at all degree levels and in all delivery formats.

The new structure greatly enhances each department's ability to provide "comparable quality of teaching/instruction, academic rigor, and educational effectiveness of the institution's courses and programs regardless of the location or delivery mode" including "educational expectations, rigor, and student learning within any accelerated degree program are comparable to those that characterize more traditional program formats" (*Characteristics of Excellence*, 2006, p. 44). In addition, this move provides a much better structure by which to "foster a coherent student learning experience and to promote synthesis of learning" at the certificate, associate, baccalaureate, masters, and doctoral levels (*Characteristics of Excellence*, 2006, p. 43).

Leveraging Charles Frey Academic Center and Teague Learning Commons

The March 2016 opening of the Charles Frey Academic Center (CFAC) furthered our vertical integration. This four-story, 50,000 square-foot building houses six of our seven academic departments, each inhabiting its own suite of offices, workroom, and conference room or dedicated classroom space. In addition, the CFAC houses numerous academic support units, including the Provost's Office, Adult Learner Services, Office of Digital Learning, and Office for Institutional Effectiveness. With all these departments and offices under one roof, we are better able to serve our undergraduate and seminary/graduate students, both traditional and non-traditional. In addition, the idea that the CFAC would not be merely an administrative enclave was at the forefront of the planning process for this building. Eleven technologically integrated classrooms were positioned throughout the building close to each of the six departments. Not only does this building add needed classroom space, but also brings students into the building to interact with faculty both during class and afterward; students regularly visit conveniently located faculty offices or Charlie's Creamery, situated on the first floor.

The Teague Learning Commons (TLC) was completed in August 2012. As the anchor for academic learning, the TLC houses our Charles and Gloria Jones Library and our learning support services. Students can receive academic support through the Ally Center, which is comprised of Academic Mentoring Services, Disability Services, the Math Lab, and the Writing Center. As noted in the [accompanying documents](#) (Appendix 4I), the use of these services has been increasing. The TLC has allowed LBC to centralize these services for students, including remote access from LBC's various locations.

The opening of the TLC went a long way toward addressing the 2012 Periodic Review Report (PRR) suggestion of making the library more accessible to LBC's non-traditional students during times other than normal semesters. The support of teaching and learning has been recast in this \$10 million building. Since the 2007 self-study, the Library has grown to include access to over 300,000 electronic books and over 90,000 electronic journal titles that are available 24 hours a day to all students. The Library hours are now carefully scheduled around nontraditional class schedules during the summer and between semesters, and at additional times when there is a need. All databases have been moved to the cloud, allowing student access from anywhere. The Library has added a link on the webpage for patrons to chat with a professional librarian about research issues at any time. There is also a link to make a reference request directly to LBC librarians. A service was added which provides links to electronic content between different providers that is transparent to Library users. Library staff provide telephone research help and mail materials to online students who are not located near any of our locations. Librarians have also increased the number of in-class tutorials on research and information literacy. More information on this is included in Chapter Five, General Education. An additional full-time library technology position was added to oversee the Library databases and website and will

eventually also create information literacy tutorials for the faculty. Additionally, an Information Literacy Lab as well as a Writing Center are available in the TLC enhancing our approach to information literacy for our Lancaster students.

The Charles and Gloria Jones Library extends its services through core library collections at the Greenbelt, Philadelphia, and Memphis locations, thus helping to “meet standards for quality of instruction, academic rigor, and educational effectiveness comparable to those” offered on our main campus (*Characteristics of Excellence*, 2006, pg.58). Between the summer of 2013 and the summer of 2016, the Lancaster library staff went through several stages of processing and cataloging four library collections. The Springfield library collection was redistributed when that location was merged with the Greenbelt location (see [Library Report – 2016](#) [Appendix 4J]). Each of the three current locations now has a core library collection that reflects the programs taught at that location. Each library has its own holdings code in the institution's Online Patron Access (OPAC) and has an online catalog that gives access to all of the electronic resources held at the Lancaster location. The catalog shows all the physical resources available at all locations. Materials from all four library locations are delivered to students at other locations as needed. The borrowing of materials from other libraries is provided through interlibrary loan.

Each location has library workers who can circulate materials, and students and faculty at these locations can consult with the librarians at Lancaster by telephone. The Lancaster library purchases electronic books whenever possible so that they are accessible to all faculty and students at all locations.

A high priority for our Library Director is to continue to extend information literacy and other library services to our remote campuses. The hiring of part-time professional librarians at the

Greenbelt, Philadelphia, and Memphis locations, as funding and enrollment targets are met, would provide timely and effective on-site research assistance and interpretation of the collection to students and faculty. A librarian at each location would also provide research and information literacy instruction both individually and in classes. The greatest need for a professional librarian is at the Greenbelt location where many of the students are enrolled in graduate programs whose assignments require higher-level information skills. The college should consider adding professional library staff at our additional locations as enrollment and funding allow.

Both the TLC and the CFAC buildings have provided LBC with greatly enhanced “learning resources, facilities, instructional equipment, [and] library services” to support our educational programs and have allowed greater “collaboration among professional library staff, faculty and administrators in fostering information literacy and technological competency skills across the curriculum” (*Characteristics of Excellence*, 2006, p. 44).

The Changing Face of the Bible College Student

As was previously mentioned, the student body makeup has changed significantly. LBC has been meeting the needs of the adult population since 1994 with the establishment of a degree completion program. Then in 2006 and 2009 our first two totally online programs geared to adults were approved by MSCHE. In the last ten years these adult-focused programs have more than doubled our population of students over 40 years of age. Our mean and median ages have gone from the 20 to 22-year range up to the 25 to 29-year range.

According to a [recent study](#) (Appendix 4K) by the Association for Biblical Higher Education in conjunction with the Barna Group, adults 26 years of age or older are more likely to apply to a

Bible college over a Christian college (35%) than are traditional-aged students (28%). This has been evident in the growing enrollment of non-traditional students at LBC.

With the growth of non-traditional student academic programs, services meeting the needs of these students had to be addressed. In response to some of these needs, the Adult Learner Services (ALS) team was created in 2015 and tasked with the goal of establishing and promoting “practices and policies that reflect the needs of adult learners” (*Characteristics of Excellence*, 2006, p. 44). The establishment of ALS allows students to connect with a centralized team for prospective-student, admissions, and academic/registration information.

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 Office for Institutional Effectiveness (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 4L) 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.

Academic Rigor

“An accredited institution is expected to possess ... educational offerings congruent with its mission, which include appropriate areas of academic study of sufficient content, breadth and length, and conducted at **levels of rigor** appropriate to the programs or degrees offered” (Characteristics of Excellence, 2006, p. 43).

To supplement other evidences of academic rigor (see our [Document Roadmap](#)), in late January of 2016, the Office for Institutional Effectiveness conducted a [survey](#) (Appendix 4M) 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 upon 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.

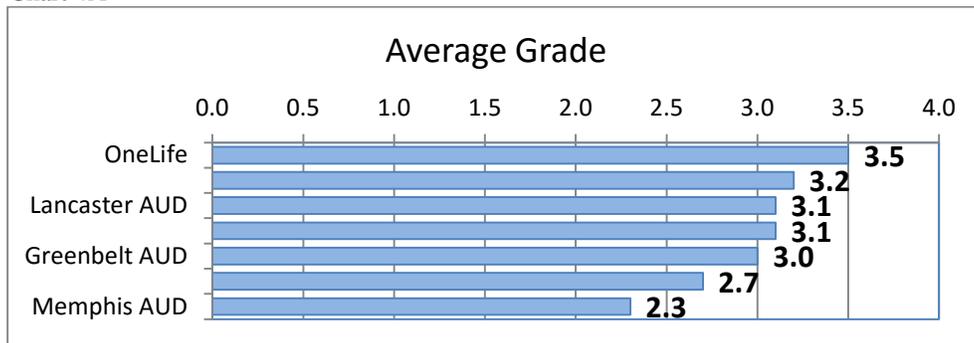
The data gathered from the focus groups seems to indicate that course rigor is primarily dependent upon the instructor. More specifically, rigor depends on whether an instructor is an adjunct or a full time instructor. As was noted earlier in the chapter, LBC has seen tremendous growth in the past ten 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 and acclimation 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, [here](#) (Appendix 4N).

During the spring of 2015, the Office for Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) initiated a [correlational study of BIB 105 final grades](#) (Appendix 4O) over the previous three academic years. The goal was 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 based on the campus of LBC and is described more fully later in 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 4A



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 a June 2015 [Analysis of Blind Grading Study](#) (Appendix 4P) 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. 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 4Q](#)).

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.

Professional Accreditations

Professional or specialized accreditations or certifications can also be seen as evidence of appropriate academic rigor. 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 stricter. 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 the “skills and abilities developed in [LBC’s] general education [offerings can be] applied in the major or concentration” (*Characteristics of Excellence*, 2006, p. 48). Currently the following programs are professionally accredited or are seeking such accreditation.

- Certification Programs in the Education Department, Worship & Performing Arts Department, and Health & PE are approved through ACSI (Association for Christian Schools International). These approvals, the first received in 1982, grant ACSI standard certification upon graduation.
- Certification Programs in the Education Department, Counseling & Social Work Department, Health & Physical Education, and Worship & Performing Arts Department are approved by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. These approvals, the first received in 1991, grant students eligibility for certification upon graduation.
- The Social Work program within Professional Counseling and Social Work department received [accreditation](#) (Appendix 4R) through the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) in 2016.
- Programs within our Worship & Performing Arts department are seeking accreditation through the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM). [Editor’s Note: NASM accreditation was achieved in December of 2016; official notification is pending.]
- The Sport Management program within our Health & Physical Education department is seeking accreditation through the Commission on Sport Management Accreditation (COSMA). [Editor’s note: An initial visit from a self-study team was conducted in December 2016.]

([Appendix 4S](#) summarizes the admissions requirements of these and two other programs: the five-year BS/MA Professional Counseling program and the BS/MEd Professional School Counseling program.)

As each program works through professional accreditations, LBC's Academic Council provides crucial assistance to the department chair, the program coordinator, and program faculty. This structure gives department chairs the ability to work within their programs to meet accreditation needs. Being able to work within their own curriculum to achieve these accreditations has allowed the academic programs to receive validation from professional organizations. As individual programs within LBC receive professional accreditation, it confirms that those programs have "sufficient content, breadth and length, and [are] conducted at levels of rigor appropriate to ... the degree offered" and are "designed to foster a coherent student learning experience and to promote synthesis of learning" within that professional field (*Characteristics of Excellence*, 2006, p. 43).

Other Educational Offerings Issues - MOUs

LBC partners with certain institutions through memoranda of understanding (MOUs). These MOUs allow 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.

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. (See the Document Roadmap [Standard 8] for full report.)

The average SAT scores of transfer students from these schools ranged from 891 to 1115, which was lower than the average range of 990 to 1115 for fall 2014 LBC freshmen. Withdrawal (from LBC) rates for students from these schools ranged from 0% to 44% with three of the eight schools having withdrawal rates of 40%, 43%, and 44%. The schools with the highest withdrawal rates also tended to have lower GPAs and SAT scores. (In the interest of confidentiality, the full report [which names each institute] is not included here but can be made available to the Evaluation Team upon request.)

While it is acknowledged that accredited status should not be the sole determining factor with regard to transferring credits, based upon 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 to consider “course equivalencies, including expected learning outcomes, with [our own] curricula and standards” (*Characteristics of Excellence*, 2006, p. 44). 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. 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 should be put in place. The Provost's office and academic programs should jointly create policies 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.

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

At a time when [60% of young people are walking away from faith after high school](#) (Appendix 4U), over [35% of college graduates are unemployed or underemployed](#) (Appendix 4V),

¹Damon, W. *The Path to Purpose: How Young People Find Their Calling in Life*. New York: Free, 2008.

and 80% of high school seniors do not “express a clear vision of where they want to go, what they want to accomplish, and why,”¹ OneLife creates an educational atmosphere focused on helping emerging adults to think more deeply about God’s purpose for their lives. Many students and parents are also questioning the value and worth of a college degree, especially after the economic downturn of 2008. Because of the changing face of today’s students and the current cultural landscape of higher education, OneLife at LBC provides a nine-month educational experience that starts students on the right path as they enter their young adult years.

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 4W](#)).

Key Strengths Noted in This Section

1. The vertical integration model has allowed for consistency between degree levels and delivery models, especially in the face of growth and location expansion.
2. 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.

Suggestions

1. The college should consider adding professional library staff at the Greenbelt, Philadelphia, and Memphis locations as enrollment and funding allow.
2. The college should consider continued monitoring of the academic rigor of courses offered in non-traditional formats and at all locations.
3. 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.

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.