

Chapter 5

General Education

Overview

While a strong biblical education is at the crux of an education from Lancaster Bible College (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.

Standards

MSCHE Standard 12

The institution's curricula are designed so that students acquire and demonstrate college-level proficiency in general education and essential skills, including oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, technological competency, and information literacy.

A reading of this chapter also lends support to our compliance with MSCHE 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 12](#). We track the assessment and planning aspects of this standard through our Arts & Sciences Department's Taskstream workspace. Just one of many examples of LBC's compliance with Standard 12 is in the area of information literacy skills. As seen in Appendix 5T: 2015 SAILS Summary Report, LBC students taking our introductory English composition course as freshmen and sophomores earn similar scores on the Standardized Assessment of Information Literacy Skills as students at other colleges participating in this measurement.

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

“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. How are we diversifying the curriculum for high-achieving and as well as academically at-risk students?
2. Is rigor sufficient for students' academic/professional goals, and how is that rigor assessed and remediated?
3. Does course content encourage proficient use of technology by the instructor and student?

4. Are students exposed through general education curriculum to diversified world views?
5. 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 “a program of general education of sufficient scope to enhance students’ intellectual growth” (*Characteristics of Excellence*, 2006, p. 48).

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.” As was noted in LBC’s 2012 Periodic Review Report, a new chairperson was put in place at the start of 2008-2009 and this individual continues to lead the department. The current Mission and Objectives of the Arts & Sciences Department were tweaked ([Appendix 5A](#)). 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 5B) 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 5C).

The recent key initiatives undertaken by the college have provided the Arts & Sciences Department with some challenges. The rest of this chapter outlines the strategies already undertaken to address these challenges as well as future steps yet to be taken.

Move from Regional to National

As this 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 associations. 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 5D: [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 as mentioned.

In keeping with a Standard 12 Fundamental Element regarding the “assessment of general education outcomes . . . [where] results are utilized for curricular improvement” (*Characteristics of Excellence*, 2006, p. 48), 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 applies 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 5E](#)). 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.

This 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 ([Appendix 5F](#).) 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. These data are just one indication that “upon degree completion, [LBC] students are proficient in written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning and technological competency appropriate to the discipline” (*Characteristics of Excellence*, 2006, p. 48).

Rapid Growth and Expansion

As the study group considered the rapid growth of LBC, it focused on 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 [See *The Changing Face of the Bible College Student* section of Chapter 4]. 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 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 a Standard 12 Fundamental Element regarding the “assessment of general education outcomes . . . [where] results are utilized for curricular improvement” (*Characteristics of Excellence*, 2006, p. 48), 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 5G: [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. As of that date, applicants to the AUD program must now submit a writing sample, which is scored by an individual who does not otherwise participate in AUD recruitment and admissions. AUD student advisors take into consideration the placement essay score and student transcripts. 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. The study group found, through their own experiences and discussion with colleagues who also teach in traditional, AUD, and online formats, that students have conflicting perceptions of academic rigor. This was confirmed by survey data. Additional research is needed to evaluate 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 4N: [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 5H: [A&S courses GPA analysis report – 2013](#)).

Changing Face of the Bible College Student

Lancaster Bible College is preparing students to live and work in an increasingly globalized culture and in neighborhoods and work environments more diverse than ever before. A fundamental element of Standard 12 calls for a program of general education “consistent with institutional mission” that “incorporates study of values, ethics, and diverse perspectives” (*Characteristics of Excellence*, 2006, p. 48). 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 5I: [General Education Survey Data](#), Appendix 5J: [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 ethno-centric 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 at one of Compassion International's many local church sites, thus promoting an awareness of global poverty, encouraging humility, and training students to be global citizens. The first year of the sponsorship is at no extra cost to the student and a step down model allows students to slowly take over the financial ownership of their sponsorship throughout their four-year academic career.

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](#) (Appendix 5K) 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 5L: [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](#) (Appendix 5M) comprised of 374 students to countries including Macedonia, South Africa, Spain, Brazil, Japan, Zimbabwe, Germany, the Philippines, Nigeria, Jamaica, China, Ireland, and Portugal. Usually staff and faculty provide leadership on these trips, modeling cross-cultural awareness to students.

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 enrichment and leadership opportunities provided by extra-curricular campus

organizations compliment the “skills and abilities developed in [the academic curriculum of] general education [which can be] applied in the major or concentration” (*Characteristics of Excellence*, 2006, p. 48). Information provided by the Student Services office reveals 14 different student organizations who collectively provide over 100 leadership opportunities for students (Appendix 5N: [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.

Finally, as noted in the description of Standard 12 (*emphasis added*), “skills and knowledge derived from general education *and the major* should be integrated because general education and study in depth, together, comprise a quality undergraduate education” (*Characteristics of Excellence*, 2006, p. 48). As more students enroll in majors designed to prepare them for careers beyond full-time church and para-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](#) (Appendix 5O) 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 provides them with a competitive edge in the job market.

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 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.

As the use of this technology and the Charles Frey Academic Center increases, it remains to be seen how extensively these facilities will serve the rest of campus. If past use and preemptive inquiries are any indication, the ability for students, faculty, and staff to incorporate technology into their curriculum and the commitment shown by LBC to provide these opportunities will increase exponentially.

Other Issues – Academic Rigor

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 general education group found it necessary to also 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 5P: [Summary of June 2010 SAILS](#), Appendix 5Q: [Fall 2012 SAILS Summary Report](#), Appendix 5R: [SAILS Synopsis 2010-2011](#)).
- 2014 SAILS - The [report](#) (Appendix 5S) 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.
- 2015 SAILS – The [Fall 2015 report](#) (Appendix 5T) 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 in the Arts & Sciences [Taskstream workspace](#) (Appendix 5C). 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 5U) 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 4 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 through 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 5V](#)).
- 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 an ALP [Accelerated Learning Program] course) in the Spring 2016 semester with a more expanded pilot planned for Fall 2016 (see [Appendix 5W](#) 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 are 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 [5W](#) and [5X](#) for sample syllabi).

Additional problematic patterns were seen in 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 5G) course. While the numbers generally indicate students fare well in the ensuing WI course, as many as 15% actually score 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 5Y: [Curricular and Policy Change in English Composition Sequence](#)) 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 or below 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 5Z: [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 5AA: [Advanced Public Speaking Syllabus](#)).

Two final notes regarding academic rigor in the Arts & Sciences Department are mentioned here but are covered in more detail elsewhere in this document. During the fall of 2014, the Office for Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) initiated a [blind grading study](#) (Appendix 5BB) for several sections of LAN 101 English Composition from both traditional undergraduate and from our Accelerated Undergraduate Degree (AUD) programs. While Chapter 4 of this report contains a

fuller examination of this study, 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.

In addition, in late January of 2016, the OIE conducted a [survey of current students who had transferred in at least 30 credits](#) (Appendix 4N) when they enrolled at LBC. The purpose of this survey was to find out how transfer students think LBC's academic rigor compares to their previous institution(s). The study revealed transfer students generally consider Arts & Sciences courses 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%). A fuller consideration of this study is found in Chapter 4 of this report, Academic Programs.

In consideration of these last two findings, the Arts & Sciences Department, in accordance with the recommendation from the OIE, should track GPA averages in courses. 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. Since the OIE's original research did not investigate online classes, particular efforts should be made to gather GPA data from courses delivered online.

Other Issues - 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 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). See Chapter Four for programs currently professionally accredited or which are seeking such accreditation.

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. LBC has a robust, holistic student experience providing opportunities to both at-risk and high-achieving students. Notably, a significant number of LBC students are able to hold campus positions of leadership and are able to develop skills transferrable to the job market as they participate in these extracurricular opportunities.

3. LBC, due to its commitment to an annual Missions Conference and an immersive cross-cultural study requirement, emphasizes cultural diversity in its approach to curriculum and holistic student experience.
4. 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.
5. LBC students are scoring at a level comparable to other institutions of higher education on measures of information literacy.

Suggestions

Based upon the findings of this chapter, this study group proposes that the Arts & Sciences Department consider these suggestions in addition to the two recommendations noted below.

1. Carefully monitor both student and instructor feedback and performance in the 300 and 400 level courses as the new sequence is introduced. Where necessary, changes in prerequisites and student assignments should be made so the goal of having an authentic set of prerequisites and depth of study is attained. To further support the goal of depth of study, the department should provide professional development opportunities for faculty which will enable them to teach subject matter and information literacy and critical thinking skills.
2. As LBC continues to experience rapid growth, the feasibility of reinstating an honors program or honors sections of courses should be explored.
3. As the new Arts & Sciences core curriculum is developed, the department should consider how biblical worldview development, a current strength of the department, can coexist in courses with content that will stretch students' awareness of and interaction with the perspectives and beliefs of individuals from a broader range of ethnicities and religions.

4. The Arts & Sciences Department should continue to implement the requirement instituted in the fall of 2015 that all LAN 101 English Composition courses incorporate a library staff-led tutorial pertaining to research. Additionally, the department should consider creating a master syllabus for English Composition courses allowing for flexibility of assignments and textbooks while dictating information literacy skills to be taught, along with expected workload and assignment types.
5. The Arts & Sciences Department should continue with the plan to increase support for writers who pass English Composition with a C and assess whether the plan increases performance in Writing Intensive courses and improves students' progress toward graduation.
6. Each individual academic department and/or program should determine the technological skills students need and form assessment strategies that ensure graduates are technologically competent according to the parameters of their chosen professions.
7. LBC should develop a plan to administer the SAILS test to AUD students. A customized SAILS test should be created to include information most likely to be of value to students in the use of LBC information databases and in their future careers. Standard SAILS questions of dubious value would be eliminated.
8. The Arts & Sciences Department should continue to track the performance of students enrolling in LAN 061 to see if more students taking this replacement for LAN 060 will pass LAN 101 and if their grades in LAN 101 will rise.

Recommendations for Growth and Improvement

1. 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.
2. 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.