



Request for Institutional Change

**Respectfully Submitted to the
Higher Learning Commission of the
North Central Association of Colleges and Schools
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**Institutional Contact
Dr. Maria Vaz
Provost
Lawrence Technological University
Southfield, MI 48075
vaz@ltu.edu 248-204-2400**

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Executive Summary

Lawrence Technological University (Lawrence Tech) proposes to offer selected existing degree programs through distance learning methods, specifically via asynchronous and synchronous web-based and video-based methods. We respectfully request approval of this change under Commission policy 1.C.2.b (“Change in Educational Offering”).

Lawrence Tech has extensive distance learning and instructional technology capabilities developed over several years, both from the perspective of faculty skills and technology infrastructure. Lawrence Tech uses the Blackboard™ course management system to support all classes, and over 825 classes actively use Blackboard™ resources. Over 30 classes are currently taught in a hybrid mode using some degree of online instruction. Over 18 classes are currently taught using synchronous videoconferencing or webcasting technologies. Several classes have been developed and delivered as fully online asynchronous courses with great success. Lawrence Tech leverages these capabilities to provide fully online degree and certificate programs.

The LTU Online initiative was established under the Office of the Provost to administer, design, develop, and deliver high quality online courses in collaboration with colleges and academic departments. Academic responsibility for all academic programs – both on-ground and online – rests with the colleges and academic departments. LTU Online collaborates with colleges and academic departments to develop and deliver online classes that are equivalent in content and outcomes to on-ground Lawrence Tech classes.

The University wishes to offer the following degree and certificate programs in a totally online format using the capabilities developed by LTU Online:

1. Master of Business Administration
2. Master of Engineering Management
3. Bachelor of Science in Information Technology
4. Graduate Certificate in Nonprofit Management
5. Graduate Certificate in Project Management
6. Graduate Certificate in Architectural Management

This change request addresses the issues identified by the Commission in evaluating the preparedness and capabilities of an institution to deliver and sustain online programs. The proposed change articulates the anticipated outcomes and impact of the proposed change. The factors leading to the change are discussed within the context of the University’s strategic plan. The institutional approvals for the LTU Online program are discussed, and the impact of the LTU Online initiative on institutional challenges noted by the Commission during its last visit is addressed. The University’s plans to implement and sustain the LTU Online initiative are addressed at length, with special attention paid to issues of faculty participation and support, provision of student services to online learners, and long-term budget and staffing commitment to the initiative. The timeline of the LTU Online initiative and plans for formative and summative evaluation are also described. The University’s plan to address the requirements of the TEACH Act of 2002 is also discussed.

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Several appendices provide detailed information on the linkages of LTU Online to the Commission's criteria for accreditation, the Commission's crosscutting themes, and to best practices in online program design as articulated by the Commission and by the Sloan-C Foundation. The appendices also provide extensive documentation on procedures for LTU Online course development, faculty selection and training, intellectual property policies, and delivery of online courses. An inventory of existing student services practices is included, and action plans to address the provision of online student services are presented. The LTU Online project plan and budget for fiscal year 2006-2007 are presented as appendices. The academic and professional qualifications of LTU Online staff members are also provided.

We believe that Lawrence Tech has developed the capabilities to deliver high quality online programs, has a proven record in the delivery of hybrid and online classes using a variety of delivery methods, and has developed an online initiative informed by best practices and subject to considerable due diligence and involvement of key stakeholders. The University has committed financial and human resources to establish and sustain the LTU Online initiative, but the financial model used by LTU Online requires that Lawrence Tech be authorized to deliver fully online degree programs. We respectfully request the Commission's approval for Lawrence Technological University to offer fully online degree and certificate programs as outlined in this proposal.