

Organization Dimension Report  
Lawrence Technological University

*Foundations Institutions create organizational structures and policies that provide a comprehensive, integrated, and coordinated approach to the first year.* These structures and policies provide oversight and alignment of all first-year efforts. A coherent first-year experience is realized and maintained through effective partnerships among academic affairs, student affairs, and other administrative units and is enhanced by ongoing faculty and staff development activities and appropriate budgetary arrangements.

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#### Current Situation - Structure of the First Year Experience

Lawrence Technological University defines a first year student as one who is in his or her first year of college, including both first time students and transfer students who have completed less than 30 credit hours. The First Year Programs Office oversees a variety of programs aimed at supporting first year students.

1. First Year Advocacy provides a coordinator who supports students and their parents throughout the first year by written and verbal communication. Parents are an important part of the transition into college. Consequently, parents of first year students under the age of 21 receive several letters over the course of the first year. The letters keep parents informed about campus resources and programs, as well as important dates on the academic calendar. They also serve as a reminder of the First Year Programs Office as a resource for students and parents.
2. First Year Advising coordinates the assignment of advisors for each incoming student. Every first year student is assigned an academic advisor. The student meets the advisor during Discovery Days. The advisor is expected to support the academic progress of their advisees and assist with the students' course selection for the following semester. Students and advisors can contact each other via email, phone, or Blackboard. The First Year Coordinator and advisors meet at various times throughout the school year to exchange information and address issues related to the first year students.
3. Academic Feedback is provided about the fifth week into the semester. The faculty of first year students are asked to provide information on students' behavior that may prevent them from succeeding in their course. Students identified as "at risk" are contacted by their academic advisor and the First Year Programs office. We get about 77% faculty feedback. At about the ninth week into the semester the faculty of all first year students are asked to submit midterm grades for all first year students. Students with a grade lower than C in any of their courses are contacted by their advisor and the First Year Programs Coordinator.
4. University Seminar course is required of all first year students. This seminar class helps the first year students make the transition to college. It focuses on academic development, personal and interpersonal skills, and leadership. The course is designed to address the needs of a diverse student population. There are sections dedicated to honor students and remedial students.
5. Mentoring Program for First Year Students Every first year student is assigned a returning LTU student mentor. Mentors meet the first year students at Discovery Days, and stay in contact with them for the first semester. Mentors send weekly emails with study tips, to remind the first year students of important dates, and inform the first year students of on campus events and activities. Two to three all mentors-mentees fun activities are planned during the fall semester. The purpose of the activities is to have our first year students feel part of the LTU community.

Other vital programs which affect the first year student are implemented by Enrollment Services, Student Services, and the Provost's Office.

6. The Academic Achievement Center (AAC) is our university's learning center. It offers free tutoring in major subject areas. It also offers proctored testing services, study skills workshops, self directed study groups and pre-courses.

7. Orientation and Registration (O & R) -- This is a one-day student and parent orientation. During this day students

participate in team building activities, meet an academic advisor, select their courses and register. The First Year Programs Coordinator presents the group advising section. Parents meet with financial aid, housing, and enrollment staff to find out more information about the different programs. During this day the parents also meet the Dean of Students and the First Year Programs Coordinator

8. Discovery Program- Every first year student is invited to attend this two-day welcome/orientation program. During these two days first year students participate in team building exercises and get to know their classmates, mentors and advisors. The program is held two days before classes start and it gives the new students a head start on college life. The program closes with an all campus convocation to which an outside speaker may present topics about leadership, how to stay motivated, etc.

9. Student Affairs sponsors professional and academic fraternities and sororities that are open to first year students. Over thirty student government and special interest organizations/clubs are also open to first year students.

#### Evaluation of Current Situation

Survey data from Noel Levitz (2006), NSSE (2008), and the Foundations of Excellence Student Survey (2008), generally show students have positive perceptions of their First Year experience at Lawrence Tech. The scores on survey questions are more positive than the national average in areas dealing with new student orientation, academic support services, concern of the institution for the student. However, students reported lower scores on the NSSE and FOE surveys for the area of help with non-academic matters such as money management and family issues. One area of particular concern is the University Seminar class based on end of the semester student evaluations. These evaluations provide negative feedback on the content of the class.

Faculty/Staff responses from the Foundations of Excellence survey indicate areas for improvement such as the need for increased support for students with non-academic issues, increased funding for courses for first year students, and more communication among groups that serve first year students. Staff also felt there was a need for more collaboration between academic and student affairs. Faculty and Staff need consistent training on First Year programs and their relation to student success and retention. These training sessions could take place during new faculty orientation or as a separate training event. The training could also address the issue of remedial class sequences, as well.

The Foundations of Excellence Organization Committee spent several hours evaluating the First Year Advising Program. Here are observations and recommendations of the committee.

1. The advising process through Orientations and Registration (O & R) is not defined (or communicated sufficiently) so faculty throughout the university understand the steps involved. As a result, Faculty are not fully aware of the advising process for First Year Students. Colleges should encourage faculty to attend FY programs to show support for new students.

2. A follow-up after O & R advising could check to see if recommended classes were actually taken. Determine the feasibility of assigning advisors who will follow the student during their entire first year of study.

3. More detailed information is needed on FY programs from individual colleges such as Engineering, Arts & Sciences, Architecture and Management. More communication is needed between offices and departments that support FY students. A&S faculty advise FY business, engineering, A & S majors, and undeclared students. Many FY Engineering students need to take remedial math classes, so Engineering faculty do not advise them until they are taking Calculus I, which is often in their second or third year.

4. Standardize the software used to manage advising documents so all departments are using the same program.

5. It was suggested that increased funding for FY Advising would allow adjunct faculty and even graduate students to assist with advising. This would free up full-time faculty to spend more time advising junior and senior level students.

There is considerable concern about FY students and remedial courses. This impacts FY Engineering students as referenced above, as well as other majors. More data is needed on the percentage of FY students who do not pass remedial classes and how this group might be identified prior to admission. The cost of remediation is a challenge that all universities are now facing. Suggestions were made on ways to keep engineering students (who are not able to enroll in engineering classes yet) involved in their departments by becoming a member of professional organizations or by providing advanced engineering students as mentors to FY students. It may be necessary to provide more First Year services to high risk students. At present, students receive FY services only through the first calendar year of their enrollment.

The level of university resources devoted to remediation is increasing. Do remedial classes work? There is a need for evaluation of admission standards as they relate to FY student success.

The University Seminar program is very unpopular with students as shown on course evaluations. Criticism centers on how many assignments are required for a one credit class. Over the years the scope of this one credit class has expanded to include service leadership, cultural diversity, time management, career services, study skills, research skills, and service learning with numerous assignments. Research skills, or information literacy, administered by the library is no longer introduced to each class. University Seminar needs to be reevaluated and restructured. Students could be grouped in University Seminar sections based on their intended majors or ESL status. The information literacy component (Library instruction) once offered to every student through University Seminar is now only given to classes whose instructors specifically request the session. Library skills might be offered to FY students in Freshman Composition, if they cannot consistently be taught in University Seminar.

Committee Leader:

Glen Bauer, Associate Dean  
Leslie Michalik, Administrator of Student Services

Committee Members:

Lisa Kujawa, Assistant Provost for Enrollment Management  
Alan McLaughlin, Director, Student Sport and Recreation  
Cathy Phillips, Reference Librarian and Head of Technical Services  
Charlene Ramos, Help Desk Director  
Jane Rohrback, Director of Admissions  
John Tocco, Assistant Professor, Dept. of Civil Engineering

Steering Committee Advisors:

Gladys Aviles, Coordinator of First Year Programs  
Larry Chesnutt, Data and Applications Analyst  
Steven Howell, Associate Provost & Dean of Graduate Programs  
Mary Thomas, Director of Institutional Research and Academic Planning

Recommended Grade: B-

Recommended Action Items:

- O&R Advising (Departmental Level-Dean's Council) (*High priority*)

Follow up with post O&R freshman students to review their schedules to make sure that they registered for the advised classes. If not, determine if they are still on the correct path. If they are registered for classes that don't fit with their curriculum plan, intervention needs to happen. During O & R students will meet with an advisor who will not necessarily be their regular advisor. Determine the feasibility of assigning advisors during O & R who will follow the FY students during their first year of study.

- Changing the culture (Departmental Levels- Dean's Council) (*High priority*)

All colleges and departments should focus on the undergraduate curriculum, as well as graduate programs. Faculty from all departments should attend and be part of the O&R process for a better understanding of undergraduate students.

- University Seminar (First Year Programs/ Library) (*High priority*)

Figure out the intent of University Seminar. Web based programs could be used to help students engage with faculty. Use interactive sites to share information about a successful transition to college.

Develop a plan to offer library skills (information literacy) instruction to all FY students, possibly through Freshman Composition.

- Advising (Departmental Level- Dean's Council/ First Year Programs) (*High priority*)

Attempt to keep advisors up to date with FY procedures.

Train faculty to notice warning signs that students may not be able to handle the curriculum in their area of study and advise them of alternative study options.

For some majors, align advisors relevant to the faculty field of study.

- Advising for Engineering Students (Engineering Department) (*High priority*)

If advising for Engineering is to remain in the A&S college then Engineering will need to find a way to engage students within their college. The primary issue is how to keep students motivated to become involved in university life and stay interested in engineering.

A Pre-engineering class might be offered to students who are enrolled in remedial classes to introduce them to engineering professions and keep interest level high.

- Closely monitor engineering/architecture students in remedial classes (Dept. Level- Dean's Council) (*High priority*)

Determine a way to monitor progress of engineering/architecture students who are enrolled in remedial classes. If they are not able to pass remedial classes, they may need to need to change their major. Remedial curriculum may need to be restructured.

- Admissions (Institutional Research & Enrollment Services) (*High priority*)

Run reports to see if there are trends between ACT scores and academic success. Perhaps the criteria should be changed for admittance using a higher ACT score instead of a watered down GPA. Determine a way to examine data on high school grading standards and the effect it has on FY student success. For example, students with lower high school GPA's may earn higher grades at LTU because their high schools had higher standards. Do we want increased enrollment at any cost or do we want a higher caliber of student attending and graduating from LTU?

- Faculty / staff FY training (Provost's Office/ First Year Programs) (*High priority*)

Add discussion of FY programs/philosophy into the new faculty orientation. For existing faculty, require attendance at a program to educate them on first year programs and their importance.

- Advising Models (Departmental Level- Dean's Council) (*High priority*)

The College of Architecture and Design has been able to improve their student advising by training faculty to familiarize themselves with remedial class sequencing. Adjuncts and graduate students can also provide advising assistance to ease the load on full-time faculty. These improvements can be used in other departments, such as Engineering to help overcome the obstacles of advising students who are enrolled in remedial classes for 1-2 years before qualifying for engineering classes.

- Advising documents (Departments-Dean Council) (*Medium priority*)

We need a mechanism to standardize advising documents. Each college utilizes a different tool, either Excel, Word, Visio and various other formats.