

Roles & Purposes Dimension Report
Lawrence Technological University

Foundations Institutions promote student understanding of the various roles and purposes of higher education, both for the individual and society. These roles and purposes include knowledge acquisition for personal growth, learning to prepare for future employment, learning to become engaged citizens, and learning to serve the public good. Institutions encourage first-year students to examine systematically their motivation and goals with regard to higher education in general and to their own college/university. Students are exposed to the value of general education as well as to the value of more focused, in-depth study of a field or fields of knowledge (i.e., the major).

ROLES AND PURPOSES DIMENSION REPORT
APRIL 2009

Revised Dimension Statement:

Foundations Institutions promote student understanding of the various roles and purposes of higher education, both for the individual and society. These roles and purposes include knowledge acquisition for personal growth, learning to prepare for future employment, learning to become engaged citizens, and learning to serve the public good. Institutions encourage first-year students to examine systematically their motivation and goals with regard to higher education in general and to their own college/university. In contrast to other universities, where first-year students are required to sample a variety of courses in order to achieve career focus, LTU students arrive with career focus and are required to sample a variety of courses in order to achieve intellectual breadth.

1. Culture of Service

The University needs to develop ties and maintain ongoing relationships with community organizations to provide a variety of opportunities.

Justification:

LTU desires to formalize a "culture of service" across the curriculum and at all academic levels. There exists a foundation of student involvement upon which to build this culture: According to the results of the 2008 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), LTU freshmen performed as much, or more, community service or volunteer work than their geographic peers, the Carnegie Class and the aggregate of the 2008 NSSE participants. However, it appears that at present, students do not obtain this experience through LTU. Fewer LTU freshmen reported participating in a community-based project as part of a course than did their peers at other institutions. (NSSE 2008). Further, LTU freshmen indicate that LTU only "somewhat" contributes to their knowledge, skills and personal development in contributing to the welfare of their community, a lower rating than peer institutions received. (NSSE 2008). Respondents to the Foundations of Excellence (FoE) Faculty/Staff Survey indicate that LTU falls short of its goal in helping first year students explore the idea that one purpose of higher education is to actively engage with the community.

LTU has taken some steps toward formalizing a culture of service. The University presently facilitates two opportunities to participate in community outreach: the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service and Alternative Spring Break. Students can also search for other opportunities using CareerQuest. However, even though the Leadership curriculum (including University Seminar) and Honors Program require community service, University Seminar instructors report that students have difficulty in finding appropriate opportunities, even with the availability of the CareerQuest tool. Faculty do not receive guidance on assisting students with the search for service opportunities. If LTU utilizes its resources (including the Center for Nonprofit Management, relationships built through Advancement and through the Leadership Programs) to develop and cement ties with several community-based organizations, opportunities will exist for students to engage in community outreach without the administrative burden on faculty.

Responsibility: The Office of Leadership Programs
Supported by: Center for Non-Profit Management, University Advancement

2. University Seminar content and design

Content and design for University Seminar needs to be revisited in response to near universal student dissatisfaction as well as inconsistency in course delivery.

Justification:

University Seminar impacts nearly all freshmen and serves as a student's first impression of LTU. However, student evaluations and the 2008 NSSE results overwhelmingly show dissatisfaction with the course. Students clearly differentiate between their assessment of the instructor (which normally includes positive feedback) and their assessment of the course itself, including content and structure. Students report, among other things, that the course requires more work than is reasonable for a 1-credit-hour course; that the course neither enhances their education nor their personal growth; and that the course content is primarily "common sense" material. A sample University Seminar syllabus indicates that the course includes a broad range of topics including career planning, time management, study skills, leadership, service learning and using on-campus resources. Each University Seminar instructor includes these topics, but beyond that, course content is inconsistent from section to section.

Responsibility: Department of Humanities, Social Sciences, and Communication; Office of First Year Programs; Office of Leadership Programs

3. Academic and career guidance

Lawrence Tech should offer the "My Vocational Situation" assessment or similar instrument on its website and require potential students to complete and submit it along with their admissions application.

Justification:

Current LTU students have access to a variety of career guidance (including the MVS assessment and follow-up Discover Session during University Seminar; opportunity to discuss career options with a faculty advisor; and mentorship within the Scholars Program for participating students). However, it is unlikely that a student will take the time and effort to change programs even if the MVS and Discover Session reveal the student might be best suited for a different major. With respect to academic advising, many students do not meet with an advisor who is knowledgeable about the students' prospective career fields (for example, engineering students receive academic advising from professors in the Humanities department who do not receive instruction or information about advising future engineers). Other evidence indicates that freshman advising sessions may not be the best source of career guidance: Negative comments about students' experience with academic advisors were prevalent in the 2008 NSSE results, and respondents to the FoE Student Survey indicate that LTU falls short of its goal to have faculty and staff help students examine the students' personal reasons for getting a college education. One NSSE respondent wrote, "My advisor never stepped in and asked me if I had thought about a major change" after apparently receiving low grades. Anecdotal evidence from faculty advisors suggests that many students change majors around their sophomore year, and it is possible that some students who drop out of LTU realize that their chosen major is not the "right" program and do not realize that there might be another program at LTU for which they are better suited. Although career guidance and academic advising should remain in place and continue to improve, efforts to match students with an academic program that complements their results on a career assessment tool as part of the application process will help ensure that students start their academic career in an appropriate major.

Responsibility: Admissions, Office of Career Services
Supported by: Division of Student Affairs

4. Socialization of Students--Within the University

LTU should encourage faculty interaction to a greater degree through a mentoring relationship with their students through office hours, email, Blackboard, and social events on a regular basis.

LTU should provide suitable physical facilities and financial support for adjunct faculty (e.g., paid orientation, paid office hours, etc.).

LTU should provide training for staff to facilitate this initiative.

Justification:

The quality of student interaction with adjuncts should equal the quality of student interaction with full-time faculty. Staff members are a source of information and guidance, and the university should provide encouragement and incentive for direct staff involvement with students outside their assigned duties.

Presently, out-of-class interaction between faculty and students occurs in a few ways: during Discovery Days, students meet briefly with their academic advisor (although faculty who participated in the Days found a lack of guidance regarding what should take place during this meeting); during University Seminar, students are required to interview their academic advisor as part of an assignment; students designated as "At Risk" should be contacted by their advisor (although some faculty do not participate in this process); and students in the HSSC programs are invited to a weekly tea with the department chair and faculty. Students participating in the Scholars program also interact with the Scholars advisor and with faculty who provide tutoring.

NSSE respondents indicated they "often" used e-mail to communicate with an instructor, slightly less frequently than students at LTU's geographic peers. Very few NSSE respondents reported working with faculty members on non-coursework activities, and most respondents indicated they only "sometimes" received prompt feedback on their academic performance. Most NSSE respondents indicated they never worked on a research project with a faculty member outside of course requirements. NSSE comments indicated dissatisfaction with faculty-student relationships and an overall disconnect between the two populations. Students also reported being shuffled among several advisors during their time at LTU, advisors who were unavailable and/or uncommunicative and advisors who were not responsive to student concerns. Encouraging better relationships between students and all faculty (regardless of whether a particular faculty member and student have an advisor-advisee relationship) will help students feel more connected to the institution.

Responsibility: All academic departments
Supported by: All colleges, Office of the Provost, University Advancement, and Human Resources

5. Socialization of Students--Outside the University

Alumni should play a role in the socialization process for students through guest speaking, "mixer" events, networking and mentoring on a regular basis.

Justification:

When students are provided with entry-level skill sets plus a desire to be identified as a member of the profession, they are more comfortable and prepared for their first professional job experience.

NSSE 2008 respondents indicated that they spent an average of 0-1 hour per week engaging in co-curricular activities. Students also indicated that the institution did not emphasize the importance of attending campus events and activities. Finally,

freshman students reported, on average, that their experience at LTU contributed "some" or "quite a bit" to their job or work-related knowledge, skills, and personal development. While LTU received higher NSSE 2008 rankings in this last category compared to other participants, involving alumni with freshman students can only help to increase student engagement with the university and with their career decisions. Providing opportunities for alumni to network with students (future professionals) benefits both alumni (giving back to their university) and students (learning how to become a professional and to develop contacts that will pay off during the job hunt.)

Responsibility: University Advancement

6. Curriculum value

LTU should explain purpose and value of our first-year courses and lower the barriers (e.g., financial limitations, community college alternatives) to taking them.

The University needs to introduce a rationale for the Core Curriculum and other required courses to students and parents on the Lawrence Tech website and other publicity materials, and during recruitment events, Orientation & Registration and Discovery Days.

Justification:

62% of LTU freshmen receive financial aid. 50% of all LTU freshmen are placed into at least one developmental course (courses at the "0" level that do not provide credit toward any degree program). Students enrolled in developmental courses (particularly in areas where students are often under-prepared, including mathematics) may be required to re-enroll in at least one of those courses. For example, 42% of first year students enrolled in MCS0054 Intermediate Algebra/Geometry earned a D, F, W or I grade. 28% of students enrolled in COM0094 English Fundamentals received a D, F, W or I grade. If a student takes MCS0054 twice, at the current tuition rate of \$660/credit hour, the student will spend \$5,280 in tuition alone, without accounting for fees and materials. Students in developmental courses thus face a difficult choice: spend \$5,280 for just two developmental courses at LTU, or take the same courses at a lower priced institution (but lose out on the experience of attending just one university full time and incur the additional burden of transit and scheduling issues). Either option puts the student at a disadvantage and may negatively impact a student's perception of LTU.

The Core Curriculum is a unique and integral component of a Lawrence Tech education. The FoE Student Survey shows that freshmen find LTU surpasses its goal in providing an opportunity for students to discuss a broad range of topics, supporting the importance of the Core Curriculum. However, anecdotal evidence shows prospective students do not receive information about the curriculum beyond a list of the courses. Admissions counselors do not communicate (and may not be fully aware of) the importance of the Core Curriculum. Some student evaluations of core curriculum courses include comments suggesting that the students do not understand the purpose of the Core courses. If a student's first impression of the Core is a positive one, and LTU highlights the Core as something that sets the institution apart, students will view the program more favorably. The LTU website, brochures and related materials; Orientation and Registration; and Discovery Days all provide an appropriate venue for conveying this message. LTU should consider highlighting the skills students obtain in the Core courses, and the relevance of those skills in all professions.

Responsibility: Admissions, Department of Humanities, Social Sciences, and Communication

Supported by: Office of First Year Programs, College of Arts and Sciences, Division of Student Affairs

7. Curriculum: value and cost

LTU should consider a tiered tuition scale in which students take developmental courses at community college-equivalent costs, reduced tuition for core curriculum courses, and full tuition for courses in their majors.

Change course load from 4-4 to 3-3 for faculty who teach all writing-intensive courses and assess faculty workload in all courses that could potentially require more time (e.g., problem-based learning models, etc).

Justification:

An appropriate market segmentation strategy to study price levels for student courses at equivalent universities would provide additional support for this action item. A business paradigm is the wrong model for a university of LTU's size and success. Previous evidence points to a conclusion that emphasizing short-term returns have revealed indicators that we have not maintained our standards. NSSE results overall indicate a lack of senior year dissatisfaction with their four-year experiences. There is no qualitative data (e.g., interviews, anecdotes) that provide an explanation for this dissatisfaction. The articulation of a first-year philosophy requires careful reexamination of the University thought and culture regarding admissions and an overall approach of customer service.

In addition to the discussion in #6, above, it is important to note that students (not understanding the value of the Core Curriculum) often take Core courses at community colleges because those courses are significantly cheaper. For example, Oakland Community College charges a total of \$215.30 for a 3-credit course (\$340.10 for students outside of Oakland County), including registration fees. An Arts and Sciences 3-credit course at LTU costs \$2,095 at the freshman level and \$2,221 at the sophomore level. Additionally, 62 percent of students in the FY cohort received financial aid, which indicates that educational costs are a factor in considering where to complete their coursework.

The University can entice students to take developmental and first-year courses at Lawrence Tech by easing the financial burden of these courses. Teaching writing skills is labor-intensive and requires a great deal of individual attention from the instructors.

Freshmen respondents to NSSE 2008 reported receiving feedback on their academic performance in a slightly more timely

manner compared to students at other institutions. However, faculty report that in writing-intensive courses, providing timely and quality feedback presents a significant burden. An instructor in a writing-intensive course must balance this obligation with service, professional development and student involvement requirements. As noted, LTU needs improvement in faculty-student interaction. Further, faculty responses to the FoE survey indicate that LTU falls far short of its goals regarding faculty professional development. Reducing the required course load for faculty teaching writing-intensive courses will present an equitable result and allow those faculty to continue engaging with students and participating in other LTU initiatives.

Responsibility: Board of Trustees

Supported by: Financial Services, Office of the Provost, Department of Humanities, College of Arts and Sciences

8. Curriculum: Admissions and Transfers

Ethics in admitting students: The University should not admit anyone whose academic needs it is not prepared to meet.

LTU should increase and strengthen the admission requirements for transfer credits for first-year students and reconsider its low barriers for community college transfer credits, particularly for the Core Curriculum courses. There should be content-to-content comparisons to justify community college transfer credits. MACRO-compliance should be maintained at the Associate's degree level as it was originally intended, not the course level.

LTU should develop a systemized method of keeping faculty informed of requirements for accepting transfer credits for advising purposes.

Justification:

Justification for ethics in admission is self-evident. The high percentage of students having to repeat foundation courses suggests many of those students may not be fully prepared coming in to LTU. If LTU is investing in a superior Core Curriculum, we should not make it easy for students to avoid it. Highlighting the value and importance of the Core, but accepting as transfer credit courses that are not equivalent in content, sends a mixed message to students.

Referring to previously cited evidence regarding student dissatisfaction with advising, faculty should be kept informed of all transfer credit policies and equivalents -- the more fully informed an advisor, the better quality advising he or she is able to provide.

Responsibility: Admissions, Academic departments

9. Curriculum: Developmental courses

Delivery and service in Developmental Courses should include smaller class sizes than traditional courses (10:1 student-teacher ratio), be taught by faculty with a background in developmental education, and give release time to faculty who teach Developmental Courses because of the additional work required to guarantee student success.

Justification:

In the FY cohort, at least one-fourth of all students enrolled in developmental courses do not pass the first time they take the class. While some of this failure is due to a lack of individual student responsibility, more support and preparation for faculty who teach these courses could ensure a better success rate.

Responsibility: College of Arts and Sciences

Supported by: Academic departments, Office of the Provost

10. Curriculum: Online courses

Although there is a University-wide push to make courses available online, decisions pertaining to delivery methods of developmental and first-year courses should be determined by the individual faculty teaching the courses and the demonstrated benefit to student learning.

Justification:

In English Fundamentals (a developmental writing course), 28 percent of students in the FY cohort received a D, F, W, or I grade. In other Developmental Courses, the failure or repeat numbers were higher. For Intro to Math Analysis 1 and Intro to Math Analysis 2, the percentage of students with D/F/W/I grades were 32 percent and 39 percent respectively. Even with direct instructor-to-student instruction, students in Developmental Courses struggle to receive a passing grade. This is especially problematic when 50 percent of the students in the FY cohort placed into at least one Developmental-level course. The merits of online education have been inadequately addressed at LTU. Experience indicates that the design and delivery of internet-based courses are inappropriate for Development Courses and first-year students in general. Courses that are available online (e.g., Intermediate Algebra and Intro to Psychology) to first-year students should be studied longitudinally to determine the long-term success rates of the online students in comparison to the traditional classroom-based students.

Responsibility: Academic departments

Supported by: Office of the Provost, eLearning Services

11. Information literacy and social media tools

Lawrence Tech should integrate library and research skills and critical thinking throughout the students' campus experience.

LTU should assist students in development of skills pertaining to responsible use of social media tools and appropriate academic uses (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, blogging, etc).

Justification:

Competent research skills and the mainstreaming of critical thinking into curricula will lead to improved presentation skills and writing. It should be a campus initiative as the ability to assess the value of information does directly support the student leadership initiative. Many students attempt to cite Wikipedia entries as scholarly sources vs. the true scholarly sources available to LTU students at considerable annual investment.

By senior year, 2008 NSSE respondents indicate that LTU falls below other institutions in helping students develop their writing skills. NSSE 2008 comments show students would like more research opportunities and information literacy would enhance this. Existing opportunities, including the Quest program for Arts and Sciences students, can be more effective if students develop competent research skills.

Simply looking over any given student's shoulder shows that students rely heavily on social networking tools for socializing. However, there is a possibility that inappropriate use of these tools could cause problems in the future, especially during the job hunt process. Networking with those in the same profession can yield great benefits to students: for example, professionals who visit LTU to talk about networking emphasize the use of professional social networking sites such as LinkedIn. LTU should help students understand the appropriate and responsible use of social networking tools. The tools ultimately can be a benefit to students given the decline of classified advertisements as a primary method of learning of job opportunities. The tools can be an advantage rather than as a potential burden or distraction.

Responsibility: Academic departments, Office of First Year Programs, Library

Committee Leaders:

Melissa Grunow, Leadership Curriculum Coordinator
Nicole Villeneuve, Professor of Chemistry

Committee Members:

Gary Cocozzoli, Director of the Library
Karen Evans, Undergraduate Management Director for A&S
Gretchen Maricak, Associate Professor of Architecture
Mary Thomas, Director of Institutional Research and Academic Planning
Philip Vogt, Associate Professor of History
Natalie Zebula, Reference Librarian

Steering Committee Advisors:

Gladys Aviles
Steven Howell

Recommended Grade: C-

Recommended Action Items:

- Culture of Service (*High priority*)

LTU desires to formalize and participate in the "culture of service" across the curriculum and at all academic levels. Leadership curriculum and Honors Program require community service, but students have difficulty in finding appropriate opportunities. Faculty are not given guidance on assisting students for service opportunities, so the university should assist in the placement of students. University needs to develop ties and maintain ongoing relationships with community organizations to provide a variety of opportunities.

- University Seminar content and design (*High priority*)

Content and design for University Seminar needs to be revisited in response to near universal student dissatisfaction as well as inconsistency in course delivery.

- Socialization of Students--Within the University (*High priority*)

Encourage faculty interaction to a greater degree through a mentoring relationship with their students through office hours, email, Blackboard, and social events on a regular basis.

Suitable physical facilities and financial support (e.g., paid orientation, paid office hours, etc.) should be provided for Adjunct Faculty, so the quality of student interaction with adjuncts equal the quality of student interaction with full-time faculty.

Staff members are a source of information and guidance, and the university should provide encouragement and incentive for direct staff involvement with students outside their assigned duties. University should provide training for staff to facilitate this initiative.

When students are provided with entry-level skill sets plus a desire to be identified as a member of the profession, they are more comfortable and prepared for their first professional job experience.

- Curriculum value (*High priority*)

Explain purpose and value of our first-year courses and lower barriers (e.g., financial limitations, community college alternatives) to taking them. The University needs to introduce a rationale for the Core Curriculum and other required courses to students and parents on the Lawrence Tech website and other publicity materials, and during recruitment events, Orientation & Registration and Discovery Days.

- Curriculum: value and cost (*High priority*)

The University can entice students to take developmental and first-year courses at Lawrence Tech by easing the financial burden of these courses. Consider a tiered tuition scale in which students take developmental courses for free, reduced tuition for core curriculum courses, and full tuition for courses in their majors.

Change course load from 4-4 to 3-3 for faculty who teach all writing-intensive courses and assess faculty workload in all courses that could potentially require more time (e.g., problem-based learning models, etc).

- Curriculum: admissions and transfers (*High priority*)

Ethics in admitting students: The University should not admit anyone whose academic needs it is not prepared to meet.

LTU should increase and strengthen the admission requirements for transfer credits for first-year students and reconsider its low barriers for community college transfer credits, particularly for the Core Curriculum courses. There should be content-to-content comparisons to justify community college transfer credits. MACRO-compliance should be maintained at the Associate's degree level as it was originally intended, not the course level.

LTU should develop a systemized method of keeping faculty informed of requirements for accepting transfer credits for advising purposes.

- Curriculum: Developmental Courses (*High priority*)

Delivery and service in Developmental Courses should include smaller class sizes than traditional courses (10:1 student-teacher ratio), be taught by faculty with a background in developmental education, and give release time to faculty who teach Developmental Courses because of the additional work required to guarantee student success.

- Curriculum: Online courses (*Medium priority*)

Although there is a University-wide push to make courses available online, decisions pertaining to delivery methods of developmental and first-year courses should be determined by the individual faculty teaching the courses and the demonstrated benefit to student learning.

- Information literacy and social media tools (*Medium priority*)

To maintain competitiveness with other universities that have implemented this, Lawrence Tech should integrate library and research skills and critical thinking into their campus experience. Competent research skills will lead to improved presentation skills and writing, and should be a campus initiative as it does directly support leadership skills.

Develop skills pertaining to responsible use of social media tools and appropriate academic uses (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, blogging, etc).

- Socialization of Students--Outside the University (*Medium priority*)

Alumni can play a role in the socialization process for students through guest speaking, "mixer" events, networking and mentoring on a regular basis.

- Academic and career guidance (*Medium priority*)

To make a better match between applicants and our programs, Lawrence Tech should offer "My Vocational Situation" assessment or similar instrument on its website and require potential students to complete and submit it along with their admissions application.