



Academic Plan

2021-2022

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of the Academic Plan is to determine and promote a vision for academic and student development at LCCC. Academic Council, a group with broad representation from the academic and student development areas of the college, is charged with updating the Academic Plan annually. Because the college's vision and goals are truly dynamic, both the Academic Plan and the Strategic Plan have adopted a three-year, "rolling" timeframe. This provides for a longer-term vision while allowing for annual adjustments to the plan. Academic Council gathers input from other groups within the college and, works with President's Cabinet in a tactical capacity to implement academic and student development proposals.

The Academic Plan considers the mission, vision, and values of the college and informing through the Strategic Plan, short, intermediate, and long-term academic and student development goals.

Academics at LCCC should inspire intellectual curiosity, encourage a thirst for knowledge, promote a critical awareness of self and society, and create lifelong learners. The goals set in the Academic Plan outline the steps to achieve and maintain LCCC's vision for academic excellence.

Definition of Academic Excellence

Academic excellence is mastery of knowledge in a content area and of the analytical, practical, and/or creative skills to use this knowledge effectively.

Academic excellence at LCCC is fostered by exemplary teaching, rigorous curricula, engaging co-curricula, exceptional service, synergistic partnerships, and collective dedication to student learning and student development.

Academic excellence inspires and generates personal, professional, and intellectual growth of learners.

Guiding Principles

The Academic Plan will:

- Be consistent with Lehigh Carbon Community College's vision, missions, goals, and core values.
- Maintain high academic standards.
- Emphasize student success and learning.
- Support diverse teaching and learning environments.
- Support diverse practices in services that cultivate student learning, growth and development.
- Advocate credit and non-credit offerings in response to community needs.
- Promote partnerships.
- Inform the college's strategic planning process.
- Be reviewed and revised on an ongoing basis.

Basis for Current Goals

Recognizing the need to redesign the Academic Plan to better suit the needs of informing the Strategic Plan is the basis for the new design. The Academic Plan now is set up in such a way to provide a vision to LCCC as it creates the strategic priorities for the college. No longer will there be specific action plans outlined by the Academic Plan, but rather Objectives with further detail provided in the Description. The Assessment portion of the Academic Plan provides information on how one may go about determining whether the Objective has been met.

A college-wide culture of success in academic excellence is paramount, leading to the first overall Objective. A team-based organizational structure is key to developing a culture of success. The functional attributes of this structure should be shared governance, including appropriate representation of stakeholders, consistent decision-making processes, and clear, formal communication between faculty and administration. This structure will allow students to articulate their goals, pursue their goals, and address obstacles along the way. Assessing this objective requires capturing, analyzing, and interpreting data, required by many accrediting and governing bodies, through inquiring of students' goals and progress toward meeting them.

In order for students to find success in academic excellence, we need to ensure their needs (logistics, modality, culture, access, etc.) are met and provide educational services, networking infrastructure, and support in response to those needs. Taking a look at data already collected at college application and potentially instituting additional data collection points as a "check in" would allow the college to confirm continued success in meeting the student's needs. In order for anyone to succeed, one needs to feel that their needs are met.

Strategically organizing an institutional structure to promote a culture of success, and meeting the needs of our constituents, is one part of the success equation. Curriculum, materials, instruction, and curricular infrastructure needs to be relevant, transferable, affordable, accessible, and variable based on students educational/occupational, career goals and diversified community needs. Considering the expansiveness of this objective, one could become overwhelmed with attempting to figure out how to strategically actuate this objective. However, this is the reason we have advisory boards, high school and transfer institution advisors, seats on the Workforce Development Board, and support of our accrediting bodies to pursue how to situate teaching and learning in this broad and inclusive mode.

Finally, a robust organizational infrastructure and set of processes to facilitate data collection, analysis, and organizational change are key to the success of this plan. All college initiatives must uphold student learning, shared governance, and be data supported. We acknowledge we cannot meet all needs and solve all barriers, given what we learned by reading Candide, knowing our fiscal resources are limited. This is why LCCC creates a Strategic Plans, which will now be informed by the Objectives in the redesigned Academic Plan. Academic Council, as the editor of the Academic Plan, should play a significant role in assessing the appropriateness and effectiveness of strategic/tactical pursuits of the Academic Plan Objectives.

OBJECTIVES

Objective 1

By creating an organizational structure that uses a team-based approach to help students articulate their goals, pursue them, and address obstacles that arise along the way, LCCC will promote a college-wide culture of success and academic excellence at all its sites.

Description

The organizational structure should demonstrate functional shared governance, including appropriate representation of stakeholders on deliberative and decision-making bodies (committees and councils), consistent decision-making processes, and clear, formal communication between faculty and administration.

A team-based approach includes an organizational structure that facilitates departmental and cross-departmental discussion, planning, and execution of student-centered and learning-centered initiatives; clearly defined, intentional communication channels and processes; and cross-training of faculty and staff. These teams should be understood to include part-time/adjunct faculty and staff.

The purpose of the organizational structure and team-based approach is to help students articulate their goals, pursue their goals, and address obstacles along the way. The college needs to ask students what their goals are, help students articulate their goals, periodically review and revise those goals, and track progress toward the meeting of these goals; otherwise, the institution can only recognize student success in abstraction. Likewise, the college needs to solicit and use information from students regarding obstacles they face.

Assessment

Periodically, the college must capture, analyze, and interpret data relevant to this objective. Accrediting bodies and governmental agencies require data relevant to persistence, completion, graduation, etc., but these data present only part of the picture. Meaningful assessment of this objective should consider evidence of intentionally structured teams, the quality of such teams' performance, and the quality of the teams' communication. Data regarding students' goals and progress toward meeting them should be collected, structured, and coded so that they can be analyzed and interpreted. Efforts to address challenges and obstacles should be well documented.

Objective 2

LCCC will monitor students' needs (scheduling, location, and transportation needs; modality preferences; cultural backgrounds; prior educational experiences; accessibility and accommodations needs; etc.) and provide educational services, network infrastructure services, and support services in response to them.

Description

Meeting student needs is paramount to student success. Some data relevant to student needs are gathered in the initial application process, such as location, modality preferences, and prior educational experiences. A midpoint (relative to the student's end goal) check or survey should be administered and analyzed to determine whether any of their initial needs have changed substantially or new obstacles have emerged. Graduate outcomes survey gathers data as students complete programs of study.

Educational and support services encompasses tutoring, disability and learning support, advising and counseling, English language learner support, library/information technology support.

Network infrastructure should include a robust wireless network and an effective Learning Management System. We should continue to train faculty and staff to utilize Universal Design, Quality Matters, and accessible document formatting as they prepare and deliver course information and student services.

Assessment

Data must be gathered directly from students about how the college is meeting their needs in regard to scheduling, location, transportation, modality, accessibility, and accommodations. Data need to be captured and analyzed, and trends must be reported annually to Academic Council to help prioritize recommendations.

Objective 3

Curriculum, instructional materials, and pedagogy should be designed to be relevant, transferable, affordable, accessible, and valuable per students' educational / occupational / career goals and evolving community needs.

Description

Using data collection and evaluation processes to determine what role LCCC can play in providing quality programs, academic planning needs to assess what needs exist based on input from academic audits, faculty subject-matter expertise, advisory boards, high schools, transfer institutions, Business and Industry Leadership Teams (BILTs), the Workforce Development Board, and accrediting bodies. This input is to be collected annually through regularly scheduled contact / meetings with all relevant stakeholders mentioned above. The faculty and administration should then analyze this input to determine what changes, if any, must be made to courses/programs so that resources can be allocated appropriately, programs developed or modified, and, as necessary, programs deleted.

Assessment

The collected data and their analysis will provide information that will document the rationale for budget allocations and changes to curricula, instructional approaches, and infrastructure. These data and documents provide means for examining changes made and to assess the success or failure of the changes, thus allowing for further modifications to the approach. This creates a scheduled feedback loop so that processes are in place to accept input from all relevant stakeholders, generate an informed plan, and assess its success.

Objective 4

Curricular, instructional, and sustainability needs will drive budgeting, resource acquisition and implementation (hardware, software, infrastructure, furniture, library materials, etc.), classroom design, staffing, student support, and service programming.

Description

This objective extends Objective #3.

In collaboration with Academic Council, committees or task forces that include faculty members, administrators, and other stakeholders should make all decisions regarding changes in classroom design, instructional technology, library resources, provision of support services, and staffing assignments.

These committees/task forces should make decisions based upon clearly articulated, data-supported explanations of the use, benefits, costs, and environmental impact of new designs, resources, and/or staffing assignments. Among the factors considered should be the advantages of the proposed changes/acquisitions for student success, impact on existing resources and practices, anticipated level of use and support by stakeholders, coordination with other initiatives, costs of training and maintenance, anticipated date of obsolescence, compliance with sustainability goals, and opportunity costs of investing in the proposed change/acquisition.

Committees/task forces should communicate plans to the broader faculty and administration and provide a mechanism for receiving and considering feedback.

Assessment

Annually, committees or task forces that have initiated changes in classroom design, resource acquisition and implementation (hardware, software, furniture, library materials, etc.), support and service programming, and/or staffing assignments should submit to Academic Council a brief report with the following components:

- An outline of the rationale and data used for any such changes or acquisitions;
- A summary of concerns expressed by stakeholders;
- And a specific plan for measuring the effect of the change/acquisition on student learning, student completion of goals, and college sustainability goals.

In subsequent year(s), once data have been collected and analyzed, the committee/task force should submit to Academic Council a brief report on the assessment data.

APPENDIX A: HISTORY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ACADEMIC PLAN

Planning Process

In a parallel activity to the Middle States Self-Study process during spring 2007, recognizing achievement of the principal benchmarks outlined in *2020 Vision: Student Learning Strategic Plan 2004-2013*, the President outlined the framework for the 2009-2014 Strategic Plan. Targeted for implementation fall 2009, the plan was to consider the valuable work which had been accomplished by the Self-Study; assure a direct linkage and guidance between institutional mission, values and goals and the plan itself; and further serve as a guide in program and curricular development and their outcomes. With a theme of *Transformation: Strategic Plan 2009-2014*, the Strategic Planning Steering Committee worked to assure campus-wide collaboration and constituent representation in the Strategic Planning document recommended to the President.

Two recommendations resulting from the Self-Study were:

- Establish a formal Academic Plan that identifies, prioritizes, and coordinates policies and practices, improving student learning.
- Convene a broadly representative task force to discuss and clarify the concept of academic excellence, as it applies to student learning.

In considering an academic plan, the College noted a number of standing committees address elements of LCCC's academic activities. The Curriculum Committee oversees the process through which academic divisions create, revise or delete courses and programs. The Academic Standards Committee reports to the Vice President of Academic Services and Student Development and makes policy recommendations to the President regarding academic procedures, including entrance requirements, grading standards, and graduation requirements. A subcommittee of Academic Standards was at that time examining LCCC's general education requirements and the educational philosophy that serves as its basis. The Assessment Council reviews LCCC's collegewide, academic competencies and its process of academic assessment. In addition to these committees, the college has a formal cycle of Academic Program Reviews in which, every five years, each academic program audits its curriculum and use of resources. The college has identified and funded initiatives such as the creation of an Honors Scholars Program, the promotion of interdisciplinary learning communities, the development of the PA Academy (a program of advanced courses for high school students), the expansion of the concurrent enrollment program, and the growth of online learning. With this information, the institution developed a formal Academic Plan. The plan was intended to unify these activities and those of the individual departments and divisions, clarify long-term academic goals and coordinate activities across the campus. The plan was intended to provide additional guidance in the prioritization of resources in pursuit of LCCC's academic goal achievement.

Development of the LCCC Academic Plan began in the fall of 2007 as a parallel to the strategic planning process. The Community of Practice was identified as the group to follow through with the Self-Study recommendations of developing the Academic Plan and clarifying the concept of academic excellence.

Community of Practice Participants

| Dianne DeLong, Co-Chair | | Dr. Barbara Kistler, Co-Chair | |
|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|
| Maryjane Albeck | Joanne Gerken | Cyndi Levis | Jeanette Polizzi |
| Wendy Barron | Tim Gibbons | Dr. Lori Madiara | Janet Seggern |
| Marc Bonanni | Jeannie Hause | Ilona McGogney | Jonathan Sponsler |
| Dr. Christine Bowditch | Valerie Hayes | Linda Mesics | Michelle Strein |
| John Callahan | Jeffrey Herman | Dianne Melnychuk | Joyce Thompson |
| Marsha Felsten | Juanita Kaness | Michelle Mitchell | Larissa Verta |
| Joe Flaherty | Nancy Kelley | David Moat | Pam Weldon |
| Jake Flyzik | Janet Kirkpatrick | Christine Orban | Melanie Wursta |
| Jim Garraway | Rebecca Landis | Barbara Platt | |

Charge to the Community of Practice

The Community of Practice was directed to:

- serve as both a resource and critical reader for the Strategic Planning Steering Committee and Task Forces;
- remain mindful of the college's vision, mission, value statement and those elements the Institution holds as core, most specifically an outcome based student-centered learning institution, as the foundation of the Academic Plan;
- consider the work of the Middle States Self Study, the strengths which were noted and the recommendations which followed as they pertain to the Academic Plan;
- consider the elements of the Academic Plan which currently exist within the Institution and their integration into the over-arching plan (including: academic standards, assessment of student learning and institutional effectiveness of academic programming, curriculum process, developmental education, enrollment management, general education, learning communities, learning support, partnerships, retention, workforce training, etc.);
- research and examine critically the external environmental factors, related to the Academic Plan, which may impact the college through 2014;
- define academic excellence;
- develop and recommend the Academic Plan based on an established educational model;
- recommend assessment and a cycle of review by which the Institution can measure its progress and the Academic Plan will be achieved.

The Community of Practice was divided into sub-communities to include the four categories identified, based on individual area of interest and expertise. Originally there were six sub-communities identified. As the work of the sub-communities progressed, the categories were further refined and reduced to the four presented. Members from the other two groups continued with their work in the four remaining sub-communities.

Concurrent with the Strategic Planning Process, the groups met and developed definitions of the categories, discussed strategies, and developed action items. Throughout the discussions and upon review, as appropriate, items identified to be strategic in scope were referred to the appropriate strategic planning task force. As the result of numerous group meetings and after review of the findings the sub-communities identified, the initial plan dated October 1, 2008, was formulated.

APPENDIX B: DERIVATION OF THE DEFINITION OF ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Academic excellence was first identified as one of the collegewide goals by President Snyder in fall 2000. The Strategic Plan, *2020 Vision: Student Learning Strategic Plan 2004-2013*, defines academic excellence as a “commitment to academic standards, faculty professional development, and innovative course offerings.” Several measures have been used by the various academic planning teams to identify the achievement of academic excellence, these include: increases in graduation rates, students’ satisfaction with their college experience, and opportunities for service learning or civic engagement. In addition, the college supports various accreditation and certification opportunities, which demonstrate key student learning program outcomes.

During the October 2002 faculty meeting, the faculty was asked to share markers of excellence which were relevant to their programs. Several markers were identified; (1) transfer to bachelor programs, articulation agreements, acceptance of courses “as is,” transferability; (2) satisfaction/feedback (employer, student, graduate); (3) national exam pass rate, industry certification, national recognition, first-time pass rate; (4) job placement, advancement, industry demands, internship, post-graduation employment retention; (5) accreditation, approval, certification, certification as training site; (6) increase in graduation rates, graduation, high completion rate; (7) retention and success in next level courses (persistence). While the discussion was beneficial, it has been several years since the conversation occurred. The Middle States Steering Committee began an online discussion of academic excellence that was open to the whole by additional discussions in the 2007-2008 academic year resulting in a more universal and operational definition of academic excellence.

It was further noted as a recommendation from the Self-Study:

- Convene a broadly representative task force to discuss and clarify the concept of academic excellence, as it applies to student learning.

As a result of the Self-Study recommendation, and in conjunction with the strategic planning process (*Transformation: Strategic Plan 2009-2014*), further defining of academic excellence has taken place. The Community of Practice was given as one of their charges to define academic excellence; members discussed during their meetings several working definitions. In addition, the definition was presented in February 2008 at a faculty meeting where group discussions took place for continued refinement of the definition.

Based on the group discussions, the first definition of academic excellence emerged. Further revisions to the definition have been made through subsequent versions of the Academic Plan.

APPENDIX C: MISSION, VISION, VALUE STATEMENT, COLLEGEWIDE STUDENT LEARNING COMPETENCIES, AND COMPONENTS OF A COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

MISSION:

Lehigh Carbon Community College serves the community by providing high quality learning experiences that are affordable and accessible.

VISION FOR EXCELLENCE AT LCCC:

Lehigh Carbon Community College will promote academic excellence, student achievement, and support of diverse populations as a comprehensive community college.

VALUE STATEMENT:

As a student-centered learning institution, Lehigh Carbon Community College values:

- **Access:** opportunity for students to pursue learning in an environment that supports identification and achievement of goals within their ability.
- **Continuous Improvement:** decision-making based on assessment, solid planning, and effective management of resources.
- **Diversity:** open dialogue for increased understanding of differing viewpoints; offering experiences that embrace the diversity of humanity.
- **Employees:** contributions, capabilities, collegiality, teamwork, and professional development of our employees.
- **Instructional Excellence:** an environment of best practices that engages and challenges students, advances intellectual curiosity; fosters lifelong learning with quality teacher-student contact and use of current technology.
- **Learning:** the development of foundational knowledge, critical thinking skills, and self-awareness, that advance intellectual, ethical, and social responsibility.
- **Partnerships:** relationships that provide innovative and entrepreneurial solutions to meet the demands of the community and region's economic development and workforce needs.
- **Student Development:** best practices that engage and challenge students; foster individual growth, leadership and service; and intentionally support holistic development.

OVERARCHING THEME: We are here to serve the best interests of our students.

- Improve students chances for success: through college readiness, school district, workforce and community partners.
- Broaden the understanding and application of best practices in enrollment management.
- Foster student learning, student development, academic success, and persistence to goal attainment.
- Ensure a diverse and inclusive environment to facilitate student learning and engagement.
- Act responsibly and ethically in the stewardship and development of institutional resources.

COLLEGEWIDE STUDENT LEARNING COMPETENCIES:

Student Learning Competencies

- Think critically
- Communicate effectively
- Apply quantitative reasoning
- Participate cooperatively within a team
- Use current technology effectively
- Apply information literacy skills
- Analyze human diversity
- Apply scientific reasoning
- Evaluate ethical aspects of decision making

It is the college's belief that in acquiring these competencies students will develop confidence in their academic potential and recognize their own strengths and limitations.

PERM24B-z (AC)