

Academic Improvement Plan 2011-2012

This document will outline major initiatives to be taken in academic year 2011 – 2012 in order to more efficiently allocate resources, align activities with the University's mission, comply with our accrediting agency's expectations, and institutionalize assessment practices. This plan is comprised of three major initiatives.

- 1) Program Prioritization
- 2) Program Assessment and Review
- 3) Opening Pathways

Program Prioritization:

Program prioritization is an open process where an institution evaluates all its programs in order to group them or rank them in such a fashion that resources can then be allocated according to the value the institution places on that program. A program is defined as any activity which utilizes University resources (personnel, space, finances, etc.). The process is data driven and therefore, data intensive. The analysis focuses on preselected criteria. The end result is that the institution has a systematic basis to identify opportunities to increase revenue, reduce costs, improve program quality, align programs with institutional goals, and strengthen institutional reputation.

During the 2010-2011 academic year, the Provost, the deans, several chairs, as well as many faculty and administrators read the book "Prioritizing Academic Programs and Services" written by Robert Dickeson. The University also hosted two webinars on this topic in early May 2011.

As the Provost and deans studied the book and the prioritization process it was clear that LSSU was not positioned to begin this endeavor in the 2010 – 2011 academic year due to the lack of sufficient institutional data to support the review process. A search for a Data and Report Analyst began in the fall of 2010 and resulted in a failed search. A new search began in the summer of 2011 and is currently underway.

Data for program prioritization must be publically available so that all areas use common data sets. LSSU has none of these data sets at this point. The Provost/deans have started to collect data, but the process has been slow. The summer is needed to gather the following data and prepare for program review and prioritization next year. The goal is to have all data available via the internet in a drill-down format. It is suggested that LSSU use a software tool such as cognos to provide the analysis and presentation of the data. The Provost/deans would gather a minimum of five years of data, but where possible, 10 years of data will be provided. Obviously, a dedicated data analyst would be the best route, but in the absence of such a person the deans and the Provost will complete this task to the extent they are able.

Here is the data proposed to be gathered via the BANNER system. Data from BANNER will form the common data set from which all programs/departments/school/colleges will draw from. Getting this data is of the highest priority. In each case where data is gathered, every effort will be made to provide information down to the program/degree level, however, data may only be available down to the department level. The common data set will be completed by summer's end.

General Data (trended by department, school and college):

- 1) Number of freshmen (break out FTIC)
- 2) Number of graduates
- 3) Number of students
- 4) Demographic information
 - a. Percent of freshmen by ethnicity
 - b. Percent of freshmen by country
 - c. Percent of freshmen by state
 - d. Socio-Economic

Quality of Students (trended by department, school and college):

- 1) Incoming student ACT & HS-GPA data
- 2) Graduating student ACT & HS-GPA data
- 3) LSSU GPA at graduation
- 4) Ratio of cumulative LSSU GPA to HS GPA
- 5) External transfer student graduation rate

Demand for the Program (trended by department, school and college):

- 1) Number of external (non-LSSU student) transfers in
- 2) Number of internal (LSSU student) transfers in

Program Completion/Success (trended by department, school and college):

- 1) 6 year graduation rate
- 2) Ratio of declared majors to graduates
- 3) Percent graduation rate in original degree
- 4) Persistence at LSSU (% graduating at LSSU)

Beginning with the fall semester, School Chairs and College Deans will be charged with gathering additional data for review. The general topics for which reporting is required are given below. In each case, suggested sources of data or suggested data are provided. For each program the report would indicate...

External Data: Insight into future programmatic demand and competition (duplication) & student demand and success after graduation.

- 1) Projected need (future demand)
 - a. <http://www.milmi.org/?PAGID=67&SUBID=170>
 - b. <http://www.bls.gov/oco/oco2003.htm>
 - c. Other documented need
- 2) List of competing programs in the state (other programs)
- 3) 6-month placement rates (into job & graduate school)
- 4) Results on major field/placement tests
- 5) Licensure results
- 6) Results of any nationally normed tests

Faculty Information:

- 1) Number of faculty at each degree level (Baccalaureate, Masters, Doctorate)
- 2) Teaching awards and recognition (LSSU and other)
- 3) Other narrative on faculty credentials (licensure, field experience, etc.)
- 4) Number of publications; refereed journals, books, book reviews, etc.
- 5) Level of publications; refereed, peer reviewed, etc.
- 6) External grants and contracts
- 7) % of faculty involved in research (last five years)
- 8) % of faculty involved in grants (last five years)
- 9) % of faculty involved in publication (last five years)
- 10) % of faculty in practice (last five years)
- 11) % of teaching done by adjuncts
- 12) Comment on the availability of qualified adjuncts

Community Service (Faculty, Staff, Students)

- 1) Service on Boards

- 2) Recruiting
- 3) Mentoring
- 4) Volunteer work
- 5) Improving the image of LSSU

In addition to the common data sets and the data gathered by departments, LSSU would attempt to gather the following information. The Provost's Council will pursue these to the best of their ability during the summer of 2011.

Use of Infrastructure:

- 1) Square footage allocated to program (by building, not including LSSU controlled classrooms)
- 2) Cost per square foot by building

Cost of Instruction (trended by department, school and college):

- 1) Faculty, Adjunct, and Overload costs
- 2) SCH generated
- 3) Cost per SCH (using various formats)
- 4) Program Revenues (tuition, grants, fees, other)
- 5) List of all courses offered. Denoting which are required/elective in degree programs.

All data will be gathered and then summarized in narratives. The end result of program prioritization will be a thorough review of all academic programs (BA/BS) to at least the department level; ideally to the program level. It is expected that all programs/departments self-identify themselves using the following options...

Categorize the program:

- 1) Critical that it exists
- 2) Important that it exists
- 3) Not essential, but desirable
- 4) Not essential

Eventually the overall goal is to develop a plan, based on data gathered, that will define future program direction, clarify mission and lead to resource re-allocation. Because LSSU does not expect new resources, re-allocation of existing resources appears to be the only option.

Overall Goal:

- 1) 10-15% of programs will be identified for enrichment
- 2) 25-30% of programs will be identified for continuation at a higher level of support
- 3) 25-30% of programs will be identified for continuation at the current level of support
- 4) 25-30% of programs will be identified for continuation at a lower level of support
- 5) 10-15% of programs will be identified as a candidate for elimination

The following timeline for program prioritization is presented below.

- 1) Generate publically available common data sets (summer 2011)
- 2) Present plan to academics (fall 2011)
- 3) Open period for comment and modification of plans (fall 2011 - 2 weeks)
- 4) Create Program Review Committee: PRC (fall 2011)
- 5) PRC determines data weights consistent with LSSU mission (fall 2011)
- 6) Gather program, department, school, and college data (fall 2011)
- 7) PRC to finalize report format (fall 2011)
- 8) Generate program reports (spring 2012)
- 9) Present reports to PRC by spring break

- 10) PRC renders findings to Provost and LSSU (May 2012)
- 11) Open period for comment (June 2012)
- 12) Provost provide written plan and timeline
- 13) Open period for comment (August 2012)
- 14) Plan implemented (fall 2012)

Each School will submit one report, detailing the information for all its degree programs. The report will contain the following sections.

School introduction and program history (beginning of School report):

Provide a 300-600 word introduction (depending on the number of programs) describing the history of the school and its degrees programs.

From this point forward, until noted, each item is to be discussed at the program level.

Data provided by LSSU administration:

Tables, by degree of data collected from the common data sets.

Degree Program: Place Degree Name Here					
	2006 2007	2007 2008	2008 2009	2009 2010	2010 2011
General Information					
Number of Freshmen					
Number of External Transfers In					
Number of Internal Transfers In					
Number of Students					
Composite Freshmen ACT					
Composite Graduate ACT					
Composite Graduate GPA					
Six Year Graduation Rate (degree)					
Six Year Graduation Rate (LSSU)					
Number of Faculty (% tenured)					
Demographics					
Michigan					
Out of State (U.S.A.)					
Out of Country					
White					
Black					
Asian					
Native American					
Other					
Pell/BIA					

Provide a 300 word narrative of student interest/recruitment and placement:

The focus of the narrative is to define the internal and external demand for the program. Provide a review of enrollment trends (past and future) and success in placing graduates. Discuss the program's importance to student recruitment; both internal and external to LSSU.

Provide a 300 word narrative of program quality:

Discuss student and faculty quality and service. Discuss the program's role in attracting quality faculty. External measures of quality/need might include national accreditation, regional/national recognition, specialized labs and/or equipment, comparative rankings, etc.

Provide a 600 word narrative on program assessment (reviewing the quality of outcomes):

Discuss the status of program assessment which includes:

- a) Program outcome statements
- b) Course and degree program assessment plans
- c) Yearly assessment report
- d) Feedback from students, faculty, alumni, advisory boards, etc.
- e) Clearly defined feedback process with documented results
- f) Short- and long-term goals with actions plans in place

Provide a 300 word narrative of future needs:

Provide long-term program goals (5-10 years). Define and report on opportunities for advancing the program. Define, quantitatively and qualitatively the obstacles to moving the program towards its long-term goals. Report on the current status of equipment/lab and other resources. Has the program kept facilities current? How will future equipment needs be met (external funding or LSSU funding).

Provide a 300 word narrative on revenue:

Define and quantify revenue generated over the last five years. Are these revenue streams expected to continue?

Provide a 300 word narrative on productivity:

This section will be defined after the LSSU administration can better define program costs. The section will review cost, outputs, and expenses in a standardized fashion; yet to be determined.

Provide a 300 word narrative on opportunities:

Describe any options for continuation of the program in a different format (emphasis, minor, AS degree, etc.). Are there any duplicated efforts on campus? Can efficiency be increased through collaboration?

Provide a 300 word narrative of alignment with LSSU mission:

The focus in this section is on the program's overall essentiality to the institution. Discuss the importance of the program with respect to achieving the LSSU Mission or strategic plans/goals.

Final Program Statement:

It is expected that all programs self-identify using the following options...

Categorize the program:

- 1) Critical that it exists
- 2) Important that it exists
- 3) Not essential, but desirable
- 4) Not essential

The report will end with an optional School level review of low-enrolled programs that do not cost the institution anything to support, due to their integration with critical, mission aligned programs.

Provide a 300 word narrative on "no cost to LSSU" (if applicable):

Explain how integrated programs are within the school in which they reside or within the University (other academic areas), to the point that the program(s) is/are offered at no cost to LSSU.

New programs can be proposed while the program prioritization process is ongoing. Some areas are beginning to review the possible addition of MA/MS degrees to the offering at LSSU. Academic administration believes that LSSU should seriously review options to develop 1 or 2 unique master's level degree programs for implementation by 2013-2014. Programs should be built on existing BS/BA programs that have a strong enrollment, high measures of demonstrated quality, documented future demand, ties to unique resources (LSSU or regional), and sufficient numbers of Ph.D. qualified faculty to support a master's program. The master's program itself should be conventional but with a unique component to differentiate it from the typical MS/MA degrees regionally and/or nationally. It will need to be self-sufficient financially, within three years, and have a creative method to recruit students, such as offering teaching- or research- assistant positions (contractual issues may arise).

Program Assessment and Review:

The term “assessment” has been defined in a variety of ways and therefore it’s important to understand the term’s definition in education today. The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) has identified five fundamental questions for institutions to use in discussing and defining assessment:

1. *How are your stated student learning outcomes appropriate to your mission, programs, and degrees?*
2. *What evidence do you have that students achieve your stated learning outcomes?*
3. *In what ways do you analyze and use evidence of student learning?*
4. *How do you ensure shared responsibility for assessment of student learning?*
5. *How do you evaluate and improve the effectiveness of your efforts to assess and improve student learning?*

Using these questions, the following is offered as an operational definition for LSSU.

Assessment is an on-going, evaluative process focused on improving student learning. It requires the institution to make its learning expectations clear to students and to establish appropriate learning outcomes at the course and program levels. It helps determine how well student performance matches the expected outcomes. The resulting information is used to improve student learning by making changes in the courses, programs, and resource allocations to improve student learning. The process is institutionalized and conducted openly.

The program assessment and review initiative addresses several areas where LSSU falls short in meeting the minimal standards for accreditation as noted by the University’s accrediting agency, the HLC.

- Minimal Standard: Syllabi are provided for all courses offered.
Status: LSSU cannot demonstrate that syllabi are provided for all courses. Syllabi have not been collected or reviewed over the last 10 years. After repeated requests in the spring semester to collect syllabi, 72% were submitted by the eighth week and 97% were submitted by the end of the semester. The syllabi do not necessarily conform to LSSU standards and are not consistent from one section of a course to another section of the same course.
Plan: Work with Shared Governance over the summer to staff the assessment committee and develop a method for periodic review of syllabi submissions. The expectation is that all syllabi will be posted to the “O” drive by the end of the first week of the semester.
- Minimal Standard: The institution has formal, written agreements for managing internships and clinical placements.
Status: Some agreements exist within program areas where a clearly identified need for such agreements has been demonstrated (nursing, athletic training, etc.).
Plan: The development of an institutional policy will be the responsibility of LSSU's risk management office. The director of risk management will work with the academic deans and chairs in the development of the policy.
- Minimal Standard: The institution maintains a practice of regular academic program reviews that include attention to currency and relevance of courses and programs.
Status: There is no schedule of regular academic program review.

Plan: At the conclusion of the program prioritization process, the Provost will issue an academic program review schedule. One of the required narratives covers the currency and relevancy issue.

Minimal Standard: Programs, majors, degrees and general education have stated learning outcomes.

Status: Not all degree programs have explicitly stated learning outcomes. During the spring semester of 2011 all departments were asked if program outcome statements existed for their programs. Results indicated that approximately 67% of the degree programs had learning outcomes. Only 50% of the degree programs provided those outcomes in a written form. The outcome statements have not been reviewed in any formal process.

Plan: The assessment committee will review all program outcome statements in an effort to ensure the statements are measurable and at a level sufficient to warrant designation as a program outcome. All programs will be required to submit program outcome statements to the assessment committee by the end the seventh week of the fall semester 2011.

Minimal Standard: Processes for assessment of student learning are in effect.

Status: Processes for the assessment of student learning are in effect for several departments across campus, however processes do not exist everywhere and the process is not institutionalized.

Plan: Each program will be required to submit an assessment report to the University assessment committee. At a minimum the report (due in May of 2012 and yearly thereafter) will include:

- Statement of Program Outcomes by each program/degree.
- A discussion of the assessment processes used to generate data appropriate for analysis of student success in achievement of outcomes. What measures are used? Direct? Indirect? Etc.
- An overview of the feedback loop, describing how the assessment data is reviewed and by whom. What measures are in place to insure that faculty read and react or respond to the results of assessment data.
- A one year summary of changes in course content, syllabi, or course requirements, etc. driven by an analysis of the assessment data.

The Provost will work throughout the 2011-2012 year to develop an institutional archival system for the tracking, storage, and evaluation of assessment related activities and reports. A review of the resources needed to implement this plan and maintain the assessment review process will be conducted in the summer of 2011. Finally, the Provost will re-open the previously failed search for someone to lead assessment activities on the campus.

Minimal Standard: The institution clearly differentiates its learning goals for undergraduate, graduate, and post-baccalaureate programs by identifying the expected learning outcomes for each.

Status: As previously stated, not all programs have learning outcome statements.

Plan: As program outcome statements are developed and subsequently reviewed by the university's assessment committee, the differentiation between similarly titled programs at the associate, bachelors and Masters level will be evaluated.

Minimal Standard: All faculty members are evaluated regularly in accordance with established procedures.

Status: As of the fall semester of 2010 all faculty members will be evaluated on a regular basis in accordance with the Faculty Agreement. All tenured faculty will be evaluated at least once every five years and all untenured faculty will be evaluated yearly. Deans are required to submit their faculty evaluations by August of each year.

Minimal Standard: The institution has a process for assuring that faculty members are current in their disciplines. (All faculty and adjuncts are “qualified)

Status: LSSU does not have a formal process to assure currency of its faculty (qualifications are reviewed at the time of hire). Although the tenure track faculty “qualifications” are determined at the time of hire, adjunct faculty qualifications are not necessarily verified and/or retained by Human Resources or by the deans.

Plan: As a component of the periodic faculty review process, deans will assess the activities undertaken by a faculty member to maintain currency and to develop professionally. All tenure track faculty will have a professional development plan created and updated. A plan for determining and retaining documentation for adjunct qualifications will be developed by the Director of Human Resources.

Beyond meeting these minimal standards, several other related activities will be undertaken. These include:

- 1) The Provost will provide resources to ensure the activities can be maintained and are part of a wider institutional effort in continuous improvement.
- 2) The Vice Presidents will work with Institutional Research to develop peer institution lists for comparative studies.
- 3) A review of library and IT funding levels will be conducted. These two areas appear to be underfunded and both are at the heart of LSSU academic quality. Perhaps we can try to ask faculty/departments about the unmet library and IT needs and try to quantify the amount needed and phase in dollars for the future.
- 4) The Provost will review online education; developing levels for engagement, training for faculty, and reviewing hosting options.
- 5) The Provost will review options to automate the data collection for Board of Trustee reporting (optional) and professional activity reporting (contractually required).
- 6) Issue from Self-Study:
Although a few individual areas within the university have developed strong links between students’ academic learning and lifelong learning, more areas need to emphasize these connections. Many student groups participate in fundraisers for local charities, but this location of “civic engagement” within the realm of the “extra-curricular” serves to reinforce the notion that the engaged citizen is external and peripheral to a student’s future role as engaged professional. The connections between the life of the worker and the life of the citizen need to be developed more explicitly within additional disciplines.

An ideal audience for providing information about LSSU’s effectiveness in teaching lifelong learning would be alumni. This connection would seem obvious, but it only came about as a result of the discussions connected to the self study. The self study “evidence team” has noted this need and plans to follow through by providing the means through which the university will be able to solicit input from alumni on this question.

Opening Pathways:

The initiative to address opening pathways will examine a variety of bodies, activities, policies, procedures, and contractual agreements that could potentially act as roadblocks in the implementation of the various components of the academic improvement plan. Some of these include the role of the Board of Trustees, upper level administration, General Education and Curriculum Committee procedures, as well as the procedures for the granting of tenure, promotion, and sabbatical. The process will be ongoing and other issues may surface as the Plan moves forward. The goal of this initiative is to provide clear support for the Plan, deliver consistent messages concerning the importance of the Plan, and ensure open and clear communication exists in all LSSU policies and procedures.

The LSSU Board of Trustees is statutorily responsible for oversight of all campus activities. In 2000, the University's accrediting agency, the HLC, recommended that the Board become an active member of the Association of Governing Boards (AGB). The AGB recommends that Board members develop a better understanding of their responsibility for educational quality and become more engaged in institutional conversations about learning outcomes.

The HLC further states an expectation that:

- Board policies and practices document the board's focus on the organization's mission.
- The board enables the organization's chief administrative personnel to exercise effective leadership.
- Board members routinely champion institutional and other improvement efforts that are based on assessment findings.
- Board members advocate the continual improvement of student learning as an institutional priority.
- A governing board possesses and exercises the necessary legal power to establish and review the basic policies that govern the institution.
 - The board provides oversight of the institution's finances as well as its academic and business operations.
 - The board is sufficiently autonomous from the administration, ownership, and other related entities to assure the integrity of the institution and to allow the board to make decisions in the best interest of the institution.
 - The board authorizes the institution's affiliation with the Commission.

The LSSU Board of Trustees is currently reviewing the possibility of becoming a member of the Association of Governing Boards. The Board is also requiring more accountability from the administration of LSSU. It's important that the LSSU BOT support LSSU assessment activities and the activities required by the HLC if continued accreditation of LSSU is desired.

Upper level administrators are also important components in the Academic Improvement Plan. The Provost and Deans will need to ensure they openly communicate the need for successful implementation of the Plan and that every effort is made to provide adequate resources where and when they are needed. Open, honest, and clear communications will be required at both faculty and Provost Council level. Shared Governance will be utilized in the program prioritization process to provide the open across-campus dialog necessary as well as provide significant input into the decision making process.

General Education and Curriculum Committee new program and course proposal forms do not explicitly require learning outcome statements or the associated assessments. Because these committees and the forms are contractually agreed-upon discussions between the Provost and the Faculty Association will need to take place during the fall semester of 2011. By ensuring new programs and courses have

appropriate learning outcomes and assessment activities in place in the early stages of their development, the institution can expect better compliance with the current HLC assessment policies.

Tenure, promotion, and periodic faculty evaluations are also contractually defined. In some cases, the requirements and procedures are unclear. Once again, the Provost and the Faculty Association will work to better define the requirements and procedures for each of these activities. The current evaluation criteria are listed as:

Released Time Assignments:

1. Effectiveness in administration of program.
2. Effectiveness in carrying out non-teaching academic responsibilities.
3. Rapport with students, faculty, administration, and public.

Librarians:

1. Effectiveness in carrying out responsibilities.
2. Effectiveness as supervisor of students and/or staff.
3. Efficiency in carrying out responsibilities.
4. Initiative in carrying out responsibilities.
5. Knowledge of library resources, equipment, and trends.
6. Knowledge in specific areas of library responsibility.
7. Rapport with library staff, students, faculty, and public.

Licensed Professional Counselors:

1. Ability to accept students unconditionally, regardless of differences in values and attitudes.
2. Maintenance of confidentiality.
3. Effectiveness in carrying out assigned responsibilities outside of counseling, such as supervising the tutoring program, training Resident Advisors, coordinating workshops, conducting Northern Ontario admissions counseling, and teaching classes.
4. Effectiveness in oral and written communication.
5. Effectiveness in creating a friendly and stimulating counseling environment.
6. Effectiveness in using crisis intervention techniques.
7. Knowledge of the University catalog and curricular requirements.
8. Knowledge of current standardized tests and psychometric techniques, and effectiveness in selecting tests and interpreting test scores.
9. Knowledge of major counseling theories and effectiveness in applying these appropriately in counseling situations.
10. Knowledge of study skills and effectiveness in helping students develop such skills.
11. Knowledge of career fields, job requirements, job opportunities, and other pertinent career information.
12. Willingness to deal with emergency situations, both during and outside of regular office hours.
13. Willingness to take certain risks in contacting and counseling students when it is in the best interests of the client.

Faculty:

1. Availability and helpfulness to students.
2. Effectiveness in achieving course objectives.
3. Effectiveness as an advisor.
4. Effectiveness in communicating course objectives, requirements, and methods of evaluation.
5. Effectiveness in explaining course material.

6. Effectiveness as an instructor or supervisor of practicums, internships, or clinical experiences.
7. Effectiveness in planning and directing laboratories.
8. Effectiveness in stimulating student interest.
9. Fairness and impartiality toward students.
10. Incorporation of current research and ideas.
11. Knowledge of subject taught.
12. Planning and organization of class presentations.
13. Propriety and fairness of methods of student evaluation.
14. Rapport with students.

The instructions given to prepare documentation do not appear to adequately refer to these criteria. Furthermore, it is stated that the criteria are not equal and that the committee members may exercise their personal professional judgment in weighing the importance and relevance of the criteria listed. This does not provide clear directions for those wishing to be tenured and/or promoted. In the spring of 2011 Mark Terwilliger presented a case for a unified evaluation system for LSSU. Academic administrators have reviewed the presentation and will be considering pursuit of this next year. This would probably be a two year process; with the study and development conducted in 2011-2012 and the actual new system implemented in 2012-2013.

Sabbaticals represent the final activity which is contractually defined. It is hoped that the sabbatical process can be altered to encourage the sabbatical committee to consider how well sabbatical applications align with the university's mission and/or strategic goals.

The plan is to work with the Faculty Association over the summer to develop the timeline, list the topics, and develop goals for the discussions. The hope is that if both parties have similar expectations documented up front then discussion will be focused and more productive. The topics would be discussed next year (2011-2012) with implementation at the next contractually logical entry point.