Chapter 3: Student Transitions:

The First-Year Experience at Lehigh University – A Report from the Subcommittee on the First-Year Experience (and Beyond)

3.I Executive Summary

3.I.A Background and Introduction
When Lehigh elected to follow the Selected Topics approach in its 2008 Decennial Accreditation Review, it identified “Student Transitions” as one of its topics for self-study. This study was to focus, primarily, on the first-year experience (and beyond), which includes the period from admission to the University to declaration of a major (which typically occurs late in the first or during the second year of study). The central task for the Subcommittee on the First-Year Experience (and Beyond) was to investigate the degree to which the various academic and Student Affairs efforts designed to support students during the transition to college were meeting the intellectual, social, and personal needs of incoming students. In conjunction with this study of student transitions, the Subcommittee also was charged with considering Lehigh’s compliance with three of the Educational Effectiveness Standards, each having particular relevance to first-year students: Student Admissions and Retention, Student Support Services, and General Education.

3.I.B Compliance With Standards of Educational Effectiveness

3.I.B.1 Standard 8: Admissions and Retention
The University seeks to admit students whose interests, aptitudes, and aspirations make them a good match for an institution with rigorous academic programs and ideals of integrity, personal initiative, and intellectual engagement. At the same time, the University is determined to become a more inclusive, diverse, and globally oriented institution. Considerable effort has been expended in the areas of recruiting and retaining minority students, and also in fostering a stronger atmosphere of inquiry and intellectual engagement across the campus. Progress has been steady but sometimes slow. The Subcommittee’s recommendation is that the University needs to keep its eyes steadfastly fixed on goals of inclusiveness and intellectualism as it develops policies for admissions and retention of students.

3.I.B.2 Standard 9: Student Support Services
The Subcommittee’s inventory of existing programs and practices demonstrates that the services available to support Lehigh students are comprehensive, far-reaching, and situated throughout the University community. Lehigh offers a wide variety of curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular activities that address the gamut of student needs. Nevertheless, several areas must be strengthened: Advising is inconsistent; the residence halls are not sufficiently recognized as sites of learning; coordination and communication among support services should be improved; and a specific individual or group should assume overall responsibility for the first-year experience. The major recommendations concerning Student Services have been integrated into Section 3.IV of this report,
Enhancing the First Year Experience: Review of Existing Programs and Recommendations, in the sections on Advising, Common Intellectual Experience, and Residential Environment.

3.I.B.3 Standard 12: General Education
Lehigh University’s approach to general education attempts to steer a middle course between curricula that specify detailed core-skills requirements and programs that avoid requirements in order to encourage independence and exploration. Lehigh designates only a few courses as general requirements, but all three undergraduate colleges specify distribution requirements in mathematics, sciences, social sciences, and humanities. The goal of these college requirements is for every Lehigh student to take courses that expand general knowledge and develop basic skills, such as critical reasoning, mathematical literacy, and competence in academic writing. What Lehigh students need more than basic skills or general knowledge, however, is a more sophisticated and engaged approach to learning as an act of inquiry. The strongest suggestion for general education, therefore, is to infuse a common intellectual experience into the first year, a recommendation developed in Section 3.IV.

3.I.C Enhancing the First-Year Experience
This self-study of the first-year experience at Lehigh revealed that many dedicated individuals and thoughtful programs are available to support new students during the transition to college. Nevertheless, there also are several grounds for concern: Insufficient coordination of efforts, inadequate administrative responsibility and leadership, and lost opportunities – especially in student advising, common intellectual experiences, and use of the residential environment as a site for learning and development. Four specific recommendations are made in this self-study and listed in order of priority:

- Implement a Hybrid Advising Model: Develop a comprehensive model that gives first-year students access to both a faculty advisor and a professional staff advisor.
- Create a Common Intellectual Experience for First-Year Students: Consider options such as forming small clusters of first-year students, led by peer mentors and a faculty or staff facilitator, to investigate a substantive intellectual issue or idea.
- Pursue Opportunities in the Residential Environment: Expand opportunities for affiliated living arrangements, support academic initiatives in the residence halls, and encourage the residence life staff to pursue developmental objectives in its programming.
- Provide Coordination, Communication, and Centralized Responsibility: Invest an individual, office, or group with focused responsibility for the first-year experience, including coordination, oversight, advocacy, and assessment.
3.II Introduction

When Lehigh elected to follow the Selected Topics approach in its 2008 Decennial Accreditation Review, it identified “Student Transitions” as one of two topics for self-study. The study of Student Transitions was to focus primarily on the first-year experience (and beyond), which includes the period from admission to the University to declaration of a major (which typically occurs late in the first or during the second year of study). The current study benefited from a previous task force analysis of the first-year experience, especially a report submitted to the provost in 2005.1

The central task for the Subcommittee on the First-Year Experience (and Beyond) was to investigate the degree to which the various academic and Student Affairs efforts designed to support students during the transition to college were meeting the intellectual, social, and personal needs of incoming students. The Subcommittee asked whether Lehigh’s array of curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular activities provided sufficient opportunities for adjustment, sound decision-making, and academic success. The Subcommittee wanted to assess where Lehigh was succeeding — and in what areas it could be doing a better job.

The Subcommittee consisted of faculty, staff, and students from relevant sectors of the University, including associate deans or key faculty, as well as students from the three undergraduate colleges and staff from Student Affairs, Admissions, Athletics, Study Abroad, and Library and Technology Services. After several initial meetings, the committee divided into four smaller working groups: Admissions and Retention, General Education, Student Support Services, and Advising. Each working group had two broad tasks: To investigate Lehigh’s compliance with a particular standard (or part of a standard) and also to engage in an intensive study of resources and programs that impact transitions for first-year students. Over the course of more than a year, the working groups gathered documents, compiled data, talked with key individuals, drafted recommendations, and engaged in many hours of discussions, both as working groups and, periodically, with the larger subcommittee. The co-chairs coordinated these efforts, facilitated interactions, and responded to drafts. At a key meeting of the entire subcommittee, at the end of the spring 2007 semester, the members considered a list of more than 20 proposed recommendations, generated by the working groups, for improving the first-year experience at Lehigh. After intensive discussion, the group consolidated recommendations and narrowed this list to four proposals that were unanimously endorsed as the core recommendations to emerge from the study. These four recommendations for enhancing the first-year experience at Lehigh were further developed by members of the Subcommittee, and the final version is presented and discussed in Section 3.IV.

The Subcommittee’s work on student transitions took at its point of departure a previous Task Force study of the first-year experience at Lehigh (Appendix 3.1). Its report concluded that several elements would be required to make the first-year experience at Lehigh a distinctive program. These elements included removing boundaries between the academic and non-academic wings of the University, recognizing transitional phases in a student’s development (within and beyond the first year), and educating faculty about “student issues” so they can encourage students to exhibit intellectual curiosity and put themselves in uncomfortable educational situations.2

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2 White et al.
In this self-study, the Subcommittee also focused on integration of services and adopted a developmental orientation to student transitions, making use of findings from the Task Force report. But the Subcommittee broadened its focus to include elements that the Task Force did not consider – putting more emphasis on advising, the potential of the residential environment, the need for a common intellectual experience, and suggestions for strengthening administration and leadership.

3.II.A Compliance With Standards
In conjunction with the self-study of student transitions, the Subcommittee also was charged with considering Lehigh’s compliance with three of the Educational Effectiveness Standards, each having particular relevance to first-year students:
- Standard 8, Admissions and Retention, focuses on the exchange of information that flows between students and the University prior to matriculation.
- Standard 9, Student Support Services, addresses issues that, while relevant for undergraduates at all levels, are particularly salient for students who are making the transition to college.
- Standard 12, General Education, asks questions about academic competencies that students usually address early in their college experience.

3.II.B Self-study Process
This report is the product of a self-study process that occurred over nearly a two-year period, beginning with the selection of co-chairs early in 2006, the formation of a committee, and its division into four working groups that met throughout the 2006-2007 academic year. These working groups investigated Admissions and Retention, General Education, Advising, and Student Support Services. Members included faculty, staff, and undergraduate students, and were selected to provide breadth of experience and depth of knowledge.

In the spring 2007, the whole committee met twice a month to share findings and consider the recommendations that had been generated within working groups from the self-study process. Starting with 18 suggestions, the full committee worked toward a shorter list of primary recommendations that would express the most important findings of its investigations. The final list of four recommendations was reached by consensus, with near unanimity.

3.II.C Recommendations
The final recommendations, which will be discussed below in Section 3.IV, are:
1. Implement a hybrid advising model.
2. Create a common intellectual experience for first-year students.
3. Pursue opportunities in the residential environment.
4. Provide coordination, communication, and centralized responsibility.

3.II.D Organization of This Report
Following the Executive Summary and Introduction, the body of the report is organized into three additional sections. The first, Section 3.III, Compliance With Standards of Educational Effectiveness, considers issues of compliance with the three Standards for which the Subcommittee was responsible, addressing issues of compliance with a focus on the first-year experience. Section 3.IV moves to what is considered the heart of this chapter, the specific ways in which the first-year experience could be enriched for Lehigh students, both
within and beyond the curriculum. Section 3.V identifies a series of steps to move Lehigh toward considering the Subcommittee’s recommendations and making changes that may well require a shift in institutional values and priorities.

3.III  Compliance With Standards of Educational Effectiveness

In choosing the selected topics approach to accreditation, Lehigh opted to integrate the self-study of particular topics with the assessment of its compliance with several standards of educational effectiveness. The Subcommittee on the First-Year Experience (and Beyond) was charged with considering three standards in the context of its primary mission, which was to assess the institution’s programs for first-year students. The three standards address issues of central importance to the first-year experience:

- Standard 8, Admissions and Retention, considers the flow of information between students and the institution, as well as satisfaction and persistence, which are major issues during the first year or two of college.
- Standard 9, Student Support Services, addresses services that are particularly relevant to students when they are in transition and finding their way in a new environment.
- Standard 12, General Education, focuses on educational issues that are typically addressed during the first years of college.

The discussion of compliance with each standard is organized into three parts: An introduction and overview, a discussion of compliance with “fundamental elements,” and conclusions and suggestions. From its study of institutional policies and practices, the Subcommittee – while seeking to identify areas for improvement – concluded that Lehigh is solidly in compliance with the letter and spirit of these three standards of educational effectiveness.

3.III.A  Standard 8: Admissions and Retention

The admissions and retention of students at Lehigh University are complex processes. Methods of recruiting students have evolved over time to reflect the changing demographics of who is attending college (on a national level) and the University’s desire to provide access to a broad cross-section of students. Retention of these students is critical, and several offices across campus work to research best practices, and put in place those processes that are proven to increase student success and graduation.

The Admissions Office strives every year to admit an incoming class of students with the following characteristics: Applicants with a strong academic background who are believed to benefit from the education Lehigh has to offer, good citizens from both a domestic and international background who will give back to Lehigh and the greater community, and students that together will comprise a diverse class along several dimensions, including racial and ethnic, geographic, religious, socio-economic, gender, and academic discipline. Guidelines used by the Admissions staff emphasize reading applications in a “holistic manner,” taking into account not only academic performance and promise but also additional factors that make applicants a good match for a university determined to maintain rigorous standards of excellence while striving vigorously to become more inclusive, diverse, and global in orientation3 (Appendix 3.2, 3.2a, and 3.2b).

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3 See, for example, the Admissions Office Application Review Guidelines document, 2006-2007.
3.III.A.1 Inventory of Admissions Programs and Practices

The following programs are in place to “assist the prospective student in making informed decisions” about Lehigh.

- **Information Sessions**: Information sessions are typically offered two times a day on weekdays at 10 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. Some Saturday dates are offered as well, and sessions run at 9 a.m., 10 a.m., and 11 a.m. On selected days, there are also shorter sessions geared specifically towards engineering. Sessions are conducted by an admissions officer, and in some cases, one or more current students. Information presented includes an overview of Lehigh, including the history of the institution, academic programs, campus layout, student life, residential life, admissions, financial aid, career services, and the surrounding area.

- **Tours**: Informational tours normally are offered during the fall and spring, last a little over an hour in duration, and highlight several buildings on the Asa Packer campus, including dining facilities, a dormitory, classrooms, the student center, and the art and fitness centers. Special informational tours are arranged for groups upon request (i.e., a group of students from one high school, a group of guidance counselors, or special interest groups). Some colleges, such as P.C. Rossin College of Engineering and Applied Science, offer their own tours.

- **Interviews**: Interviews are typically offered eight times a day on weekdays at 9 a.m., 9:45 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 11:15 a.m., 1:15 p.m., 2 p.m., 2:45 p.m., and 3:30 p.m. On selected Saturdays, interviews are offered during the four morning time slots. Interviews typically last 30-45 minutes and are conducted one-on-one with the student, and then the parents are brought in to ask any questions they might have.

- **On-Line College Fairs**: Prospective students are given the opportunity to participate in on-line chat rooms with current students, admissions staff, and faculty. These programs are generally very well received, and on-line offerings are being developed for specific populations.

- **V.I.E.W.**: Visit, Inquire, and Experience our World (V.I.E.W.) is a program that gives the prospective student an opportunity to experience a “day in the life” of a Lehigh student. Visits may include sitting in on classes, eating lunch with students, spending time in a dorm room, participating in campus events, and just spending time with undergraduate students. The program begins in Admissions at 8:45 a.m., includes an afternoon campus tour and a group information session, and concludes by 3:15 p.m. Class attendance in this program is geared toward providing an academic experience that will highlight faculty/student interaction and give the prospective student a feel for academic life at Lehigh.

- **College Fairs**: College fairs typically are held during the fall (September through November) and spring (April and May) semesters. These events take place at high schools, colleges, and other venues around the country and abroad. Each college is represented by a table or booth, and prospective students and their families gather information from institutions of interest.

- **The Counselor Fly-in Program**: In mid-September, counselors from all over the country who express interest in visiting Lafayette College and Lehigh are invited to “fly in.” Typical attendance is a group of 16. Presentations are arranged with a variety of faculty and staff members to highlight special programming such as the Integrated Business and Engineering degree. Counselors also have the opportunity to spend time with individual students and give them an abbreviated tour of campus.
• **Junior Open House**: Junior Open House takes place in late March (two days offered) and allows juniors in high school a chance to get a sense of Lehigh. There is a general information session that covers admissions, financial aid, and student life. Groups split for three separate college presentations – College of Arts and Sciences (CAS), College of Business and Economics (CBE), and the P.C. Rossin College of Engineering and Applied Science (RCEAS). Prospective students and their families will hear from a faculty member (usually the Associate Dean), and have the opportunity to visit specific academics departments. Tours are offered throughout the day.

• **Senior Open House**: The format and nature of the Senior Open House is similar to the Junior Open House. This program takes place on a day in mid-November.

• **Admitted Student Programs**: These programs are held in various parts of the country (more often in the Northeast) and include alumni, Admissions staff, and sometimes current students. It is a chance for admitted families to mingle with current and past members of the Lehigh community.

• **LVAIC Tour**: LVAIC (Lehigh Valley Association of Independent Colleges) consists of schools in the Lehigh Valley, including Lehigh University, Lafayette College, Muhlenberg College, De Sales University, Cedar Crest College, and Moravian College. Each year guidance counselors from all over the country are invited to visit the Lehigh Valley schools through the LVAIC Tour, with programming at all of the above colleges. Each April, two groups of 50 guidance counselors visit Lehigh. The program takes place during a breakfast, lunch, or dinner and typically includes presentations from each of the colleges, Admissions, Financial Aid, and current Lehigh students, as well as a tour of campus.

• **Experience Lehigh Life Days**: During April, programming is offered to admitted students on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Upon arriving on campus, students are given a schedule of events for the day, which typically includes breakfast at the President’s house, an admitted student information session, an opportunity to sit in on classes, a faculty luncheon, student panels, and a trolley tour. The month of April is the busiest time of the year in the Office of Admissions because it is working on matriculating accepted students, as well as handling the heavy influx of visitors who are juniors in high school.

• **Candidate Days**: Each of the three undergraduate colleges hosts a Candidate’s Day for accepted students in April. These programs are designed, organized, and coordinated by the Associate Deans of the colleges, and are arguably the most important programs in terms of matriculating accepted students. Programming includes tours of facilities, visits with professors, and presentations by the President, Dean of the College, Dean of Admissions, and Dean of Students, as well as lunch with current Lehigh students.

• **The Diversity Achievers Program (DAP)**: This program provides a unique opportunity to experience campus life at Lehigh. The program enables prospective students who are high school seniors to immerse themselves in the different cultures of the University and highlights the many resources offered to multicultural students. Prospective students are given an opportunity to go to class, meet faculty, enjoy meals in the dining hall and stay at Lehigh overnight. For students who are selected for the program, Lehigh assumes the cost of transportation and meals, and arranges for a student host.

• **The Diversity Delegates Program**: The Diversity Delegates are a group of students dedicated to the enhancement of diversity on Lehigh’s campus. Their leadership helps attract a
diverse and vibrant group of students, creating a community that embraces social and intellectual growth.

3.III.A.2  Overview of Retention Mechanisms

The University takes a multifaceted approach to retaining students, including a series of academic monitoring and support systems, policy initiatives, and a collection of diverse programs aimed at connecting all students to the University, with special attention to groups that might feel isolated or marginalized.

3.III.A.2.i  Academic Monitoring Systems

Lehigh has a number of systems in place to monitor the academic progress of students in their first and second years.

- **Section III Process:** Professors submit forms (called “Section III” reports) indicating when students fail to report to class or otherwise behave in ways that interfere with learning in the course. The student and his/her advisor are notified through e-mail. Students are instructed to print out the form and take it to their instructor, advisor, and the Associate Dean’s office for signatures. If students ignore the first Section III notice, the instructor can file a second report. Students failing to react to the second report may be dropped from the course.

- **Midsemester Grade Reporting Process:** The Office of Academic Support Services receives first- and second-year student midsemester grade reports from most course instructors, and works with administrators in the Division of Student Affairs to follow up with students receiving one or more failing grades, and connect them to appropriate resources to aid them in completing the course successfully or withdrawing from the course. This process builds on work by the Associate Dean of Students for Academic Support and the Director of Lehigh University Counseling and Psychological Services, whose outreach to coaches of varsity athletic teams on how to recognize a student in distress ensures that students in need will be referred to appropriate resources, and thus retained until graduation.

- **Academic Monitoring in Athletics.** Lehigh University Athletics takes the success of student-athletes seriously, and has implemented several measures to ensure students’ academic success. Lehigh recognizes that involvement in sports greatly increases the likelihood that a student will be retained at the University. At Lehigh, the work of the Assistant to the Athletic Director for Academic Support is key in achieving this goal of increased student-athlete retention, referring athletes to University support systems. Additionally, most coaches work directly with staff in the Dean of Students Office, so that the latter becomes a clearinghouse of information on student progress. This builds on the relationship between faculty and staff members in ensuring student success. The Dean of Athletics conducts exit interviews with athletes who chose to withdraw from Lehigh, and information garnered from these interviews is used to address issues of retention among athletes.

3.III.A.2.ii  Academic Support Systems

The University has academic support system to help all students succeed academically.

- **Center for Academic Success:** This Center is a newly created facility committed to helping all students reach their full academic potential and succeed academically at Lehigh. It houses both the Peer Tutoring and Study Skills Assistance Programs. Staff in the Center offers students in many first- and second-year course tutoring services and study skills assistance free of charge.
Students with Disabilities Services: Once admitted, students may request support services in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1992. The ultimate goal is to ensure that students with disabilities have an opportunity to grow independently to their fullest potential at a competitive university. It is the responsibility of students with disabilities to identify themselves to the appropriate University contact person to provide the required documentation in order to receive accommodations. Given the specific nature of each person’s disability, “reasonable accommodations” will be determined on an individual basis by the Assistant Dean, Academic Support Services for Students with Disabilities. As a result of this office’s work, Lehigh has experienced great success: There has been an increase in the percentage of students who self-identify as having a learning disability and seek assistance through the office, and then go on to graduate within five to six years. Support for students with disabilities was enhanced by staffing changes in this office (the shift from a part-time employee to a full-time administrator 10 years ago, and the creation of another full time position), as well as the creation of the Center for Academic Success (Appendix 3.3, 3.3a, and 3.3b).

Office of the First Year Experience (OFYE): The creation of this office (described in more detail in Standard 9) has increased the ability of the Dean of Students staff to connect with and monitor the progress of first-year students and thereby serve the University’s mission of retention.

3.III.A.2.iii Policy Initiatives
There have been two policy initiatives at Lehigh specifically designed to improve student retention.

S.O.S. (Committee on Standing of Students): This committee has jurisdiction over all undergraduate matters concerning the application of faculty regulations to the scholastic standing of students, scholastic probation, drop actions, and exceptions to academic regulation procedures. Petitions to the committee are filed with the Associate Dean of Students, who is the Executive Secretary of the Committee, after consultation with the appropriate academic adviser or curriculum directors and College Dean. A function of this committee in increasing student retention is the Freshman Forgiveness Exception, whereby students repeat courses or enroll in new courses in efforts to boost their grade point average and remain in good standing with the University (Appendix 3.4).

Leave of Absence Policy: Each student is expected to complete the baccalaureate degree by attending Lehigh for four consecutive academic years. Once a student who has matriculated at Lehigh chooses to deviate from this attendance pattern, a revised degree plan, coordinated with his/her adviser and Associate Dean, must be submitted with a request for a leave by completing a petition to the SOS Committee for an Academic Leave of Absence (Appendix 2.52). The form must be signed by the student’s faculty adviser, Associate Dean of the college and the completed form must be submitted prior to the start of any subsequent enrollment at another college or university. Because students must petition for the Leave of Absence, and explain their request to advisors and members of the Office of the Dean of Students, the University is confident that this process is not abused; rather, students leave the University temporarily, with a clear understanding of the steps necessary for them to begin classes again. Additionally, for some students, this interaction with a faculty advisor or administrator serves to connect them to the University in meaningful ways (e.g., the establishment of a faculty member
who will then “keep tabs” on them), and thus, increase the likelihood that if they do take
the leave of absence and soon return in good standing.

3.III.A.2.iv Additional Programs that Affect Retention
In addition to the policies and systems described above, Lehigh has a number of other
programs that affect student retention.

• **Keep It Real:** Keep It Real is an exciting way for first-year students to accelerate their
  involvement and connections in college. First-year students who participate in this
  program have a chance to socialize with other first-year students and upperclassmen
twice a month. The first chance is in a social setting to help them get to know their
peers and just have fun, and the second time is at a session that provides them with
insider knowledge on Lehigh and how to navigate their new environment.

• **Joint Multicultural Program.** This program is committed to advancing diversity and
  improving the experience of minority students on campus. One of its main aims is to
ensure that students of color achieve their desired intellectual and personal goals. The
JMP acts as a liaison among many offices at Lehigh, including the Dean of Students
Office, Multicultural Affairs, Umoja House, Career Services, First Year Experience,
Alumni Association, Leadership Lehigh, Africana Studies, Latin American Studies, and
many student organizations. The JMP is responsible for a first-year mentoring program,
Chat & Chew discussion forums at the Umoja House, and other formal retention
programs.

• **Summer Excel:** This program is a six-week residential pre-college experience for incoming
first-year students. It focuses on academic excellence through the development of
leadership skills, and seeks to equip students with the tools to successfully navigate the
University community. Students spend the summer taking classes; engaging in
opportunities to transfer learning beyond the classroom setting; exploring leadership
models based on the perspectives, values, and approaches of traditionally marginalized
racial and ethnic groups; meeting and networking with students, faculty, and staff; and
going to know their community environment.

• **Community Service and Civic Engagement:** The Lehigh University Community Service Office
(CSO) was established in fall 1996 to provide a coordinated effort for students, faculty,
and staff to engage in service to the greater Lehigh Valley area. The Office’s mission is
“to provide students, faculty and staff of Lehigh University a readily accessible doorway
through which they can explore the rewards and benefits of providing service to the
community.” Similar to involvement in Leadership Lehigh and other programs
sponsored by the Dean of Students Office, being engaged in CSO-sponsored initiatives
means committing to a greater cause, seeing the benefit of personal work, and making
connections on and off campus – all of which increase the likelihood that a student will
feel integrated into campus life, and persist until graduation.

• **LGBTQA Programs and Outreach:** Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer/Questioning
Ally (LGBTQA) Programs and Outreach seeks to promote a vision of diversity that is
aware of, engaged in, and appreciative of issues related to sexual orientation and gender
identity/expression. The staff fosters academic and personal growth and development of
LGBTQA students and encourages full involvement in all aspects of campus life.

• **Office of Multicultural Affairs Emergency Loan Program:** The Office of Multicultural Affairs is
able to provide students with no-interest loans (due six months from the date of the loan
request) to help them cover unexpected expenses related to college and housing. The
program focuses on students who already receive financial aid, have taken loans, work at jobs, and are not able to call upon family or friends for additional financial assistance. Without the benefit of an interest-free emergency loan, many of them would be forced to drop out and work full time in order to pay bills or tuition. As a result of this emergency service, many students are able to concentrate on their academics instead of incurring the stress of pending bills.

- **Leadership Lehigh:** This four-year comprehensive leadership program gives students an opportunity to gain the theoretical background and practical skills necessary to be successful leaders at Lehigh, in their communities, and in their future personal and professional lives. The program consists of four phases of intensive leadership development that focus on skill development, practical application, experiential learning, and self-reflection. Participating in this program allows students to connect to their peers, faculty, and staff members engaged in the program, and community leaders with whom they interact. Students who make these connections feel woven into the University fabric, and are less likely to drop out or transfer.

- **Housing Initiatives:** Recent changes to the Lehigh residency policy resulted in the mandate that all first- and second-year students live on campus. Because of this requirement, second-year students now remain on campus and participate more fully in activities, which results in a more robust University experience. Additionally, a focus on themed housing and the opportunity for students to live in affinity based groupings contributed further to increased student engagement, satisfaction, and retention. Students are now able to self-select potential neighbors based on their interest in a particular issue or desire to maintain a certain lifestyle, petition to live together in a recognized unit, and receive targeted University support for their cause. One example is the Global Citizenship House, where students who are concerned about internationalization and their ability to be good stewards and citizens live together in University housing. Also, the newly-recognized Green House attracts students who are interested in environmentally-conscious products and ways of living. They work together to streamline processes and otherwise reduce waste among residents, and serve as a model for their peers on how to conserve resources. These students report greater satisfaction with their living environment, greater engagement in campus and civic issues related to their causes, and overall, a greater satisfaction with the college experience.

### 3.III.A.3 Compliance with Fundamental Elements of Student Admissions

The Standard, Student Admissions and Retention, states that “the institution seeks to admit students whose interests, goals, and abilities are congruent with its mission and seeks to retain them through their pursuit of the students’ educational goals.” While the foregoing description of programs and practices addresses this standard by suggesting the commitment that Lehigh has made to careful recruitment and admissions practices as well as to comprehensive programs for retention, the following section addresses, in a more focused manner, eight “fundamental elements” identified by Middle States Commission in the area of admissions and retention:

1. **Admissions policies, developed and implemented, that support and reflect the mission of the institution.**

   Prospective students are given literature (via websites, brochures, and other Admissions materials) about Lehigh, which communicates the overarching nature and mission of the University (Appendix 3.5). These messages are consistent in their presentation and are developed in concert with the staff in University Relations.
2. **Admissions policies and criteria available to assist the prospective student in making informed decisions.**

Regional recruiters develop relationships with students on an individual basis and help them to further understand Lehigh. Virtual tours, outreach efforts, and Preview Days are among the channels available to students seeking to make informed decisions about Lehigh as their institution of choice (Appendix 3.5). Admissions staff members understand that they are counselors as well as recruiters, helping prospective students and their families make well informed decisions.

3. **Programs and services to ensure that admitted students who marginally meet or do not meet the institution's qualifications achieve expected learning goals and higher education outcomes at appropriate points.**

Students receive information regarding the performance expectations necessary for success. Lehigh does not admit students who do not meet the admissions requirements. Preparation will vary from one student to another and a full range of support services in the colleges, Dean of Students Office, University Counseling and Psychological Services, and Athletic Department are made available to those in need (Appendix 2.52).

4. **Accurate and comprehensive information regarding academic programs, including any required placement or diagnostic testing.**

The Admissions Office, working in conjunction with the College Deans, ensures that prospective students are fully informed about academic programs including required placement or diagnostic testing. Students who share information regarding learning disabilities with the Office of Academic Support Service for Students with Disabilities are told about additional support resources (the Study Skills Center, the Center for Writing and Math, Peer Tutoring, Center for Academic Success, etc.) (Appendix 3.6).

5. **Statements of expected student learning outcomes and information on institution-wide assessment results, as appropriate to the program offered, available to students.**

Admissions materials convey the expectations of student academic performance. For example, in a section on “Admissions Guidelines,” the University catalogue states that the “admission policy of the university is designed to enroll students with a variety of backgrounds…. Evidence of academic growth, ability to learn, and motivation are special qualities that may not be reflected in the accumulation of units.”4 Criteria are outlined explicitly and reiterated throughout admissions materials. Additionally, college and department web pages and materials outline expectations for students (Appendix 3.7, 3.7a and 3.7b).

6. **Accurate and comprehensive information, and advice where appropriate, regarding financial aid, scholarships, grants, loans, and refunds.**

Information on financial aid is provided to all prospective students. Financial aid information is clearly expressed in several areas including the Registrar and Bursar’s websites, brochures, additional admissions and financial aid literature, and the course catalog. Students are advised on their on-going responsibilities to retain financial assistance (Appendix 3.8).

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7. Published and implemented policies and procedures regarding transfer credit and credit for extra-institutional college level learning.

Transfer credit policies are determined and published by the Office of the Registrar. Admissions staff provides the transfer credit policy information to students during the application process (Appendix 3.5 and 3.9). Once a student is granted admission, the transferable credits are determined by the Registrar’s Office. Upon matriculation, the Office of the First Year Experience reiterates these policies to all students.

8. Ongoing assessment of student success, including but not necessarily limited to retention, that evaluates the match between the attributes of admitted students and the institution’s mission and programs, and reflect its findings in its admissions, remediation, and other related policies.

An Enrollment Management team chaired by the Deputy Provost for Academic Affairs meets monthly to review recruitment and retention issues. The team includes representation from Admissions, Financial Aid, Registrar, Dean of Students, University Communications, Residential Services, Institutional Research, and Finance and Administration. The critical topic of assessment of student success is the focus of a separate section of the self-study.

3.III.A.4 Summary and Suggestions

The broad issue for accreditation is whether Lehigh “seeks to admit students whose interests, goals, and abilities are congruent with its mission and seeks to retain them through the pursuit of the students’ educational goals.” The summary is an internal document used by the Admissions staff to guide its review of applications is instructive.

“In summary, reading applications should be approached in a holistic manner. Key factors to be considered in no particular order include: Academic promise, perceived intellectual curiosity, rigor of curriculum, standardized test scores, extent of extracurricular involvement, letters of recommendation, and a well-written and organized essay. In other words, literally everything needs to be factored into a final decision.”\(^5\) (Appendix 3.2, 3.2a, and 3.2b)

In short, the University seeks to admit students whose interests, aptitudes, and aspirations make them a good match for a University with rigorous academic programs and ideals of integrity, personal initiative, and intellectual engagement. At the same time, the University is determined to become a more inclusive, diverse, and globally oriented institution. The Lehigh of today is strikingly different than the Lehigh of the 1940s or even 1960s, when the institution was an all-male university known as an “engineering college.”

Considerable effort has been expended in the areas of recruiting and retaining minority students and also in fostering a stronger atmosphere of inquiry and intellectual engagement across the campus. Progress has been steady but sometimes slow, and the Subcommittee believes that the University needs to keep its eyes steadfastly fixed on goals of inclusiveness and intellectualism as it develops policies for admissions and retention of students.

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3.III.B Standard 9: Student Support Services

The student services available to support Lehigh students are comprehensive, far-reaching, and situated throughout the University community. One key area of the University’s student support is the Division of Student Affairs. Its mission statement captures its role in the lives of students:

“The fundamental role in Student Affairs is to support and enhance the University's educational mission. At the core of all we do is a commitment to promote student learning. The living and learning environment should inspire, challenge and support students to achieve their full potential as individuals, as members of the Lehigh community and as citizens of a larger society. We foster a comprehensive approach to students' intellectual and personal development by integrating students with residential life, a vibrant array of student organizations and activities, leadership development, the arts and athletics. The quality of our programs, facilities and services should compare favorably to those of the finest colleges and universities in the country. Lehigh should be known as a university that produces leaders who are held in high regard for their character as well as their achievements.” (Appendix 2.21)

3.III.B.1 Inventory of Programs and Practices

3.III.B.1.i Division of Student Affairs

The Division of Student Affairs addresses student needs both broadly and specifically, through formal and informal activities that are sponsored by the following departments (Appendix 3.10 and 3.10a):

- **University Counseling and Psychological Services (UCPS):** This office is dedicated to the belief that a person’s college years are optimally a time of challenge, inquiry, experimentation, productivity, and change. UCPS staff members recognize that the college experience spans a developmental period characterized by periods of crisis, adaptation, resolution, and integration. Services are designed to help students not only manage crises, but to grow in self-understanding in order to make more satisfying and better use of their personal and interpersonal resources. Individual contacts, group therapies, faculty and staff consultation, and numerous outreach activities are some of the primary means by which the mission is accomplished. UCPS staff is committed to providing assistance to all registered Lehigh students interested in personal, social, and academic growth and discovery, as well as to the larger campus community through consultation, teaching, research, and various other types of involvement (Appendix 3.11).

- **Dean of Students (DOS) Office:** This office is dedicated to providing a student-centered, co-curricular environment that enhances the academic mission of the University, and embodies the belief that learning also occurs outside of traditional classroom boundaries. The Dean of Students Office has responsibility for multiple aspects of student life including Academic Support Services, Community Service, Fraternity & Sorority Affairs, Multicultural Affairs, Campus Living, Student Conduct, Student Activities, First Year Experience, and Leadership Development. As a part of the Lehigh experience, through the programs, services, and interactions provided by the Dean of Students Office, students are challenged to be better citizens, dynamic leaders, and individuals who are guided by integrity. The DOS staff is committed to encouraging Lehigh students to broaden their world view in a campus culture that respects individual differences.
The Dean of Students staff also is responsive to student needs and interests. A hallmark of the staff’s operating style is the creation of partnerships with students, their families, faculty, staff, and alumni, which will assist in the development and transformation of students within a safe and healthy campus environment. As professional educators, they are committed to improving their knowledge and skills constantly in order to provide an optimum and praise-worthy environment for students.

• **Graduate Student Life**: The mission of this office is to make Lehigh a hospitable place that is engaging, inspiring, and supportive to graduate students. The Director’s duties and responsibilities are to: 1) Serve as principal liaison with graduate students through regular meetings with the Graduate Student Senate executive board, attendance at Graduate Student Senate meetings, and individual student consultations; 2) maintain liaison with key campus constituents, promote awareness of graduate student issues, and coordinate services to better address graduate student needs; 3) collect and analyze information in conjunction with the Institutional Research Office for strategic planning purposes; 4) foster the development of appropriate social, cultural, intellectual, and recreational opportunities for graduate students; 5) serve as a primary advocate for graduate student life issues within Student Affairs; and 6) develop and coordinate graduate student orientation and Teaching Assistant training.

• **Health & Wellness Center**: This center provides acute and on-going care to more than 4,500 undergraduate and 1,800 graduate students. Services provided by the Health & Wellness Center include, but are not limited to walk-in care, acute medical care, medical visits by appointment, routine gynecological examinations, contraceptive counseling and emergency contraception, allergy injections, minor surgeries, immunizations, laboratory services, medications, self-treatment room, and wellness resource and relaxation rooms.

• **Office of Special Projects (OSP)**: This office is responsible for administering Lehigh’s “A Matter of Degree” program. Its mission is to create a healthier, safer living and learning environment. By taking an overall, environmental change approach to reduce the harmful effects of high-risk drinking, the Office of Special Programs works to reduce alcohol abuse and its attendant negative consequences. It works to make it more acceptable for students to choose not to drink, and to encourage those students who choose to drink to do so in moderation. By transforming the culture and effectively addressing abusive drinking, the Office of Special Projects helps more students reach their full potential, enhance the educational experience for everyone, and eliminate the vast majority of undesirable and debilitating consequences of alcohol abuse at Lehigh (Appendix 3.12, 3.12a, and 3.12b).

• **University Police**: This unit, a fully accredited police department by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, works to enhance the quality of campus life by providing a secure and safe environment. The success of its mission rests on a partnership between the University Police personnel and the local and campus communities. The department places high priority on honesty and integrity and values the need for effective and open communication. It values its employees and is committed to their ongoing professional development.

• **Women's Center**: This center strives to promote a safe, equitable, and empowering environment for women at Lehigh by empowering students to create a campus culture that values all women and their differences of race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, ability, age, and socioeconomic class; providing a comprehensive University-wide sexual violence prevention program and coordinating services for survivors of sexual violence;
assessing the climate for women at Lehigh and advocating for the diverse needs of women students; maintaining a woman-friendly gathering place open to all members of the University community; providing information and referrals about issues that disproportionately affect women, such as sexual harassment, relationship violence, rape, and disordered eating; sponsoring speakers, performers, events, and activities that address gender issues; and creating opportunities for women’s voices to be heard.

3.III.B.1.ii Other Units and Divisions

In addition to Student Affairs, the University’s mission to support its students throughout their collegiate experience is supported by many other divisions and units.

- **Athletics Department:** This department values achievements in leadership, academic performance, athletic performance, community service, and sportsmanship. Its mission is “to advance learning, to develop leadership, and to foster personal growth through comprehensive athletics programming.”

- **Bursar’s Office:** This office obtains and processes data necessary to provide accurate bills and information to students, parents, University departments, and outside companies in order to efficiently collect and deposit the financial resources required to operate the University. These functions are accomplished while servicing the special needs of its customers within the framework of University policies and legal guidelines.

- **Career Services:** Career Services is committed to providing resources to support the career development of Lehigh students at all stages of their education. This office views the first year as a time of exploration and information gathering, and encourages first-year students to start the process of career planning early so they can make informed choices, rather than rushing into a quick decision.

- **Lehigh University Child Care Center:** This center was founded in 1990 to serve the faculty, staff, and students of Lehigh University, upon a recommendation from the President’s Commission on Minorities and Women. The establishment of an on-site childcare center demonstrates the University’s commitment to the health and well being of members of the Lehigh family. The center exists to encourage and support each child in his/her growth so he/she can reach full potential in all areas of development – creating a positive self-concept and a realistic opportunity for succeeding in life.

- **Office of Financial Aid:** The mission of this office is to reduce the financial barriers to a Lehigh education for those families whose resources alone would make it impossible to meet the cost of attendance. The University believes college selection should be based on educational growth opportunities, not on the price, so financial aid is designed to make college affordable for families unable to meet its costs. Lehigh is deeply committed to providing need-based financial aid.

- **Library & Technology Services:** This unit is committed to providing a leading-edge library and technology environment, an environment that enables flexibility, innovation, and effectiveness in all areas of the academic enterprise, including learning, research, administration, community building, and outreach.

- **Registrar’s Office:** The functions of this office include, but are not limited to implementation of faculty policy campus wide; degree audit and verifications for all current and former University degree recipients; building the University class schedule; supervising the building of the calendar and assuring that it meets accreditation standards; supervising the registration process for graduate and undergraduate students; processing and evaluating transfer credit for all transfer admission candidates and
continuing degree students; establishing procedures for verification of attendance and
deferrals for student loans and off-campus agencies; complying with government,
accreditation and NCAA statistic reports; and supervising athletic eligibility certification.
The Registrar’s Office is directly responsible for operating and managing the office
according to ethical and procedural guidelines established by U.S. Department of
Education, FERPA, AACROA and Rules and Procedures of the faculty of Lehigh
University (Appendix 2.65). This office also is responsible for developing and training
staff to assist in these functions and providing services to all office “users” in a timely
and accurate fashion.

3.III.B.2 Compliance with Fundamental Elements of Student Support
Programs
In addition to reviewing the multiple dimensions of support services at Lehigh, the
Subcommittee addressed compliance with 10 “fundamental elements” of a credible system
of student support programs.

1. A program of student support services appropriate to student strengths and needs, reflective of
institutional mission, consistent with student learning expectations, and available regardless of place or
method of delivery.

As discussed above, Lehigh’s formalized program of student support services is housed
largely within the division of Student Affairs and operates in collaboration with multiple
offices throughout the institution. Under the coordination of the Vice Provost for
Student Affairs, each of the departments within that area has a mission statement
(Appendices 3.13 and 3.13a-c) that falls within the University’s mission (Appendix 2.1)
and goals and speaks to a strategic planning process based on an understanding of
students’ strengths and needs. As part of the University’s intentional efforts to meet
students’ needs throughout their Lehigh experience, Student Affairs reaches out to
students in a variety of ways ranging from individual, face-to-face contact to Web-based
communication technologies. Some examples include:

• In 2005, the University identified a need to coordinate Academic Support Services to
make it easier for students to seek and receive help. To meet this need, Student
Affairs staff created the Center for Academic Success, located in the University
Center, which is a main thoroughfare for student traffic. The Center for Academic
Success provides academic support services including tutoring and strategies for
improving study skills.

• Recognizing that every Lehigh student has the potential for leadership, the Office of
Student Leadership was created in 2003 with a purpose of “[helping] all students
shape their personal definition of leadership through critical thought and meaningful
action.” A prime example of the office’s work was the Leadership Lehigh program, a
four-phase/year program providing students with a theoretical background for
leadership and the skills necessary to be successful in leadership roles.

• Recognizing that the health and well being of students is key to their success, the
Health and Wellness Center is open six days a week and provides on-call service after
hours. University Counseling and Psychological Services offers individual and group
psychotherapy and consultation, as well as programs in residential halls and athletic
venues.
2. *Qualified professionals to supervise and provide the student support services and programs.*

Offices that address specific needs of students are required to have personnel who are educated and trained to provide the appropriate services to students (Appendices 3.14 and 3.14a-bb). For example, all professionals in the Dean of Students Office possess a Master’s Degree or equivalent experience in student personnel services, higher education administration, or a comparable field of study; health professionals must be properly certified; all professional staff members in University Counseling and Psychological Services have doctorates.

3. *Procedures to address the varied spectrum of student academic and other needs, in a manner that is equitable, supportive, and sensitive, through direct service or referral.*

Within the formalized components of student support services, efforts are made to address student needs as described above. Academic Support Services reaches out to students by offering workshops/services, both in the office and in residence halls and fraternity or sorority houses. This office also responds to concerns of faculty, staff, and students who know of a student who is experiencing personal and/or academic challenges. These concerns are communicated via email, phone calls, or personal contact. In addition, personnel within Student Affairs are sufficiently well versed in other support offerings both at the University and outside the University. Such knowledge allows individuals to make referrals to students who need additional assistance.

All students deserve the highly integrated support they need throughout the University, from the moment they arrive on campus and throughout their college tenure. The Office of the First-Year Experience serves as a primary resource for incoming students and identifies key services and information to facilitate a smooth transition to the Lehigh experience both academically and socially. Students also are exposed to the variety of campus resources available with the hope that they will take advantage of them when necessary.

4. *Appropriate student advisement procedures and processes.*

At this time, the three undergraduate colleges have different advising processes.

- **CAS:** Incoming students are assigned to a faculty advisor who is the instructor for his/her Choices and Decisions course. This course meets for one hour per week for the first eight weeks of the semester. Sessions are used to discuss a wide range of topics – usually determined by the faculty member. Faculty members have the option of inviting presentations by representatives of the different central support services of the University.

  After Choices and Decisions ends, students are expected to meet with their advisor at least one time per semester for advice about course selection. Advisors are given the Personal Identification Numbers (PINs) for their students and, prior to providing the PINs, generally require that students meet with them in order to discuss a plan (Appendix 3.15). Once a student has declared a major, typically in the second year, he/she is assigned an advisor who is a faculty member in that department.

- **CBE:** Incoming students are assigned to an upper class student who serves as his/her Peer Mentor for the first year. Peer Mentors are trained in leadership skills, given instruction in advising students in course selection, and made aware of the many resources available to help and support first-year students. Trained and
coordinated by the College’s Director of Undergraduate Advising, Peer Mentors initiate contact with their student by email during the summer prior to their arrival on campus. They answer questions as they arise regarding academics, life on campus, student activities, athletics, and other issues.

The Director of Undergraduate Advising serves as the official advisor for all undeclared students. She works specifically with students who are struggling academically or personally, those with more complex questions and issues, and first-year students who would simply rather not work with a peer. Prior to registration for the second semester, the Director of Undergraduate Advising and the Associate Dean of the undergraduate program meet with groups of first-year students to explain the registration process, discuss options for course selection, and answer questions. First-year students get their registration PIN from their Peer Mentor.

All second-year undeclared students are advised by the Director of Undergraduate Advising. Prior to course selection, the Director and the Associate Dean review degree audits for each of the second-year students – creating individualized advising sheets for each. Group meetings are held for these students, and it is here where requirements and sequencing are discussed. At the end of the meeting, each student is given his/her individualized advising sheet, listing suggested courses for the coming semester as well as the registration PIN. Both the Director and the Associate Dean are available thereafter for appointments and walk-ins.

Once a student declares a major within the College, he or she is assigned a faculty advisor within that discipline. That faculty advisor is provided with the PINs of each of his/her advisees and expected to meet with them individually to discuss course selection, progress towards major and degree completion, and career options (Appendix 3.16).

- **RCEAS:** Incoming students are asked if they have any specific area of interest within Engineering. Between 50% and 60% express a preference and these students are assigned an advisor who is a faculty member within that area. Students who do not express a preference are assigned randomly to an Engineering faculty member. Students work with this advisor until registration for second-year fall classes. Approximately 30 faculty members advise about 13 first-year students each.

  Prior to registration for second-year fall semester classes (usually in April), all first-year students are told that they must choose a major. Advising dates are set, and representatives of each department hold meetings in assigned rooms for those students who have selected a major in their department. During these meetings, students are assigned an official advisor, given advice about course selection and provided with a PIN to register on-line.

  Students meet with their advisors, as necessary, throughout their academic career. It is required that meetings occur each semester prior to registration for the following term. Generally, advisors are available by telephone and email, and, when needed, walk-in appointments, as well. Recently, a peer mentor program has been initiated, and in the future the peer mentors will receive training and provide non-academic advice. The college assesses advising through exit interviews with seniors.
5. If offered, athletic programs that are regulated by the same academic, fiscal, and administrative principles, norms, and procedures that govern other institutional programs.

Lehigh University is a founding member of The Patriot League and is proud of its athletic programs and development of true student-athletes. At the intercollegiate NCAA Division I level, Lehigh consistently ranks in the top 10 in graduation rate and other measures of academic performance of its athletes.

6. Reasonable procedures, widely disseminated, for equitably addressing student complaints or grievances.

Lehigh University maintains formal policies and procedures for general grievances, including those involving academic fairness and discrimination complaints. Lehigh also has a specific policy and set of procedures in cases of harassment, and makes available “off-the-record” advice from the University Ombudsman.

The policies and procedures for general grievances are in the Lehigh University Student Handbook, 2007-2009 (Appendix 2.52). The handbook is available on the Dean of Students website (www.lehigh.edu/~indost/dos/hbook.html). This site is accessible to all.

Students with general grievances are referred to the Associate Dean of Students who works with the student to obtain a satisfactory resolution. If such a resolution is not forthcoming, the student may submit a formal written grievance to the Associate Dean of Students. The Associate Dean of Students will inform the Vice President of Student Affairs, the Provost, and the University Counsel of the grievance. The grievance will then be acted on by either the Provost or the Committee on the Standing of Students, depending on the nature of the grievance.

Students, staff, or faculty with harassment grievances follow a specific procedure delineated in the University Policy on Harassment (Appendix 2.59), which is found on the web under Lehigh University Policy Statements (www.lehigh.edu/~policy/university/harrassment.htm).

Students also may seek advice from the University Ombudsperson. The role of the Ombudsperson is to provide highly confidential advice and aid to students. This often entails explaining University policies and procedures, and discussing options with the students.

7. Records of student complaints or grievances.

A file of formal written grievances is maintained by the Associate Dean of Students. Only one or two such grievances are received per year. The Associate Dean of Students will report any patterns or unusual circumstances to the Provost and University Counsel. The Ombudsman specifically does not keep records and maintains strict confidentiality.

8. Policies and procedures, developed and implemented, for safe and secure maintenance of student records.

[Number 9, below.]

9. Published and implemented policies for the release of student information.

Lehigh University has developed and implemented formal policies for the safe and secure maintenance and release of all University data, including student records. The Data Administration policy (Appendix 3.17), which provided the framework for current practice, was approved and implemented in 2002. It put forth the basic principles to be
followed and established the Data Advisory Council to oversee the implementation of the policy and provide oversight into the future. This policy may be found in its entirety on the Lehigh website: www.lehigh.edu/lts/admin/policies/data_administration.htm. Policies regarding student records can be found in the Lehigh University Student Handbook on the Lehigh website: www.lehigh.edu/~indost/dos/hbook.html. The Handbook details the types of files that the University has for each student, as well as the location where these files are secured. It also details the circumstances in which student information can be released.

10. **Ongoing assessment of student support services and the utilization of assessment results for improvement.**

Many units within Student Affairs conduct assessments or collect data to evaluate their effectiveness. Below is a list of some of these processes, by unit:

**University Police:** Use nationally established evaluation metrics, including:
- National crime reporting statistics/data.
- Pennsylvania College & University Security and Information Act statistics (Appendix 3.18).

Use locally developed evaluation metrics to assess:
- Lehigh-Lafayette statistics (e.g., arrests, conduct issues, etc.).
- Greek Week statistics (e.g., arrests, conduct issues, etc.).

**Counseling and Psychological Services:** Use nationally developed assessment tools to assist in the evaluation of presenting issues (use varies depending on presenting issue and cost of tools).

Use locally developed assessment tools to track:
- Total numbers of students seen in counseling center (by semester and annually) (Appendix 3.19).
- Type of issues students are seen for in the counseling center (depression, addiction, assault, bipolar disorder, etc.).
- Patterns (increases/decreases) in numbers of visits at a given time in the semester and/or academic year.
- Patterns (in type/frequency) of presenting issues.

**Health & Wellness Center:** Uses the American College Health Association “Health Services Utilization Survey” to track:
- Total number of students seen in the center and total number of visits (by semester and annually) (Appendix 3.20).
- Types of issues students are seen for in the center (cold, allergy, serious illness, etc.).
- Patterns across types of medical issues that may arise (e.g., spike in colds during month of November).
- Treatment administered to students seen in the center; quality of service (e.g. length of wait, satisfaction with services, etc.).
- Referrals to other health care providers.

Uses locally developed assessment tools to track:
- Number of programs offered by the center.
- Type of programs offered by the center.
• Number of programs that are peer run; attendance to programs.
• Quality of programs (via program evaluation forms. Evaluation forms are utilized for each program offered).

Dean of Students Office: Uses nationally developed assessment tools (Appendix 3.21 and 3.21a-j), including:
• Cooperative Institutional Research Survey.
• Association of College and University Housing Officers - International residential environment survey.
• Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI).
• Association of College Unions - International Student Union Satisfaction survey (spring 2006 – participated in the Multi-Institutional Leadership Study).
• Council for Advancement of Standards in Higher Education Standards and Assessment guides.

Uses locally developed assessment tools to evaluate:
• Students’ reasons for departing Lehigh (withdrawing, transferring, etc.). Academic Support Services conducts exit interview with each student to get feedback about Lehigh experience.
• Student programming: Types of program, social/event interest, timeframe for programs, quality of programs, attendance to event, attendance to event by sub population (e.g. 1st year), etc. Assessment tools are both online and paper.
• Student Center facility spaces: Quality of venues, quantity of venues, satisfaction with programming space, satisfaction with meeting space, satisfaction with reservation system, quality of training (e.g., safe event program training, food preparation training, etc.). Facilities also works with Dining Services to get information from the surveys (Appendix 3.22 and 3.22a-e) about satisfaction with meal options, meal times, etc.
• Student experience in clubs/organizations: Type of club involvement, formal leadership roles, club activity, satisfaction with Student Senate governance and management.

In addition:
• Many departments conduct pre- and post-test experiences with students/cohorts with whom they work over an extended period of time.
• Most departments conduct focus groups with students to assess program effectiveness, program impact, test a new idea/project, review/clarify policies, or to make decisions about the continuation of a program, project, etc.
• All departments restructured strategic planning process to focus on outcomes development. Individual departments have identified useful assessment practices or tools to measure outcomes success. Updates are reported two times a year.

Graduate Student Life: Use locally developed tools to:
• Assess graduate students’ experiences, academically and socially.
• Determine graduate students’ needs via focus groups.

Military Science: Use significant number of assessment tools developed by U.S. military (samples on file in ROTC). Students also were assessed through field experiences (both at Lehigh and at national military bases).
Special Projects: Use nationally established assessment tools (Appendix 3.23 and 3.23a-f) including:

- The College Alcohol Survey.
- Alcohol EDU.

Women’s Center: Use nationally developed assessment tools including the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (IRMA).

Use locally developed assessment tools to evaluate:

- Satisfaction with services of Women’s Center (evaluations are done of staff, as well as of those who utilize the center), with assessment at midpoint of semester and at semester’s end. The center also holds retreat to assess its goals, services, needs, etc.
- Awareness of Sexual Assault resources (the center conducted a survey of students, faculty and staff).
- Satisfaction with programs, training, and outreach offered by the Women’s Center (e.g., post training evaluation surveys).
- Impact/effectiveness of orientation training program.

In addition, all workers complete a “Personal Plan Ahead” form to set goals, expectations, offer suggestions for enhancement, etc.

3.III.B.3 Summary and Suggestions

As can be seen from the information above, the University clearly offers a wide variety of student support services, curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular activities that address the gamut of student needs. During the Subcommittee’s investigations, a few suggestions were recorded about improvements in services for first-year students.

1. Create a better system for tracking students and assisting them in navigating the University system, thereby closing any loopholes where students may potentially get lost. This suggested system might involve more regular meetings between academic advisors and first-year student advisees, more comprehensive and unified approaches to programmatic initiatives in the residence halls for first-year students (concerning such issues as time management, study skills, academic, and personal success), and better use of Gryphons (student staff) Orientation Leaders, and other student leaders to identify students in trouble and inform them about available resources.

2. Create a better assessment of student complaints/grievances. This improvement might involve creating a centralized office where students can go if they have specific complaints about a faculty, staff, or department issue. This office would keep track of complaints and take note of significant trends and whether or not action needs to be taken. Students may be more likely to voice issues or seek assistance if they know where to go for a problem as opposed to seeking different individuals for different issues.

3. Provide a better means of making students aware of services available. Determine the best way to reach students, whether through printing announcements, web-based information, or other means.

4. Consider a mentoring program that requires participation of all first-year students. A model can be found in the Athletics Department, which has a group called SAM (Student Athlete Mentors) that consists of student-athletes trained in certain areas to
help other fellow athletes. Almost every team has at least one representative in this group. SAM is mainly designed to help students in their transition during their first year, providing a model that might be extended to all first-year students.

It should be noted that the Subcommittee’s major recommendations concerning Student Services have been integrated into Section 3.IV of this report, especially in the sections on Advising and Residential Environment.

**3.III.C  Standard 12: General Education**

**3.III.C.1 Overview of Practices**

Lehigh University’s approach to general education attempts to steer a middle course between curricula that specify detailed core-skills requirements and programs that avoid such requirements in order to encourage independence and exploration. The hybrid approach seems appropriate for Lehigh’s students, who have typically been high-achieving students in advanced high-school courses, and who therefore come to college with a strong background in general education, often with advanced placement credit. Lehigh does, nonetheless, designate a few courses as fulfilling general requirements: English 1 and 2 for most students (some students place into a one-semester course, English 11, a small number fulfill the requirement through special programs, and second-language students take different versions of these courses), and introductory courses within each college (Arts & Sciences 1, Business 1, and Engineering 1 and 5). Moreover, all three undergraduate colleges specify distribution requirements in mathematics, sciences, social sciences, and humanities, so that every Lehigh student must take courses that expand general knowledge and develop basic skills, such as critical reasoning, mathematical literacy, and competence in academic writing.

The prevailing philosophy, however, is that many fundamental skills are best learned in contexts of application, rather than in designated courses, and that the most important “basics” need to be practiced and extended to new situations – a philosophy consistent with Lehigh’s long-standing commitment to integrated learning. The University’s Mission Statement (Appendix 2.1) states that since “Lehigh’s founding in 1865, the faculty has emphasized the integration of the academic disciplines, combining the cultural with the professional, the theoretical with the practical, and the humanistic with the technological in a modern, liberal education that serves as preparation for a useful life.”

Therefore, the University has been moving away from “one shot” courses and toward more integrated and sustained approaches. The University also is convinced that what Lehigh students need more than basic skills or general knowledge is a more sophisticated and engaged approach to learning as an act of inquiry.

For example, in relation to writing skills, the general requirement of English 1 and 2 (or, for some students, English 11) provides a useful starting point in this endeavor. The recent appointment (2006) of a full-time University coordinator of Writing Across the Curriculum indicates the seriousness with which Lehigh is committed to integrating instruction in writing throughout the curriculum, rather than segregating it into a few courses – even if they are supplemented later in a student’s academic career with a writing-intensive course (such as the CAS junior year intensive writing requirement). A more holistic and consistent strategy is required, one that addresses the need for writing in every major and discipline.

Exciting programs recently established at Lehigh – such as South Mountain College and IDEAS (Integrated Degree in Engineering, the Arts and Sciences) – represent the leading

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6 *Lehigh University Catalogue*, 2007-08, p. 4.
edge of integrated and extended work on basic skills such as writing. These programs involve core courses that are writing intensive in all four years of the undergraduate program.

Furthermore, while there are no required courses on ethics at Lehigh and only a small number of courses devoted exclusively to topics in moral philosophy, the curriculum as a whole is being transformed in ways that introduce students to ethical issues and principles. The Global Citizenship Program, for example, not only is a certificate program for selected students but also has resulted in development of a broad array of courses open to students in all colleges (and taught by faculty from each of them). These courses are designed to provide a global perspective on contemporary issues, preparing students for the responsibility of making morally reasonable decisions in a complex world.

The Global Citizenship Program’s model – funding for annual faculty development seminars to facilitate the remodeling of existing courses or the creation of new ones – provides a prototype for other efforts to stimulate curricular reform. A faculty seminar designed to stimulate courses focused on issues of diversity recently was proposed, and discussions are underway about expanding study abroad and service learning opportunities for students, as ways to experience diversity and need in the world. In addition, in various places in the curriculum, faculty members are infusing ethical issues and perspectives into their courses. In the English Department, for example, a number of recent courses include experiential learning components that foster ethical reflection. In one course (Collaborative Storytelling and Alzheimer’s), students work with residents in a retirement home for Alzheimer’s patients, encouraging them to draw on their imaginations outside the constraints of memory loss. In another (Poverty and Representation), students read a series of medieval and modern texts about obligations to the poor, at the same time that they spend 15 hours assisting in one of several social programs for the poor in the surrounding community. In yet another course (Arguing Differently), students consider the meaning of a “nonviolent” approach to argument, while they simultaneously engage in a lab experience that uses exercises from Aikido, a martial art called the “art of peace,” as a paradigm of conflict transformation.

In sum, Lehigh is pursuing an approach to general education that recognizes the value of basic skills and core knowledge, but strives to integrate the learning of those skills into multiple courses and activities, rather than a set of required courses. Thus the number of required courses (and the “check list” mentality that they can foster) is limited in favor of a flexible system of distribution requirements, with support for integrated and experiential learning diffused throughout the curriculum.

Similarly, the Subcommittee believes that the skills of inquiry that first-year students need to acquire are best learned, not in discrete courses, but rather from multiple sources within the institutional culture. Lehigh students are generally bright and well educated, but they face developmental challenges: They take tests well but aren’t always intellectually curious or adventuresome; they are verbally articulate but tend to be declarative rather than interrogative, thinking in absolutes or behaving as though all opinions are equally valid; and they work hard, motivated by achievement, yet their definition of success is grade-based, and they are afraid to make the “growth choice” if it carries a risk of failure. Because Lehigh students come to college right from high school, they often fail to see the intellectual gap between the two experiences, drawing on old learning strategies when faced with new challenges. As in high school, they compartmentalize their education, viewing courses as discrete and disconnected experiences and rarely adopting an interdisciplinary perspective. They tend to see few connections between the classroom and experiences on the athletic
fields, in the residence halls, or at social events. Because their identity is rooted in success and popularity, they are especially anxious in situations where challenges are high and failure is possible. Because many come from relatively homogeneous and sheltered environments, they are naïve about diversity and unaware of the benefits of global perspectives and experiences.

In short, while first-year students at Lehigh are in many respects the “cream of the crop,” they nonetheless face some significant developmental challenges characteristic of this age group. These intellectual, social, and ethical challenges – rather than a narrow set of “basic skills” – should be the priority for general education at Lehigh.

3.III.C.2 Compliance with Fundamental Elements of General Education

Although general education takes a distinctive form at Lehigh because of its mission, the University is committed to ensuring that undergraduates have or receive college-level proficiency in a number of essential skills and competencies. The philosophy of education for each undergraduate college is outlined in the University Catalogue (Appendix 3.24), in separate statements for the College of Arts and Sciences (p. 33), the College of Business and Economics (p. 40), and the College of Engineering and Applied Sciences (p. 45). The following section considers Lehigh’s compliance with the six fundamental elements of general education, as they are outlined in Standard 12.

1. A program of general education of sufficient scope to enhance students’ intellectual growth, and equivalent to at least … 30 semester hours for baccalaureate programs (An institution also may demonstrate how an alternative approach fulfills the intent of this fundamental element).

Admission requirements to Lehigh University ensure that entering students have a certain background in general education and fundamental skills (units typically mean a year of study): English (4 units), foreign language (2 units), social science (2 units), lab science (2 units), and mathematics (3 units). (Appendix 3.24, p. 6)

Lehigh University requires only English 1 and 2 (or equivalent course or courses) for all students. (Appendix 3.25) Other requirements are college specific but contain the same core elements, totaling at least 30 semester hours. (Section 4.II.A.3.i for academic requirements.)

- **CAS requirements**: Arts & Sciences 1; first year college seminar; a distribution of courses in the humanities (8 credits), social sciences (8 credits), natural sciences (8 credits), and mathematics (3 credits).
- **CBE requirements**: Economics 1; Business 1; Mathematics 21; a distribution of courses in the humanities (6 credits), social sciences (6 credits), and natural science (3 credits).
- **RCEAS requirements**: Engineering 1 (for most students) and 5; Economics 1; Mathematics 21 and 22; Chemistry 25; Physics 11 and 12; and a distribution of courses in the humanities and social sciences (13 credits).

2. A program of general education where the skills and abilities developed in general education are applied in the major or concentration.

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7 The Report from the Task Force on the First-Year and Beyond Experience at Lehigh calls attention to these particular developmental needs and documents them through analysis of conversations with Lehigh students, in focus group sessions. See White et al, 2005.
• **CAS**: A junior year writing intensive course requirement, typically in the major. (Appendix 3.24, p. 35)

• **CBE**: Basic skills developed in first-year English, mathematics, economics, and business courses are consistently applied and developed in the various major fields of study. (Appendix 3.24, p. 42)

• **RCEAS**: Basic skills developed in first-year English, mathematics, science, and engineering courses are consistently applied and developed in the various major fields of study. (Appendix 3.24, pp. 45-46)

3. Consistent with institutional mission, a program of general education that incorporates study of values, ethics, and diverse perspectives.

   The University offers a wide range of courses across the colleges on the topics of philosophical ethics, religious ethics, bioethics, business ethics, and engineering ethics. But these courses are not required, nor are these value issues necessarily addressed in the required portion of the curriculum. Nevertheless, Lehigh has intensive and dynamic curricular development in the areas of ethics, diversity, and global perspectives. The university’s Mission Statement asserts that “Respect for human dignity is very important at Lehigh, a caring community deeply committed to harmonious cultural diversity as an essential element of the learning environment. In order that all members of the Lehigh community might develop as effective and enlightened citizens, the University encourages physical, social, ethical, and spiritual development as well as rigorous intellectual development.” (Appendix 3.25, p. 4)

4. Institutional requirements assuring that, upon degree completion, students are proficient in oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, and technological competency appropriate to the discipline.

   Many majors at Lehigh include as part of their programs either capstone seminars in the senior year, senior theses, or senior projects. For further information concerning institutional assessment, please refer to Chapter 5.

5. General education requirements clearly and accurately described in official publications of the institution.

   Admissions requirements to the University are clearly delineated on page 6 of the University catalog (Appendix 3.24). General education requirements for the various colleges are described on pages 34-47.

6. Assessment of general education outcomes within the institution’s overall plan for assessing student learning, and evidence that such assessment results are utilized for curricular improvement.

   No such assessment of general education outcomes presently occurs on a regular basis. However, details about the assessment of student learning (primarily, though not exclusively, in major fields) is the central topic for Chapter 5. See especially 5.II.

**3.III.C.3 Summary and Suggestions**

What Lehigh students need more than basic skills or general knowledge is a more sophisticated and engaged approach to learning as an act of inquiry. This is not something taught in a discrete course but rather an orientation that must be conveyed to students from multiple sources within the institutional culture – in curricular, co-curricular, and extra-
curricular settings. Lehigh students are generally bright and well educated, but they often bring along (understandably) a high-school orientation to learning when they arrive on campus. The challenge is how to reset their expectations, drawing them away from a culture of fulfilling requirements, “acing” tests, and elevating their grade point averages and, instead, moving them toward a culture of complexity, inquiry, and analysis.

A starting point might be the very beginning of the first-year experience, when students are relatively impressionable and have not yet retreated behind college walls. Thus the strongest suggestion for general education will be considered in Section 3.IV.C.2 of this report, in a recommendation for infusing a common intellectual experience into the first year.

3.IV Enhancing the First Year Experience: Review of Existing Programs and Recommendations

In addition to investigating compliance with three standards of educational effectiveness, the Subcommittee on the First Year Experience (and Beyond) was charged with reviewing Lehigh’s program of curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular offerings for new students, and asking how well Lehigh supports students during the transition into college, from matriculation to declaration of a major.

The Subcommittee started with the assumption that the first year is a critical period for most students, one that can be discouraging and disorienting or, more positively, one that will provide a platform for subsequent learning and success. The centrality of this assumption is reflected by the fact that Lehigh chose “Student Transitions” as a focus for self-study, suggesting both the importance that Lehigh’s leadership places on the first-year experience and also, perhaps, a sense that the University needs to do more to draw students into a culture that fosters intellectual, emotional, and social maturity.

Many individuals and offices work diligently to support the development of first-year students, and many pieces of an excellent first-year program are in place, running successfully (Appendix 2.21). It’s important to review and recognize these initiatives and efforts, which will be the topic of the next section. Nevertheless, this self-study found a few core concerns and identified four specific elements that require institutional attention and initiative. These concerns and recommendations will be addressed in a later section.

3.IV.A The First-Year Experience: Inventory of Existing Programs

Several units and offices have developed programs targeted to first-year students, including a dedicated office within the Dean of Students Office and programs run by the three undergraduate colleges.

3.IV.A.1 Office of the First Year Experience (Academic Support Services, Dean of Students Office)

In 2000, Lehigh created a new position within the Dean of Students Office, an Assistant Dean of Students for First Year Student Programs. The person in this position was to be primarily responsible for academic support for first-year students, as well as developing programs throughout the academic year to support them. In 2002, the responsibilities of the Assistant Dean expanded with the addition of the New Student Orientation Program, which was previously housed in the Office of Student Activities. Until that point, the orientation program had been perceived as entirely socially oriented with no academic component.
Moving the program under Academic Support Services allowed for more infusion of academic and intellectual components in the program.

The Office of First Year Experience (OFYE) expanded again in 2004, with the hiring of a Coordinator for Orientation & First Year Student Programs and an administrative assistant. With these new positions, the OFYE was complete. In addition to the two professional staff and one support staff member, the OFYE also is supported by a volunteer corps of 55 student Orientation Leaders who are integral to the orientation program and follow-up discussions in the fall semester. Student applications for this position doubled in 2006, reflecting the increased energy and excitement about the program and its influence in the University community. Thus, from modest beginnings, the OFYE has grown in staff and budget. Most importantly, the OFYE has embraced an operating philosophy grounded in relevant research, so that it offers first-year students multiple opportunities to grow intellectually and personally, and to become fully engaged in the Lehigh community.

3.IV.A.1.i Mission Statement for Office of First Year Experience
The OFYE recognizes that the first year of college is a critical year for new students; it lays the foundation for a successful experience in both the academic and personal realms. The OFYE provides comprehensive programs and services to support students in their transition to University life. Throughout the year, the University is intentional in its efforts to actively engage students by promoting their intellectual exploration, individual identity development, interpersonal relationships, and community development.

3.IV.A.1.ii Programs
The OFYE has primary responsibility for new student orientation as well as other programs that support first-year students. In the list of selected programs that follows, those items marked with a star (*) are events that students are required to attend.

Summer Programs:

• AlcoholEdu*: Since the summer of 2004, first-year students have been required to take this online program (Appendix 3.26, 3.26a, and 3.26b). It gives students information about making responsible decisions about drinking alcohol. Over 95% of the first-year student population completes this course. The Office of Special Projects is responsible for this program.

• Summer Excel Program: This is a six-week residential pre-college experience for incoming first-year students (Appendix 3.27). Its focus is on academic excellence through the development of leadership skills and seeks to equip students with the tools to successfully navigate the University community from a multicultural perspective. The Office of Multicultural Affairs is responsible for this program.

Fall Programs:

Pre-Orientation Programs: PreLUnion: (Appendix 3.28 and 3.28a-c) Students have the option to attend one of four pre-Orientation programs. These opportunities are one way in which pockets of connectedness are created to help students in their social adjustment to campus.

• Outdoor Adventure: Students participate in various outdoor programs (e.g., ropes course, canoeing, paintball, etc.).
• Volunteer Experience: The goal of this program is to introduce students to Lehigh’s campus and surrounding area through community service (e.g., youth programs, environmental projects, Habitat for Humanity, etc.).

• South Bethlehem Experience: This is an opportunity for students to become active participants in Bethlehem’s economy and cultural life by learning about its history, meeting community activists, and dining at local restaurants.

• ArtsAlive: This is a hands-on opportunity to discover and experience the exciting world of the visual, performing, literary, and design arts at Lehigh.

Fall Orientation: This program establishes a common experience during the four-day orientation program in an effort to help students in their transition to college life by making connections with others in their new community; explain and promote to incoming students a dialogue about Lehigh community values and expectations; and encourage students to be active participants in the academic experience. (An abbreviated version of Orientation is provided to admitted first-year students for the spring semester).

• Academic Advising*: An entire day is designated for academic advising and related topics via College Convocations and faculty-student meetings.

• Summer Reading Program*: Students are invited to read a selected book during the summer and engage in small group discussions with faculty, staff, and students (Appendix 3.29). Further development of the program will include a scheduled follow-up orientation meeting/discussion later in the semester as it relates to Summer Reading, Lehigh Life Guides Peer Theater and/or transition issues in general.

• Peer Theater/Lehigh Life Guides*: This program was introduced as part of the Orientation 2004 common experience for incoming students to expose students to different issues that they may experience in the college setting. The general topics include: academic integrity, diversity, alcohol/partying, sexual assault, and education.

• evoLUtion Seminar*: First-year students reconvene three times with their orientation groups in the Fall to discuss various transition issues and allow the Orientation Leaders an opportunity to answer questions and continue to make connections with the students. If students do not attend these meetings, they are delayed in their spring semester course registration by 30 minutes. Students will have an opportunity to make up these missed meetings before registration.

Fall and Spring Programs and Opportunities:

• Keep It Real: This is a program of the offices of First-Year Experience & Multicultural Affairs that is directed toward students of color. Orientation Leaders engage students in discussions about their transition to college.

• College Life Tour: Calendar of events that address student needs and mirrors their experience throughout the academic year (e.g., study skills and strategies, stress management and career exploration). This program is the responsibility of the OFYS.

• Peer Mentoring Program (for students with learning disabilities): Students are paired with an upper-class student/mentor of the same college and/or major, who provides
support and insight during the first year. This program is managed by Academic Support Services.

- **Leadership Lehigh**: This is a four-year comprehensive leadership program through which students can gain the theoretical background and practical skills necessary to be successful leaders at Lehigh, in their communities, and in their future personal and professional lives. The program, which is directed by Student Leadership development, consists of four phases of intensive leadership development that focus on skill development, practical application, experiential learning, and self-reflection.

- **Fraternity & Sorority Recruitment**: First-year students are permitted to join fraternities and sororities during the second semester of their first year, assuming they meet the academic requirements. By delaying recruitment until the second semester, incoming students have an opportunity to acclimate to the University community as a whole. Recruitment is the responsibility of the Office of Fraternity & Sorority Affairs.

- **Residence Life Programming**: Gryphons are required to do programming in their residence halls throughout the academic year that address core developmental areas (e.g., intellectual exploration, individual identity development, interpersonal relationships, and community development. Programming is the responsibility of Residence Life.

### 3.IV.A.1.iii Assessment of OFYE Programs

Beginning in 2004, the OFYE has administered the First Year Student Survey, created in collaboration with Library & Technology Services. This survey is given to first-year students to assess their satisfaction with services, from the use of the online Campus Portal (early May) through the end of the New Student Orientation Program (mid-September). Below are orientation-related items from the 2006 survey.

- 87% found the Welcome Kit information to be useful, very useful, or extremely useful.
- 86% found the Campus Portal information to useful, very useful, or extremely useful.
- 58% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that Orientation helped them transition to Lehigh.
- 71% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that they learned about available resources during their Orientation meetings.
- 61% thought the “Evolving Roles” session clarified the difference between high school and college academics.
- 37% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that they enjoyed reading the 2006 book selection, “Never Let Me Go.” (Results vary depending on book selection; the previous year, for example, 82% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that they enjoyed reading “The Kite Runner.”)
- 39% agreed and strongly agreed with the statement that the Summer Reading Program should continue for the 2007 year (The previous year, 64% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that the Summer Reading Program should continue for the 2006 year).
- 66% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that the Lehigh Life Production addressed college issues that were important to them.
• 81% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that they understood the Code of Conduct as explained in the Values & Integrity Session.
• 82% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that they can define what is considered academic dishonesty at Lehigh as explained in the Values & Integrity Session.
• 65% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that they felt more prepared for college overall because of the programs offered during Orientation.
• 66% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that they enjoyed the social activities that were offered during Orientation.

3.IV.A.2 CAS Programs for First-Year Students

- **CAS Convocation**: Students receive a brief welcome/greeting from the Dean, and then the Associate Dean addresses them. The Dean encourages the students to take college as an opportunity to follow their passions and, perhaps, to discover new passions. The theme of the Associate Dean’s address is the students’ good fortune to have had opportunities, including the opportunity to attend Lehigh. It also emphasizes issues of integrity and the purpose of the modern university. The purpose is to encourage – however briefly – some humble reflection on their circumstances and the nobility of pursuing a college education.

- **Choices and Decisions**: This is a 1-credit, pass/fail course that first-semester students take with their faculty academic advisor. Advisors receive an Advisor’s Manual and attend a workshop just prior to teaching Choices and Decisions in the fall semester. There are about 20 students in each Choices and Decisions advising group, which meets for one hour each week prior to registration (typically about nine meetings). The syllabus includes issues like liberal education, the CAS curriculum, academic integrity, Career Services, and the like. Many advisers will have assignments that help students learn about the University, cultural opportunities, their faculty, or the community. The adviser will typically meet one-on-one with each student twice during the semester. The goal for Choices and Decisions is to provide an extended academic orientation that helps students get to know what is expected of them and the resources they will find at Lehigh.

- **First-Year Course**: Each CAS student is required to take a course that has low enrollment (less than 20) and is taught by a regular faculty member. Most of these courses are college seminars, and are taught in a mode that emphasizes student discussion. A few are small sections of a regular course (e.g., PolS 001, Phy 011). The goal of these courses is to introduce students to the expectations of interaction, individual accountability, and discourse at the college level (Appendix 3.30).

- **ArtsAlive**: This is a pre-orientation program developed by CAS faculty but not restricted to CAS students. The purposes are to give students an opportunity to explore the arts closely with faculty and upper-class students, and to provide visibility for arts programming to incoming first-year students.

- **Global Citizenship**: Developed by faculty from all four colleges and including students from all three undergraduate colleges, the first-year experience in Global Citizenship includes travel during the inter-semester break to destinations that allow students to explore what it means to be a citizen not only of one’s community or nation but also of the world. During the first semester, Global Citizenship students are together in a course that fulfills the requirement for English 001 but is taught by Modern Language and Literature faculty, uses world literature, and prepares them for the inter-semester trip.
During the second semester, they take a course that fulfills the requirement for English 002, which is taught by an English Department teaching fellow who went on the inter-semester trip, and directs students through a reflection and processing of their trip.

- **South Mountain College**: South Mountain College (SMC) is a residential academic program in CAS. It is designed to bring together a community of students and faculty dedicated to the exploration of intellectually exciting and practically significant topics of investigation. SMC students will work in a fluid, interactive, and experiential environment; be challenged to assume responsibility for their educations; and make connections across disciplinary barriers. Assisted by core faculty – along with faculty and staff “friends” of the program – SMC students will draw from the curricular resources and intellectual expertise of the University as a whole.

- **IDEAS**: This is a four-year honors program, resulting in a Bachelor of Science Degree designated as an Integrated Degree in Engineering, Arts, and Sciences (IDEAS). Jointly administered by the CAS and the RCEAS, this new program cultivates a new breed of cross-disciplinary innovators, in order to provide an education that produces students well versed in dual focus areas – one in engineering and one in the liberal arts (humanities, social sciences, mathematics or natural sciences).

### 3.IV.A.3 CBE Programs for First-Year Students

- **Advising**: Each incoming student is assigned to the Undergraduate Advisor. The Undergraduate Advisor is in regular contact with the students both before and after their arrival on campus. Meetings, reminders, and contacts are generally on the following topics: Becoming a student in the CBE and at Lehigh; resources and contact information; deadlines and instructions; course and credit enrollment; progress towards the degree (including issues of probation and poor grades).

- **CBE Student Handbook**: Created by the Undergraduate Advisor and provided to each incoming student, this handbook includes the following material: CBE policies and contact information; University-wide information, deadlines, and resources; academic calendars; University registration policies; University forms and their purposes, deadlines, and required signatures; explanation of CBE core with worksheet; and worksheets for each undergraduate CBE major (Appendix 3.31).

- **Peer Mentor Program**: The Undergraduate Advisor manages a group of upper-class students called the Peer Mentors. This group of students serves as peer advisors and mentors to the first-year students. Each Peer Mentor is responsible for a group of five to seven first-year students. These mentors contact first-year students during the summer to introduce themselves and make themselves available to assist with any questions or concerns new students might have. Throughout the semester, Peer Mentors check-in with their assigned students through email and group or individual meetings. During Registration, the Peer Mentors meet with their assigned students to help them select courses, establish a schedule, and to distribute the registration alternate PINs. The Peer Mentors undergo training and instruction as preparation for mentoring, advising, and guiding the first-year students through their initial college experiences.

- **Business 1 – Introduction to Business**: This course serves as both an introduction to business and a welcome to the CBE (Appendix 3.32). Through the course, first-year students are introduced to the functional areas of business, the integration of these areas and the significant issues in the business world. The course helps establish the peer group for the students and prepares them for their future courses within the CBE.
3.IV.A.4  RCEAS Programs for First-Year Students

- **Engineering 1:** This is an introductory survey of computing for students in engineering and the sciences (Appendix 3.33 and 3.33a). The course covers basic programming concepts, structures, and algorithms. Applications to solving scientific problems are an integral part of the course. The students are introduced to various case studies where computers are utilized in various engineering contexts. Engineering 1 brings together first-year engineering students as a cohort.

- **Engineering 5:** The purpose of this course is to introduce first-year students to practical engineering experience via hands-on projects and teamwork (Appendix 3.34). The students are introduced to concepts, methods, and principles of engineering practice through two six-week projects in two different engineering disciplines. Throughout the course, there are lectures covering topics such as problem-solving skills, design, project planning, communication, teamwork, ethics, and professionalism, as well as innovative solution development and implementation. The students also gain an in-depth understanding of the engineering disciplines and degree programs where their projects are designed and facilitated.

- **Bioengineering First-Year Seminar:** The principal objectives of the two 1-credit first-year bioengineering seminars are to provide an overview of the bioengineering field. Students are introduced to contemporary issues in bioengineering, including human and ethical ones. Students are expected to develop an understanding of the impact of engineering solutions in a global, environmental, and societal context. Presentations are required so that students gain skill in oral communication (Appendix 3.35).

- **IBE First-Year Seminar:** The principal objectives of the course are to introduce the Integrated Business & Engineering (IBE) Honors Program and to encourage students to “think big” as they plan both their four years at Lehigh and their career path after graduation. The department chair from each of the various engineering and business majors makes a presentation designed to acquaint students with his/her particular area as a potential major within the IBE Program. Since students must select a major from either engineering or business by the beginning of the sophomore year, these presentations are invaluable. In the case of the engineering departments, laboratory tours are required. Other Lehigh faculty and staff conduct seminars dealing with topics such as leadership, team building and career planning. IBE students are encouraged to become campus leaders either in their living group, their sports team, a club, or some other campus group. The leadership seminar helps students understand the very different ways people can be “leaders” in an organization. Since much of the integrated course work within the IBE Honors Program involves students working in teams, the team-building seminar is good preparation for understanding how teams need to function if a project is to be completed. Students are also required to post to their personal web page an updated resume.

Students in the IBE program have other special opportunities. For example, successful business practitioners are invited to campus to speak with the IBE students. These talks are usually quite informal with pizza and plenty of opportunity for questions and answers. Since fall of 2000, guests have included Mr. Jeffrey Luker (Lehigh ’76), Senior Partner, Accenture; Dr. Michael Zisman (Lehigh ’70), CEO, Lotus Development Corp.; Mr. Pete Musser (Lehigh ’49), CEO, Safeguard Sciences, Inc.; Mr. Jeffrey L. Kenner (Lehigh ’65), President, Kenner & Co.; Dr. Steven K. Kreider (Lehigh ’79)
ISELP First-Year Activities: The Information and Systems Engineering Leadership Program (ISELP) is an honors program associated with the B.S. Information and Systems Engineering (I&SE) degree offered by the Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering. In the first year, the general theme is team-building, and for students to start thinking about leadership and solving unstructured problems, developing communication and presentation skills via seminars, field trips, and case studies. The ISELP activities continue for four years with increased intensity. The key experience themes for ISELP are field trips (understanding the major functions/systems of typical enterprises) and unstructured problems (solving case studies). Mentoring includes a leadership assessment baseline and development plan, executive interactions with students, and the faculty advisor and industry mentor team meeting and interacting with students.

3. IV. B Concerns and Recommendations

The Subcommittee’s study of the first-year experience at Lehigh revealed that many dedicated individuals and thoughtful programs are available to support new students during the transition to college. A number of these support programs are exemplary, and many students appear to make the adjustment to college with few difficulties. Nevertheless, the Subcommittee also identified some concerns about the current approach to the first-year experience. Throughout the Subcommittee’s discussion, which occurred over many months, two broad themes emerged: The first is lack of coordination and communication among the various individuals, programs, and services that address first-year students. Although individual programs and offices have strong leadership, no one is “in charge” of the overall first-year experience. As a result, various units and programs work in a relatively decentralized atmosphere to address students’ needs in the way they deem appropriate. The result can be duplication of efforts, uncoordinated initiatives, inconsistent policies and procedures, and diffusion of responsibility and accountability.

The second theme is uncertainty about the scope of Lehigh’s commitment to the first-year experience. Although some faculty members are devoted to new students, and while certain programs (such as those operated by the OFYE) are focused on students in transition, these efforts tend to be viewed as necessary (even heroic), but not central to the institution’s mission and goals. Most members of the faculty are, perhaps understandably, more invested in majors or graduate students in their area of specialization than in students who are just starting their post-secondary studies. It’s also likely that the first-year experience is marginalized by being based in a sub-unit of the Dean of Students Office, out of sight (and mind) for most faculty members. In the push for excellence in teaching and research, it’s easy to forget the importance of the critical transition from high school to college.

It’s important, therefore, to remind faculty, staff, and administrators about the developmental challenges faced by first-year college students. These challenges were documented in the report prepared by the Task Force on the First Year and Beyond Experience at Lehigh.8 The authors of that report examined the “gap” between the intellectual, attitudinal, and social-emotional characteristics of first-year students at Lehigh.

8 White et al.
and the desired characteristics of graduating seniors. The central characteristics of first-year students at Lehigh seem particularly relevant for anyone involved in first-year programs.

- In the cognitive/intellectual domain, first-year students don’t challenge themselves intellectually, lack curiosity, tend to think in absolutes, are uncritical pluralists, tend not to be creative thinkers, are unaware of the differences between high school and college work, and don’t see connections between their courses.
- In the attitudinal/motivational domain, their definition of success is grade based, they don’t take intellectual risks (avoiding the “growth choice”), and they are not willing to learn from mistakes or failures.
- In the social/emotional realm, many come from sheltered environments, are risk averse and afraid to lead or take responsibility, are insecure despite their accomplishments, and tend to be naïve about diversity.

The point is that first-year college students are a population with specific intellectual, attitudinal, and social challenges. The transition to college is an intense experience, filled with opportunities but also fraught with difficulties. How well does Lehigh address those needs?

The committee concluded that while the institution has many exemplary programs to assist students who are making the transition to college, there is not enough coordination, inadequate administrative responsibility and leadership, and lost opportunities – especially in student advising, common intellectual experiences, and use of the residential environment as a site for learning and development. The recommendations for improving the first-year experience that follow address these concerns and are listed in order of importance.

3.IV.C Four Recommendations For Improving the First-Year Experience

3.IV.C.1 Recommendation #1: Implement a Hybrid Advising Model for First-Year Students:

Undergraduate advising is considered by many to be a very important aspect of a successful college experience. The following quotations represent the consensus views of those who have studied advising carefully.

“Academic advising is integral to fulfilling the teaching and learning mission of higher education. Through academic advising, students learn to become members of their higher education community, to think critically about their roles and responsibilities as students, and to prepare to be educated citizens of a democratic society and a global community. Academic advising engages students beyond their own world views, while acknowledging their individual characteristics, values, and motivations as they enter, move through, and exit the institution.”

9 National Academic Advising Association website:
<http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Clearinghouse/AdvisingIssues/Concept-advising-introduction.htm/>
effective as possible; however, sometimes keeping abreast of institutional changes and academic regulations isn't enough.\textsuperscript{10}

At Lehigh, there are many excellent support systems, but not a comprehensive advising process or program for even the majority of our students. This is an area where the University has historically struggled to find appropriate and lasting solutions.

3.IV.C.1.i College or Program Affiliation
All students at Lehigh begin by affiliating with a specific college or program, and this decision determines the kind of advising they will receive. When high school seniors apply for admission, they must indicate which of the undergraduate colleges or programs they wish to attend. They can choose one of the three colleges (CAS, CBE or RCEAS), the IBE program in Business or Engineering, the Computer Science and Business Inter-Collegiate Program, Arts/Engineering, the new IDEAS program in either Arts & Sciences or Engineering, or the new South Mountain College program. Once admitted, the student is expected to enter the University as a member of that college or program.

That affiliation is formally non-binding. Once admitted to any college or program, the student is free to request transfer to any other. During the summer before the first year, it is common for a number of incoming students (often 20-30) to request a change of affiliation. Over the course of the first year an even larger number of students opt to change their program or college affiliation. This can be done by completing a request form, gaining the signatures of administrators from his/her current college and desired new college, and submitting the form to the Registrar’s Office. While the student may opt to meet with an advisor before choosing to make a change, this is not a required part of the process. Further, should the student have specific questions about his or her proposed new curriculum, the advisor – a member of the student’s “home” school – will rarely have the training or information necessary to answer those questions.

After the first year of college and throughout a student’s academic career, they may still choose to switch to a different curriculum (though students may need to take prerequisite courses to get on track for certain majors). Some choose to switch more than once. With each change, the student is assigned a new advisor based upon the advising system of the new college or program that he/she has entered. The fluidity with which a student can change programs at Lehigh is a great asset to the University. Students can change the entire course of study more than once, without having to transfer to another institution. This is a great aid to student retention and is a distinctive feature that attracts many prospective students. These opportunities, however, only serve to underscore the need for continuities in the advising system, so that students receive consistent and coordinated advice as they negotiate their academic affiliations during the first year and beyond.

At this time, the three undergraduate colleges have vastly different advising processes for first-year students. In CAS, students are enrolled in a course designed for incoming students (Arts 1), and taught by their faculty advisor. RCEAS assigns students to a faculty member in the department in which the incoming student has expressed an interest. All first-year students in CBE are assigned to a single professional advisor who is assisted by upper-class Peer Mentors. Once they have declared a major, students in any of the colleges are assigned a faculty advisor from within the department of that major.

3.IV.C.1.ii The Challenge

Given the fluidity with which students can change colleges and programs, the University’s challenge is to define the role of the advisor and develop processes that will provide all undergraduate students with equally effective and appropriate experiences. Which model of student advising is best for Lehigh? Is one model right for all colleges? To address this question, it’s useful to review some options, considering a variety of models of advising that are being used at colleges and universities within the United States.

According to the National Resource Center for the Freshman Year Experience and Students in Transition, full-time teaching faculty and professional staff advisors are largely responsible for all advising. Each model has certain advantages as well as limitations.

- Full-time Teaching Faculty: The great strength of using faculty members as advisors is that they can provide students with insight into their specific areas of study and help them to see the relationship of courses within the field. Another obvious strength is their credibility with students, staff, parents, and other faculty members. Limitations are their lack of availability to students, the generally low priority that they place on advising, their limited knowledge of student development, and need for training.

- Professional Full-time Advisors: Advantages of using professional advisors are their easy accessibility for students, the high priority they place on advising (since it’s their primary role), and their generally good knowledge of student development and the rules and requirements of a variety of programs. Limitations include high cost to the University and the challenge posed by the credibility that professional advisors have with some faculty.

3.IV.C.1.iii Models for Consideration

Several models for advising are discussed in First-Year Academic Advising, a publication of the National Resource Center for the Freshman Experience and Students in Transition.

- Faculty-only: The faculty-only advising model is usually decentralized within academic units. It benefits from the fact that the advisors have great knowledge of their own discipline. This model also has the value of not requiring any additional salaries or costs. Problems include inconsistent quality, access, and commitment, as well as limited knowledge of programs in other units.

- Supplementary: All faculty members are required to serve as advisors, but an advising center serves as a central resource for both faculty and students. In many instances the center also coordinates the faculty advising process. With no authority to approve academic transactions, however, the center has limited credibility.

- Dual: Each student has two advisors, a faculty member who is responsible for advising related to the student’s area of study and a professional advisor who assists with academic policies and registration procedures. In this model, the advising center has responsibility for all undeclared students and for coordinating campus-wide advising efforts. Shortcomings of this model are the possibility of students

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attempting to pit one advisor against the other, as well as the need for continual communication between advisors.

- **Total-Intake**: All students are assigned directly to an advisor in the advising center. After students have reached a University-determined landmark or condition, such as declaring a major or completing their first-year, they are re-assigned to a faculty advisor. This model has the benefit of providing all students with well-trained advisors who are prepared to help them make the transition to college.

- **Self-Contained**: All advising is provided by the advising center throughout the student’s academic experience. Strengths are accessibility, advising focus, and central location. The main weakness is that it does not provide students with the wealth of discipline-specific faculty knowledge or with the opportunity to interact with a faculty advisor.

The challenge for Lehigh is to provide high-quality, consistent advising for all undergraduate students, ideally one that captures the advantages of both faculty and professional advising. At present, various colleges use different models (e.g., CAS has a “faculty-only” system, while CBE deploys a version of the “total-intake” model, using peer advisors prior to declaring a major. Hence, first-year students who switch colleges or programs must cope with different systems and lose any sense of continuity in advising.

The “supplementary” and “dual” systems of advising are hybrid models that employ both faculty and professional staff advisors; these models are, therefore, of particular interest for Lehigh. In both cases, the tradition of faculty advising, which is particularly strong in certain colleges, is retained, but the duties of advising are eased because students have access to a professional advisor in a central advising center. The faculty advisor is primary, but the professional advisor provides a check, a safety net, and a resource for information outside a faculty member’s department or discipline. The professional advisor also provides continuity should a student switch colleges, programs, or majors. The challenge of these models is division of labor and coordination between advisors.

The two models differ in terms of division of labor. In the supplementary model, the staff of a relatively small advising center provides as-needed assistance and coordination, with faculty doing the primary work of advising. In the dual model, each first-year student has both a professional and a faculty advisor, and the advising center typically plays a stronger role in coordinating campus-wide advising efforts and focuses on issues relevant to first-year students. The National Resource Center for the First Year recommends that four-year colleges employ the dual model of advising, stating that:

“Student-faculty interaction has a stronger relationship to student satisfaction with the college experience than any other student or institutional characteristic. Faculty, however, cannot do it by themselves, thus the need for an advising center staffed by professional advisors/counselors, peers and/or paraprofessionals. The advising office would interact regularly with other offices, services, and departments on campus. The advising center would have responsibility for advisor training, evaluation, and recognition/reward; development of advising handbooks;

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development, maintenance, and distribution of advising files; and coordination of the freshman seminar program.”

The Subcommittee recommends that Lehigh explore a hybrid model of advising (i.e., supplementary or dual) for first-year students, across all colleges. Such a system would provide continuous and consistent advising for every student, regardless of his/her program, college, or major – and regardless of how many times those affiliations changed. This system also would provide trained, professional advisors with current and up-to-date knowledge of the University and of student development, who could support students as they make crucial decisions about their goals and programs of study. These same advisors would serve as an important and valuable resource for faculty, who would remain the primary academic advisor to students at Lehigh.

3.IV.C.2  Recommendation #2: Create a Common Intellectual Experience for First-Year Students

Each year Lehigh University welcomes more than 1,100 new students to campus as members of its incoming class. These students have their own distinctive backgrounds and personalities, represent a great variety of perspectives, and display multiple interests and abilities. Lehigh values this diversity – indeed, seeks to cultivate it through the communications and deliberations that constitute the admissions process. When these students arrive at Lehigh, they encounter a small University that embraces four colleges and offers a wide range of academic programs and numerous opportunities for intellectual exploration and growth, both curricular and extra-curricular. This richness of intellectual life also is something that Lehigh greatly values and seeks to maintain.

3.IV.C.2.i The Challenge: Richness and Diversity Without the Sacrifice of Intellectual Community

Lehigh is a complex institution, but one that has traditionally placed a great deal of emphasis on fostering a powerful sense of community among its students, faculty, and staff. As the University’s Mission Statement adduces, “Lehigh is an intellectually unified community of learners, and in this sense Lehigh is an integral university.” Of course, vibrant intellectual communities thrive only in the presence of the sort of diversity of perspective that is prized at Lehigh; a stifling homogeneity and the invocation of some rigid consensus of opinion are poisonous for such communities. Nevertheless, some common sense of purpose is essential and, if any genuine community is to be achieved, certain basic values and traditions must be shared. And so the diversity of the University, of its people and its programs, represents a vital resource but also a significant challenge for educators engaged in the ongoing task of creating an academic community.

The first-year experience is crucial to success in this regard. There is significant evidence that the first-year experience is critical, in more general terms, to laying a solid foundation for academic success in later years. It is widely recognized that an early and positive relationship with faculty contributes to student persistence in meeting and surmounting

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15 Lehigh University Catalogue, 2007-08, p. 4.
academic challenges. Meaningful relations with peers are similarly advantageous. New students need to feel connected to the place and its people before they can begin to prosper.

At the same time, it is important for first-year students to understand the mission and purpose of a university like Lehigh. This needs to be communicated in direct and positive ways, and should not be gleaned in a serendipitous fashion. Neither should students discover by accident what is expected of them during their time at Lehigh, what resources are available to them in their endeavors, or what opportunities they have to transform the University even as they are being shaped by it.

While different students will exploit different resources and opportunities as they pursue a great many different paths, they should always be respectful of each other and also mindful of Lehigh’s basic values and traditions. They will quickly become attached as members to smaller sub-communities within the University, academic and many non-academic units, each with its own distinctive values and purposes. To some extent, educators must compete with these smaller groups for the attention of first-year students, consistently reminding them of their membership in and responsibility towards the greater intellectual community of Lehigh. Thus, all of the conventional wisdom about “first impressions” and “setting the right tone” is relevant to an understanding of the importance of the first-year experience.

One could argue that it is sufficient for each student to have a positive first-year experience without the necessity of promoting a common intellectual experience for the first year. But such an argument is inconsistent with the vision of Lehigh as a genuine intellectual community. Such a community transcends individual colleges and academic departments, specific groups and clubs, residential units and athletic teams, and nurtures a habit of conversation and inquiry that cuts across a diversity of disciplines and perspectives. The primary task of a common intellectual experience is the inculcation of just such a habit in students, their invitation and initiation into those great conversations that lie at the heart of a university education. The challenge is how to effect such conversation across the boundaries that separate students at Lehigh.

3.IV.C.2.ii The Present State of Affairs

Lehigh is comprised of four distinct colleges; most first-year students are offered admission to one of the three colleges that involve undergraduate instruction (the College of Education is primarily devoted to graduate students). While the boundaries between colleges remain permeable for first-year students (who can switch affiliations almost as easily as changing majors), the colleges offer distinctive programs of study that represent different cultures within the University. Because of the intensive, highly structured curricula in certain colleges, first-year students are routed onto separate tracks, with few points of convergence.

Of course, students from various colleges may take some classes together, during the first year or so, as they fulfill distribution requirements or take electives, but the centrifugal force exerted by separate colleges is stronger than any centripetal force for a common academic experience. Each college has its own separate requirements, including some courses that are basic components of the first-year academic experience in those colleges (the first year seminars in CAS, for example, or Engineering 5 in RCEAS). But these courses will typically enroll only students in the college for which they are a requirement. Thus, they preclude rather than facilitate intellectual engagement with students across the University. Consequently, it is easy and natural for students to become immersed in the colleges, identifying so strongly with them that the colleges become “silos” from which it can be difficult for students to break out of or transcend.
The only courses that are presently required of all undergraduates are the first-year English composition and literature courses – a two-semester sequence for many students and a one-semester course for some (although, as the test scores of incoming students rise, larger numbers are placing out of one or both semesters, since exemption is based on those scores). These courses do, in fact, bring together in one classroom conversation a broad range of students representative of the University population as a whole. Yet the primary mission of these courses – that of helping students to develop academic writing skills – means that while they can play a role the composition and literature courses cannot assume the entire burden of providing a common intellectual experience, developing a powerful sense of intellectual community, inculcating a genuinely interdisciplinary habit of conversation, etc.

3.IV.C.2.iii Proposals and Recommendations
A simple way to provide intellectual community during the first years of college would be to require – for all students, regardless of college affiliation – additional courses as part of a core curriculum, perhaps focused on current or enduring issues. However, this solution encounters two difficulties, one practical, another philosophical. The first difficulty is that the curricula in certain programs cannot easily accommodate additional required courses, so that some current requirements would need to be modified or eliminated. And a second issue is that Lehigh has steered away from a core curriculum, preferring a flexible system of requirements and an emphasis on learning skills in contexts of application. Thus it seems prudent to explore alternative proposals for fostering intellectual community in the first year.

One alternative for creating a common intellectual experience would entail the expansion and development of in evoLUtion, the University’s new student orientation program. In this program, first-year students are required to participate in post-orientation meetings. This four-day experience begins in the fall semester before classes begin. The program goal is to assist new students’ transition to Lehigh, both academically and with respect to student life. Because of the amount of information to be shared and the number of events and programs scheduled during that time period, three required follow-up meetings facilitated by an upper-class student Orientation Leader were developed. Lehigh recognizes that this is a key opportunity for students to cultivate relationships with their peers, but also an ideal setting for faculty to be more intimately involved in the lives of our students.

This program has been an effective one and is constantly evolving. However, the Subcommittee is proposing that it could be the germ of an idea that might be further developed in a number of potentially exciting ways: All entering students would become active members of a learning community that would consist of 15-20 students (drawn from each of the colleges) and led, ideally, by a faculty and/or professional staff member, assisted by an upper-class student. These cohorts would not only facilitate relations between faculty and students and increase retention, but also embody the idea that the University is a seamless learning environment in which education occurs in a natural and ongoing fashion. Non-faculty as well as faculty would be involved. The role of Peer Mentors in the learning process would be sharply accentuated. The line between “curricular” and “extra-curricular” would be effectively blurred in this attempt to think of education holistically – as something that occurs at all times and in diverse places. The lines between the colleges as well as those between specific academic departments would also fade for the purposes of this unique conversation.
What would the conversation be about? What sorts of activities might the members of these learning communities engage in? A number of interesting strategies have been discussed in a preliminary fashion and are being proposed as a menu of possibilities. One strategy is to extend the summer reading project so that instead of being “once and done” with the book discussion in late August, the conversation continues with periodic meetings organized around other readings, films, lectures, performances, etc. These discussions might be coordinated with visiting speakers or with special events being held on campus. Every first-year student could be encouraged or perhaps even required to keep a journal reflecting on the first-year experience; journal writing would then form the basis for discussion in cohorts. The use of computer/web technology could be used to develop community among the students within cohorts even prior to their arrival at Lehigh, as well as to maintain connections between meetings.

Because the summer reading program is already established, it seems relatively straightforward to extend it to a semester- or year-long project, perhaps proceeding incrementally to see how long the groups can be sustained. One “cost” of such a program, of course, is faculty and staff involvement; there would need to be intrinsic benefits and perhaps other incentives, recognizing that the most appropriate individuals for this project are already heavily involved in other activities. There also is a question about whether each cohort should read a single book and pursue a common theme, or whether incoming students should select themes from a list of choices, grouping them according to interest. Both approaches have advantages: A common theme promotes campus-wide conversation about salient issues (diversity, global perspectives, etc.), while choice of topic may spur involvement and creativity. For example, some topics might encourage alternative forms of inquiry, such as a particular “social justice” project or activity (most likely in the local community, thus also facilitating town-gown relations, and effectively blurring the artificial line between the University and the “real world”). A yet more ambitious example might be to have several cohorts produce a film about their first-year experience, a kind of moving meditation on what was most salient in that experience; the year could then culminate in a weekend film festival with the awarding of prizes for the best films produced.

The details of themes, topics, and specific structures must be worked out later by a group charged with this task. The “evoLUtion” program provides a starting place for such a project. The cohorts that are assembled during this orientation program are of the sort (composition and size) that the Subcommittee envisions as being ideal for on-going discussions during the first year. It is recommended, therefore, that the University find a way to promote a common intellectual experience for first-year students, an experience that makes inquiry and exploration a priority and that enables significant conversations across the boundaries that college affiliations pose.

3.IV.C.3 Recommendation #3: Pursue Opportunities in the Residential Environment

First-year students at Lehigh have many opportunities for co-curricular engagement in areas such as athletics, the arts, and a wide array of student clubs and organizations. But one area that is virtually universal and powerfully influential is the experience of living together. The residential environment presents significant opportunities to contribute to student learning. This is especially true for first-year students as they make the transition to University life. The residence hall is where first-year students will spend the bulk of their time, forging friendships, exploring the mysteries of freedom and responsibility, and adjusting to living with complete strangers – some from similar backgrounds, some with different academic...
and personal interests, but all who share the dream of success at Lehigh. It is in this crucible of excitement, energy, and varying degrees of uncertainty and apprehension that tremendous potential exists to provide an important foundation for student growth and learning.

A decidedly residential campus, Lehigh houses 75 percent of its undergraduate population on campus. The vast majority of the remainder lives in private accommodations within a few blocks of campus. All first- and second-year students, except those commuting from home (less than 1%), are required to live on campus. Interest by upper-class students in on-campus accommodations exceeds current supply and creation of several hundred additional housing spaces is under serious consideration.

Residential staffing includes six live-in Residence Life Coordinators, who are master’s level professionals, along with more than 90 Gryphons, who are student staff selected on the basis of their maturity and interpersonal skills. Together this resident staff takes part in a comprehensive training program to enable them to fulfill the wide range of responsibilities inherent in their roles.

By all traditional measures, the residence life program at Lehigh has been very successful. Resident satisfaction, as measured by the annual American College and University Housing Officers survey, is consistently excellent along a variety of factors, including performance by Gryphon, the ability and opportunity to participate in activities and interact with others on their floor, and the ability to solve problems and develop leadership skills. Clearly, the residential experience has contributed to a successful transition, enabling students to feel a sense of belonging achieved through participation in a variety of social and/or community building activities and the formation of solid friendships.

3.IV.C.3.i Focus on Learning Outcomes
In recent years, a new paradigm of student learning has emerged, one that reflects the importance of the interaction that happens both inside and outside of the classroom. A monograph on contemporary approaches to student learning states, “...co-curricular settings are critical to learning because of the opportunities they provide students to learn through action, contemplation, reflection, and emotional engagement as well as information acquisition.”16 Herein lies both the challenge and opportunity to enrich the residential experience and recognize and embrace the living setting as a learning laboratory that can augment and complement experience in the academic classroom.

Shifting the focus of the residential experience at Lehigh emerged out of a comprehensive strategic planning effort undertaken by the Student Affairs Office in 2002. Key goals were identified (Appendix 2.21) and a process of establishing intentional learning outcomes for all services, programs, and activities was developed.

3.IV.C.3.ii Developmental Competencies in Support of Learning Outcomes
Conversations with colleagues in the Academic Deans’ offices regarding core skills prompted a group of Student Affairs staff members to create what became known as the developmental competencies model. The purpose was to identify key areas and specific skills in support of student learning. Four areas were identified:

- Intellectual Exploration: Ability to develop an interest in and therefore adopt strategies and behaviors to advance students’ cognitive and academic abilities;

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exploration of, not only how to learn/integrate academic experiences, but also to begin to understand and develop an inherent drive for/value of lifelong learning.

- **Individual Identity Development:** Exploration and understanding of personal attitudes, beliefs and feelings about self; student's need to (re)visit the question, “Who am I?”

- **Interpersonal Relationships:** Identification, understanding, and implementation of the skills necessary to build relationships in life; the ability to understand who one is in relationship to others; ability to evaluate the type and quality of interactions with others.

- **Community Development:** Feeling a part of the academic community and, therefore, developing a commitment to broadly shared ideas and interests; working together for a common purpose; developing a sense of personal responsibility for promoting the growth of the larger community.

The model was embraced by colleagues in OFYE as well as by the Office of Residence Life. OFYE programs include a summer reading as selected by a faculty and staff committee, formal sessions focusing on individual values and interpersonal relationships, and a collaborative program with the Community Service Office utilizing a service-learning model to engage students with the local community. Residence Life staff began to design programs for students addressing one of the four major themes. Traditional social programs were augmented by activities and events designed to promote student growth in one of the four major dimensions.

Recognizing the value of on-campus living led to the establishment of a residency requirement for all first- and second-year students. Implemented in fall 2005, this requirement provided the foundation for applying the developmental competencies model to programming throughout the residence hall system. Community living requires that first-year students make numerous decisions that have ethical, moral, spiritual, personal, and/or interpersonal implications. Teaching skills and providing opportunities for first-year students to examine and reflect upon who they are, what they think, and how they will manage their newly acquired independence provides a framework for thoughtful, informed decisions.

Programming based on intentional learning outcomes enables residence life staff to develop programs that support Lehigh’s educational mission. The following excerpt from the Residence Life Programming Vision document (Appendix 3.36) underscores that point:

“It is our shared responsibility to expose students to core, fundamental competencies that transcend their experiences across academic, co-curricular, social and personal areas of development. The Institution’s ability to fulfill this commitment is greatly enhanced when we work together as a community where living and learning are not constrained by boundaries, but fully integrated and coordinated across all facets of campus life.”

**3.IV.C.3.iii Affiliated Living**

Cognizant of the potential of residentially based learning opportunities and encouraged that this potential is increasingly appreciated by key academic colleagues, a group of Student Affairs staff has developed a preliminary program plan designed to further expand residential options. This program plan augments traditional residential arrangements with communities based on affiliation with a particular theme.
The overarching goal is to provide a variety of residential options for first- and second-year students that support the academic vision of the University while providing development opportunities for personal growth. Institutional priorities such as increased awareness of and support for diversity, globalization, and leadership are among the themes under consideration.

Discussions with faculty colleagues, particularly those in CAS, and several students interested in theme-based residential experiences led to the creation of several exciting outcomes, including the Global Citizenship House and South Mountain College. South Mountain College is designed to bring together a community of students and faculty dedicated to the exploration of intellectually exciting and practically significant topics of investigation. Its guiding philosophy is that the problems that confront us as individuals and as citizens are so thoroughly interconnected that the only hope of disentangling our difficulties is through creative, critical, and comparative thinking across multiple academic disciplines.

During the 2006-07 academic year, affiliated living program themes included multiculturalism (UMOJA House), globalization (Global Citizenship House), healthy lifestyles (Substance Free Living) and leadership (ROTC House). In addition to those programs being continued, a living unit focused on environmental issues (Green House) is in place for 2007-08.

3.IV.C.3.iv Moving Forward
Advancing this effort represents a significant undertaking that will require clarity of purpose and a commitment to long-term change. Three fundamental building blocks for success are identified: Institutional commitment to the concept, faculty engagement and training, and facility renovations.

Given the human and fiscal resources necessary to fulfill the learning potential inherent in the residential experience, success will be contingent upon broad-based awareness of the needs and opportunities associated with this venture, as well as an institutional commitment to take full advantage of the powerful influence that the campus living environment has on student learning. Unleashing the full potential of this effort will require a partnership of senior academic and administrative leaders, extending ultimately to faculty, staff, and students.

Faculty must be engaged in the transformation of the residential environment. Some are excited by the prospect, but enthusiasm alone is not enough. Education and training in relevant constructs of contemporary learning models will equip them to be full and productive participants in this effort. Ensuring that the faculty reward structure provides proper recognition and compensation for those who play an active role in this effort will reflect the priority assigned to this expectation.

The importance of adequate facilities to support learning in the residential setting must also be recognized and addressed. A number of residence halls that house first-year students have not undergone major renovations for 40-50 years. Student rooms in some buildings are cramped and public spaces are limited. For living-learning programs to be successful, there should comfortable, contemporary living accommodations and adequate program spaces to foster educational activities.

While there are challenges to address, there is growing recognition of – and excitement for – the potential benefit to student learning inherent in integrating academic and student life at Lehigh.
3.IV.C.4 Recommendation #4: Provide Coordination, Communication, and Centralized Responsibility

3.IV.C.4.i The Challenge

The faculty and professional staff who work with first-year students at Lehigh tend to be quite dedicated, and through their efforts the needs of most incoming students are met. Indeed, for most students, the experience of orientation, advising, residence life, first-year courses, etc., is positive and productive. From a broader vantage point, however, the elements of the first-year experience at Lehigh are compartmentalized and loosely coordinated. Lehigh is indeed more a collection of units, each with specific missions, than it is a tightly knit organization, and this situation has ramifications for the first-year experience. Specifically, it means that various groups are pursuing their own objectives, without sufficient coordination or communication across boundaries – such as those between academic units and Student Affairs or the divisions within the three undergraduate colleges.

The need to address this situation is a challenge posed by previous reports on the first-year experience, as well as by our own discussions. For example, the Task Force on the First Year and Beyond concluded in its 2005 report to the Provost that the key to a successful program was “removal of all boundaries between the academic and non-academic wings of the university.” Similarly, in this self-study – whether the topic has been general education, advising, or student services – a common finding has been that first-year programs tend to be separated by college or divided between academic units and student affairs. The result, at times, is duplication of effort, uncoordinated initiatives, and diffusion of responsibility.

The Dean of Students Office has an Office of First-Year Studies, with a director who manages orientation and coordinates a variety of co-curricular programs, such as the summer reading program. Unfortunately, the Student Affairs part of campus – residence life and other units that deal with first-year students – is separated from the academic part by a division of labor even stronger than the one that separates the colleges from one another. While faculty may know little about orientation, student life, or residence hall programs, it’s also the case that personnel in Student Affairs may not understand the details of academic advising or programs based in the colleges.

Moreover, it’s difficult to say just who is “in charge” of the first-year experience at Lehigh. The University is not unique in this regard, since “the absence of centralized or focused responsibility for the first year, in either the curriculum or co-curriculum, is a central problem on many campuses. Various departments, divisions, and individuals interact with new students with little or no connection.” At Lehigh, the chief academic officer, the Provost, exercises broad oversight of the first-year experience, but this oversight is just one of a large set of demanding responsibilities. Within the colleges, responsibility for first-year programs falls to the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies, someone who also has broad responsibility for many aspects of undergraduate education (there are no academic deans whose major responsibility is first-year studies). Barefoot notes that “when first-year initiatives are one of multiple responsibilities in a major institutional division or for a senior administrator, they are less likely to command focused attention. Rather, they become just one more in a long list of important responsibilities.”

17 White et al. p. 6.
Within Student Affairs at Lehigh, the Vice Provost for Student Affairs delegates responsibility for orientation and other activities for first-year students to an Assistant Dean of Students for OFYE. This Assistant Dean focuses on the transition to college and issues that arise during the first year – counseling first-year students and monitoring academic progress, as well as coordinating programs and events. The Assistant Dean supervises the Coordinator of First-Year Student Programs, whose main responsibility is the orientation program. An additional duty of the Assistant Dean for First-Year Experience is to “collaborate with and be a resource for academic deans and related departments to assess curricular and co-curricular issues and efforts for new students.” (Appendix 3.37) This duty entails communicating with the Associate Deans for Undergraduate Studies in the three colleges, and these lines of communication appear to be open and productive. Nevertheless, the Assistant Dean of Students has little authority outside OFYE, and the position is not designed to promote institutional leadership or centralized responsibility, particularly in academic or curricular programs. In short, because the Assistant Dean has circumscribed authority and is affiliated with the Dean of Students office, he/she can play a largely supporting role in coordinating the broad range of curricular and co-curricular activities targeted to first-year students.

3.IV.C.4.ii The Goal: Coordination and Communication

What is the best way to coordinate the multiple programs and initiatives targeted to first-year students, and how can communication among the various participants in these endeavors be strengthened? One point seems fairly clear: Someone (or some group) needs to be in charge of the first-year experience, with authority that crosses or transcends college boundaries, as well as the division of labor between student affairs and academic programs. As Barefoot concludes from her national survey of first-year programs, it is “highly unlikely that the first year on any campus will be a coherent, seamless experience unless some person or persons are in charge.”

In sum, the situation at Lehigh seems to require an organizational structure that will provide a locus of authority and accountability for the First Year Experience, one that crosses college boundaries and closes the gap between academic units and student affairs. Faculty involvement is particularly critical, yet because faculty identify with fields, departments, and colleges, it is easy for them to lose sight of first-year students as a distinctive group or the first-year experience as a special enterprise. Without leadership and advocacy, the first-year experience becomes one responsibility among more immediate and pressing priorities. Hence the need for a person, group, or office to keep first-year students on the agenda.

3.IV.C.4.iii Options

One option is to establish a new administrative office and position – perhaps a “Deputy Provost for the First-Year Experience” – to provide leadership and oversight at a level above the individual colleges. What recommends this option is the fact that one administrator would be dedicated to and responsible for all aspects of the first year at Lehigh. By creating an office of “First-Year Studies” at a fairly high level, the senior administration would signal their commitment to first-year programs and initiatives. A centralized office, with sufficient support (fiscal and personnel), would be able to coordinate programs and ensure communication among the multiple academic and non-academic units that play an important role in first-year transitions. However, a new administrative office, at the Provost’s level,

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would achieve coordination at the expense of increased bureaucracy and hierarchical structure. These are important issues, because a trend toward burgeoning administrative positions concerns many faculty members, as does the issue of faculty control of academic programs.

Another option might entail efforts to achieve more centralization and coordination without creating a new office. For example, it might be advantageous to formalize the current model in which the Assistant Dean of First-Year Experience (Dean of Student’s Office) confers with the three academic deans, perhaps creating a formal “Dean’s Council for the First-Year Experience.” Adapting the structure that currently exists, this group would consist of the Associate Deans of Undergraduate Studies and the Assistant Dean from OFYE. A Dean’s Council would strive to build cooperation and promote communication among the colleges and with Academic Affairs, and it would work through consensus rather than centralized leadership. However, a council would have few dedicated resources. It would also rely on the initiative of associate deans who have many other responsibilities and projects (This council might be more effective if each college were to appoint an Assistant Dean for First-Year Studies, though it’s not clear how the colleges would view this additional administrative position).

A different option would be to seek faculty (rather than administrative) leadership for first-year programs. The argument for faculty leadership is simply that their involvement is the key to any successful first-year initiative. Barefoot et al. conclude their analysis of 13 examples of institutional excellence in the first year of college by noting:

“Excellence in the first year relies on the direct involvement of an institution’s faculty. While we recognize the important role that all other constituent groups, especially student affairs professionals, play in implementing a successful first year, the experience of these thirteen campuses would argue that involvement of faculty is a must...[W]ithout the support of a meaningful number of faculty, first-year efforts will inevitably suffer a kind of second-class citizenship in the academy. Among these thirteen campuses, we discovered that the key to faculty support is faculty ownership. First-year initiatives in which faculty members have had a major role at the point of conception and initial implementation are more likely to be sustained.”

In its report to the Provost (2005), the Task Force on the First Year Experience at Lehigh recommended establishing an ongoing standing committee of the faculty, a committee that would report directly to the President/Provost. The advantage of this approach is that responsibility would flow from the “bottom up,” generated by the group that would implement any initiatives or recommendations, rather than from the “top down,” in the form of administrative mandates. Ideally, if faculty were managing the first-year experience, there would be more faculty engagement and support. However, creating a new standing committee would require a change to the Rules and Procedures; moreover, standing committees typically have no resources, since they usually provide policy review and oversight.

An informal model of faculty leadership has worked at some institutions, such as Ball State University, which was identified as one of the 13 institutions with an exemplary

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22 White et al.
program for first-year students. Ball State has a “Freshman Learning Council” (FLC), an ad hoc group of faculty and staff that have direct involvement in the first-year experience. The FLC was created to increase communication between departments and units that serve first-year students, and one of its main functions is simply to exchange information and generate initiatives for the institution to consider. Although the council has no formal governance power, Swing and Cutright found that it has influenced many key administrative decisions. They conclude that the Freshman Learning Council is an “excellent example of an informal structure at work in the first year of college. Although it has no budget and no line authority, it has tremendous voice in the institution and a long history of advocacy for first-year students. The FLC, comprising mostly mid-level managers and faculty who teach first-year students, has … become a keystone of first-year initiatives.”23 In fact, while “lacking in formal power, the group’s power of advocacy and grassroots strength has established it as a core source of first-year initiatives.”24

3.IV.C.4.iv Conclusions and Recommendations
There are two broad approaches to providing leadership and centralized responsibility for the first-year experience. The first is to create an administrative position above the separate colleges, probably in the Provost’s Office. This position that would have the resources (fiscal and personnel) and centralized authority that are needed to enhance visibility, advocate for support, reward faculty participation, and effect coordination and communication across institutional divisions. But this approach encourages administrative bureaucracy and results in a top-down management style that divests faculty and professional staff of their leadership responsibilities.

The alternative is a structure – office, committee, council, etc. – at a lower level in the administrative hierarchy, where representatives from the three undergraduate colleges and the Dean of Students Office can coordinate activities, develop initiatives, and advocate for the first-year experience. The success of this kind of structure relies on the dedication, charisma, and persuasive power of individuals, who are willing to take up the cause of first-year students.

The next step is for faculty, staff, and senior leadership to weigh the merits of these two approaches in the context of Lehigh’s priorities. The Subcommittee urges that steps be taken, as soon as possible, to strengthen the lines of communication, coordination, and responsibility for the first-year experience. Without these elements, many of the other recommendations in this chapter will remain good ideas that lack the leadership to implement them or the structures to support and sustain them.

3.V Implementing the Recommendations
The purpose of this self-study was to develop recommendations that would enhance the overall quality of the University’s first-year experience programs and services. The four recommendations generated by this study are to:

1. Implement a hybrid advising model.
2. Create a common intellectual experience for first-year students.
3. Pursue opportunities in the residential environment.
4. Provide coordination, communication, and centralized responsibility.

24 Swing and Cutright, 308.
Conducted in the context of Lehigh’s Decennial Accreditation Review process, the work of the Subcommittee was inextricably linked to several of the Standards of Excellence as defined by the MSCHE. The operating premise of the Subcommittee has been that undertaking a candid, thorough review of the subject and generating strategies for genuine improvement reflects the very essence of the accreditation process. Thus, the dual goals are not only compatible but, in a very real sense, interdependent.

The Subcommittee acknowledges and intends that Lehigh build upon the many excellent existing first-year programs and services. At the same time, it is recognized that there are several areas that can and should be improved. This chapter’s contribution is to identify areas that have the potential to enrich the first-year experience for students and propose options for thoughtful, thorough consideration.

Good ideas alone do not guarantee good outcomes. Successful implementation requires a process tailored to the unique nature and current circumstances of the institution and require the appropriate balance of patience and persistence.

Certain changes are being proposed that will require additional program and personnel resources as well as potential enhancements in the faculty reward structure. For example, one recommendation suggests a paradigm shift in the nature and importance of academic advising with a consequent adjustment of the role of faculty and staff in the delivery of academic advising. Clarity of desired outcomes and a compelling case for the return on the investment of time, money, and effort will be essential.

A successful implementation strategy will engage key senior leadership (senior officers, College Deans, Deputy Provosts, etc.) from the very beginning of the planning and throughout the execution stages. It is critical that faculty and senior level leadership embrace the initiatives. Both the obstacles and opportunities need to be understood. The University needs to identify if and how the recommendations described above support, complement, augment, or conflict with college and Student Affairs strategic plans. The University should endeavor to build on the points of intersection/synergy and reconcile the points of dissonance/competition.

A presidential transition in summer 2006 brought Dr. Alice P. Gast to Lehigh. Since her arrival, Dr. Gast has instilled a spirit of self-reflection and awareness, and a focus on all that is central to Lehigh’s mission. Her quest for excellence and engagement extends to all endeavors and all members of the academic community. On-going discussions of the senior leadership are currently underway to identify both short- and long-term goals consistent with Lehigh’s core values and integral to the fulfillment of the University’s mission. Thus, the Subcommittee believes that Lehigh is ideally poised to benefit from consideration of the ideas presented in the self-study.

An aggressive, yet realistic, timeline for deliberation and implementation should be developed. Consideration and implementation of the recommendations of this report should not preclude individual units in academic or Student Affairs from continuing to develop and enhance their first-year programs and services. The intention of this Subcommittee is that those currently working in this arena will use the spirit of the above recommendations as a touchstone for direction and decisions.

Proposed timelines for implementation:

- Summer 2007: Preliminary recommendations presented to Middle States Accreditation Steering Committee and senior officers for endorsement and/or revisions.
• Fall 2007: Solicit campus feedback on the report; revise as appropriate.
• Spring 2008: Receive and incorporate feedback from Middle States site visit team.
• Summer 2008: Senior leadership develops strategic plan for review and implementation.
• Academic Year 2008-09: Provide extended period for campus engagement; implementation plan to be affirmed/modified; short- and long-term budget implications to be identified and requests submitted in fall 2009.
• Academic Year 2009-10: Initiate planning and coordination for initial implementation based on budget decisions.
• Fall 2010: First phase of actual program/service implementation begins.