Academic Plan
2012 – 2017
Introduction

Achieving academic excellence (for students and faculty) is an ideal embodied in Our Lady of the Lake College’s Mission, Purpose, and Goals; the goals of the two Schools; and the curricular outcomes of departments and programs. Pursuing excellence is likewise fundamental to the learning outcomes of individual courses, the expectations of individual faculty members, and the consistent rigor guiding their scholarly work and assessments of student performance.

Academic Excellence

This plan respects the diverse ways that faculty define and enact academic excellence and rigor in their different programs and departments. As a result, this plan does not stipulate a single definition of “academic” or a single metric to determine “excellence” and “rigor.” The plan acknowledges that faculty across the College challenge students to achieve excellence through rigorous academic work as it is understood in their particular disciplinary and professional contexts.

To provide a framework for determining and respecting differing definitions of academic excellence, this Academic Plan identifies expectations for student learning that are shared across the College. Students achieve academic excellence when they:

- meet and exceed expectations, outcomes, standards in their respective programs;
- engage in critical inquiry and integrative learning;
- care, analyze, apply, interpret, integrate, synthesize, evaluate, create, and reflect;
- demonstrate deep, transferable, lasting, holistic learning;
- demonstrate “a desire to understand, a capacity for tolerance, and an ability to appreciate the ethnic and cultural diversity that make up humanity” (College Mission);
- realize their potential as responsible members of society, serving those most in need;
- participate in and contribute to their local and professional communities;
- seek and engage in continuing education and lifelong learning;
- demonstrate understanding that the quest for truth is fundamental to learning; and
- “promote individual and collective social responsibility within the concepts of community, democracy, social justice, and the culture of life” (OLOL College Centennial Compass).

This Academic Plan is informed by the belief that our “academic” work - challenging students to achieve academic excellence through faculty commitments to intellectual integrity and rigor - represents one of several ways the College fulfills its mission. This Plan also recognizes that meaningful academic work thrives in an environment conducive to learning and in a community with a shared understanding that “who we are and how we interact with one another” is as important as “what we are and what we know.” And finally, the Academic Plan recognizes the importance of promoting, sharing and contributing to disciplinary knowledge.
Embracing the Challenges

This Academic Plan, with its vision of how the College can fulfill its promise of academic excellence, challenges the College to maintain appropriate balances. First, we need to promote the humanity of an affirming smile as we educate with and through the spirit. Second, we need to insist on high standards while also demonstrating sensitivity to students’ needs and differences. Finally, we must be mission driven and market smart. This is to say that the faculty is committed to maintaining and increasing the importance of academic quality as the way to improve student retention and to attract quality students.

Pedagogical Commitments

Our Lady of the Lake College faculty members ascribe to five shared pedagogical commitments which will characterize the teaching / learning environment and advance the College’s commitment to academic excellence. Those five pedagogical commitments are: multi-modal instruction & distributed learning environments; reflective practice; scholarship; evidence-based and assessed teaching for learning; and inter-disciplinary collaboration.

Institutional Expectations

In addition, the Academic Plan identifies these specific humanizing institutional expectations: ethical, respectful, and civil behaviors; lived by individuals who are vital and valued contributors to purposeful work, academic or not. The concept of mutuality, the respectful understanding of others’ experiences and talents, undergirds each of these aspirations.

An institutional culture defined by these expectations (and known for interactions reflecting the behaviors inherent in each) enables enriched academic achievements, in their diverse manifestations. In addition, achieving such expectations advances the College mission, manifests its Franciscan heritage, and recognizes the intellectual and academic tradition in that heritage as exemplified by St. Bonaventure, Roger Bacon, and others throughout history. By extending the work our Franciscan sisters began nearly a century ago, the College’s graduates perpetuate their mission.

Professional Development

Institutional attention to professional development will help faculty fulfill their pedagogical commitments and will help faculty and staff achieve the cultural expectations that define the larger contexts within which academic excellence thrives. Through sustained professional development, faculty and staff model the ongoing learning and the commitment to academic excellence that we expect from our students.
INSTITUTIONAL EXPECTATIONS

By demonstrating their desire to achieve these expectations and by increasingly modeling them, faculty and staff will be creating the teaching and learning environment the College seeks for students.

CULTIVATING ETHICAL BEHAVIOR:

Ethical individuals act in the best interests of the community as a whole by transcending personal needs or motives. Basing decisions on knowing and understanding what is just characterizes ethical behavior. Good examples influence the development of integrity and moral values.

The College faculty, staff and administration will engage in activities drawn from the following to cultivate ethical behavior:

- Establishing understanding of Catholic social justice among faculty and students;
- Promoting faculty discussions about ethical behavior and decision-making among faculty, staff and students;
- Establishing, monitoring, and assessing appropriate attention to ethical concerns in all academic programs; and
- Participating in and contributing to national dialogues on ethics, especially but not limited to ethics in higher education.

CULTIVATING RESPECTFUL BEHAVIOR:

In a culture of respect all stakeholders’ contributions are valued and considered. When respect governs, unfailing civility follows. Respectful individuals believe unique perspectives can enhance understanding of humanity.

The College faculty, staff and administration will engage in activities drawn from the following to cultivate respectful behavior:

- Increasing appreciation of others’ abilities and interests;
- Promoting Franciscan values and ideals through explicit behavioral expectations;
- Valuing diversity of faculty, staff and students’ experiential roles and backgrounds; and
- Fostering personal and community accountability for respectful behavior.
CULTIVATING CIVILITY:

Civil individuals abide by a communal code of conduct that determines how they speak and act. Courtesy, politeness and professionalism characterize civil behavior in every context. Holding oneself and others accountable makes this shared expectation real.

The College faculty, staff and administration will engage in activities drawn from the following to cultivate civility:

- Living a shared definition of civility informed by Franciscan values; and
- Promoting lateral accountability for personal and community actions.

CULTIVATING VITALITY:

Vital people manifest life and liveliness. They are especially concerned with, and attuned to, the gift and opportunities of life itself, to their wellness, and to the wellness of others. Infused with energy, they are mentally and physically vigorous and resilient, “of good mind,” and enthusiastic.

The College faculty, staff and administration will engage in activities drawn from the following to cultivate vitality:

- Promoting a holistic view of healthy living for faculty, staff and students;
- Supporting an environment in which individuals can cultivate spiritual aspirations;
- Creating a culture of intellectual curiosity, reflection and contemplation; and
- Promoting the transformative value of community engagement and service.

CULTIVATING VALUED CONTRIBUTORS:

A valued contributor affects others through positively directed motives, aspirations, efforts, and accomplishments. Such individuals are neither too passive nor too aggressive in proposing and pursuing worthy goals. Their efforts and examples bring out the best in others.

The College faculty, staff and administration will engage in activities drawn from the following to cultivate valued contributors:

- Increasing inclusivity in campus activities;
- Creating an environment where all faculty, staff and students feel increasingly safe to share ideas and engage in productive dialogue;
- Promoting opportunities to acknowledge and reward meritorious achievements and behavior; and
- Increasing the visibility of faculty, staff and student work.
CULTIVATING PURPOSE:

Purposeful individuals respond to a calling; a sense of intentional vocation guides their efforts to make positive differences in other’s lives. The purposeful see challenges as opportunities for growth and for meeting potentials, understand the value of their work in the context of others, and are internally motivated.

The College faculty, staff and administration will engage in activities drawn from the following to cultivate purpose:

- Increasing faculty, staff and student understanding and appreciation of vocation;
- Developing greater faculty, staff and student awareness of what it means to be part of an academic community;
- Promoting and practicing Servant Leadership; and
- Promoting active participation in professional communities.

EMBEDDING OUR FRANCISCAN VALUES

It is the values of St. Francis himself that give rise to the five institutional expectations for our College. Understanding “what we do” with our unique gifts as a community committed to Franciscan values shapes our College’s expectations to:

- demonstrate the Franciscan value of service by developing a sense of purpose oriented toward others’ success and achieved through the highest ethical standards;
- exemplify the Franciscan value of reverence and love for all life by cultivating respectful behavior within our community, fully aware that learning from others will broaden our limited knowledge and experience;
- express the Franciscan value of joyfulness of spirit by through a vitality of life that finds God’s creative gift as its source of goodness;
- embrace the Franciscan value of humility in our civil dealings with each other so that we may contribute to a more civil society;
- embody the Franciscan value of justice by treating each of our colleagues as an equally valued contributor to our academic achievements.

In these ways, each Franciscan value is a seed which bears the fruit of our expectations. Meeting each expectation will help our Lady of the Lake College to demonstrate that how we pursue our academic work enhances the mission we strive to embody.
PEDIGOGICAL COMMITMENTS

Shared pedagogical commitments focus and enable execution of this academic plan. Pedagogical commitments must guide and influence how the college directs its efforts to become the premier health-focused Catholic institution in the south. Faculty, staff, and administration accept that to achieve this goal, the College must be:

COMMITTED TO MULTI-MODAL INSTRUCTION AND DISTRIBUTED LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS:

Expanding traditional instructional modes to include current and emerging instructional methods and technologies recognizes the unique needs and experiences of our diverse student community. Increasing the context for learning - where and when students and faculty interact and where and when students engage with learning - provides students with greater access to learning. Self-directed learners will result.

The College faculty will engage in activities drawn from the following to increasingly demonstrate the commitment to multi-modal instruction and distributed learning environments:

- Provide students with rigorous, meaningful learning experiences using appropriate, current and emerging instructional technology effectively in traditional and distributed environments;
- Provide faculty with support for designing and implementing innovative learning experiences that draw from the fullest range of current and emerging instructional technologies; and
- Establish that multiple instructional modes enhance learning and can increase productive faculty/student interactions and student/student interactions.

COMMITTED TO INTER-DISCIPLINARY COLLABORATION:

Academia requires faculty members to represent specific disciplinary and professional expertise; nonetheless, engaging in cross-disciplinary/cross-professional interactions is equally important. Professional practice and research is becoming less and less the province of a single field; consequentially, academic communities must not be constrained by unnecessary boundaries.

The College faculty will engage in activities drawn from the following to increasingly demonstrate the commitment to inter-disciplinary collaboration:

- Foster collaborative instructional practices, research plans and assessment work within and among disciplines, programs, and schools;
- Develop new means by which practicing professionals can contribute to academic programs;
Promote faculty partnerships to enhance innovative educational and scholarly work; and
Participate in cross disciplinary dialogue to establish consistent, fair and context-sensitive strategies for maintaining academic rigor.

COMMITTED TO REFLECTIVE PRACTICES:

Reflective practitioners rely on self-assessment, using diverse perspectives in multiple contexts. The abilities to look forward to goals and continuously assess and modify as appropriate their beliefs, their values, their behaviors, and their knowledge are paramount.

The College faculty will engage in activities drawn from the following to increasingly demonstrate the commitment to reflective practice:

- Support professional development opportunities dedicated to learning how to use reflection;
- Foster deliberate, consistent reflection on scholarly and pedagogical practices; and
- Value awareness and respect for individual and shared beliefs and values.

COMMITTED TO EVIDENCE-BASED AND ASSESSED TEACHING FOR LEARNING:

The curricula we develop and draw upon must include the kinds of deep, lasting, holistic, transferable, higher-order learning that represent academic excellence resulting from carefully designed instruction informed by current research in learning. The scholarship of teaching and learning supports specific kinds of instruction for learning and multiple means of assessment to affirm that the instruction is effective. Basing instruction on peer reviewed scholarship ensures the quality and integrity of practices and products.

The College faculty will engage in activities drawn from the following to increasingly demonstrate the commitment to evidence-based and assessed teaching for learning:

- Ensure instructional practices in all settings are based on current scholarly evidence and appropriate uses of formative assessments;
- Establish and maintain clear, shared expectations of academic rigor for faculty and students;
- Support innovative practices informed by the scholarship of teaching and learning; and
- Advance understanding and generation of scholarship related to teaching and learning.
COMMITTED TO SCHOLARSHIP:

Scholarship gives evidence of individuals’ capacity for remaining current in and contributing to the knowledge base(s) in their field(s). Work is considered scholarly when it produces new knowledge through systematic inquiry and is open to critique and use by others.

The College faculty will engage in activities drawn from the following to increasingly demonstrate the commitment to scholarship:

- Create a culture of scholarly inquiry among faculty and students;
- Foster faculty participation in scholarly activity;
- Enable and support student and faculty research projects; and
- Provide an environment that values a full and diverse range of scholarly activity.
Benefits to Students

Progress toward the Academic Plan's six behavioral institutional expectations (purposefulness, ethical behavior, civility, valuing contributors, respectfulness, and vitality) will demonstrate:

1. that how students, faculty, and staff go about their work is as important as the work itself; and
2. the desired behaviors are congruent with our Franciscan values.

Focused efforts on each expectation will help faculty and staff move closer to a better community for all over the next five years. Two beliefs guide that confidence. First, each member of the College community can, to varying degrees, become more civil, respectful, ethical, vital, purposeful and appreciative of others' contributions. Secondly, those who are nurtured and learn in an environment demonstrating those attributes are more likely to persist and succeed. Ultimately, the culture in which Our Lady of the Lake College graduates have learned will render each graduate more valued and effective in their professional, personal, and public lives.

The five pedagogical commitments in the Academic Plan will advance academic excellence at the College. The Plan serves to guide incremental and consistent progress toward each commitment. Students will benefit in these ways:

1. Students who learn with faculty members engaged in RESEARCH will learn with more confident and current faculty members and will be more likely to develop an appreciation for inquiry and lifelong learning;
2. Student whose instruction demonstrates and requires COLLABORATIVE, INTERDISCIPLINARY teaching and learning will be better able to learn and work with others in the workplace and to understand how their own work relates to that of others;
3. Students who learn through MULTI-MODAL AND DISTRIBUTED means will develop greater understanding of technology in their own professional fields, will profit from exposure to different ways of learning and will have more opportunities to learn at their own pace;
4. Students whose academic work proceeds from EVIDENCE BASED BEST PRACTICE will be better able to explain what justifies the knowledge and skills they develop and consequently be more confident, effective, and respected in the workplace;
5. More REFLECTIVE faculty members will grow richer and deeper in their practices, their values, and sense of vocation; their students will in turn benefit from more studied, focused, centered, and thoughtful instruction.

The College is not beginning at base zero in regard to any institutional expectation or pedagogical commitment. The Academic Plan provides a blueprint for the "relentless pursuit of better" now expected throughout the System.
What the Academic Plan Will Mean for Faculty Members

The operational plan offers a way to focus faculty members’ professional development on the six agreed upon institutional expectations (previously called “aspirations”) and five similarly endorsed pedagogical commitments. The plan rests on weaving the faculty members’ annual engagement in Academic Plan initiatives into their Annual Professional Development Plan (APDP) and their subsequent engagement, into College Sponsored Faculty Development (CSPD), and into other appropriate activities. Then, at the end of the year, it will be easy and natural for the faculty members to include how they have benefited from Academic Plan initiatives and the related CSPD in their Annual Self-Assessment and Reflection (ASAR). The ASAR could also indicate how focus on the expectation and commitment chosen have linked with other expectations and commitments. The keys words here are “weaving, focusing and complementing” as opposed to “adding more” or “requiring more” or “something new”

It would seem reasonable to ask each faculty member to include at least one institutional expectation and at least one pedagogical commitment initiative in their work each year. Faculty members will select these from a range of options distributed in April for the upcoming academic year. One would be a self-selected interest-based initiative from the list of institutional expectation options. The second would also be self-selected and interest-based, from the list of pedagogical commitment options. Both choices will reflect the faculty members’ primary goals for the year. The CSPD design is facile and responsive to emergent opportunities and needs. Hence, this structure can support initiatives specific to a department or small group of faculty members who propose an appropriate, more tailored initiative.

The FSEB, CSPD consortium, and Academic Affairs will initiate the planning sequence in early April of each year. Working together, these groups can modify objectives for each institutional expectation and pedagogical commitment as needed based on that year’s work or emergent needs. They will then organize and distribute an appropriate list of options (initiatives) for the upcoming year before mid-April.

During each faculty member’s spring ASAR discussion with their dean, discussions can be held regarding the selection of an institutional expectation and a pedagogical commitment initiative for the faculty member to focus on during the upcoming year. The dean may recommend one additional institutional expectation or pedagogical commitment initiative, as well. Such a recommendation would be based on the dean’s sense of how engaging in a particular expectation or commitment initiative could further enhance a faculty member’s professional development and/or work toward program improvement. Then, in August when faculty members submit their APDP, they would logically include how they will participate in Academic Plan / CSPD initiatives in their narrative.

In their academic year planning, faculty members will include in the time already built in to the load determination structure, the time for personal engagement with the Academic Plan initiatives (primarily through CSPD). It would be quite rare for participation in Academic Plan / CSPD initiatives and engagement to justify additional or reassigned workload units. And only in special cases of extended activity might faculty development initiative(s) result in supportable overload.
Finally, questions remain about who would be facilitating, coordinating, monitoring, and reporting annually on each initiative. The deans will make initiative-specific load considerations for faculty leaders who are recommended (by the FSEB/CSPD consortium, Academic Council) and accept an invitation or who volunteer and the FSEB/CSPD/AC asks to serve in this capacity. Faculty who serves as facilitators for an initiative will receive workload, professional development, or service consideration by the dean.

We have embraced individual and collective faculty development, especially through CSPD, as our surest path to ensuring that our institutional expectations and pedagogical commitments make positive differences. Clearly, we will proceed from and expand on all of our current excellence in responding to the plan’s six institutional expectations and five pedagogical commitments, including and especially those active and emerging via CSPD. Naturally, it is not expected that any single initiative or CSPD focus will be equally appropriate for everyone at the same time. The longer range goal for Academic Affairs will be that over the next five years each faculty member will have engaged in at least one Academic Plan initiative for each institutional expectation and pedagogical commitment.

As we make individual and collective progress in the areas we have agreed upon, both summative and formative assessments will reveal the benefits to our students. In the end, the accumulated evidence of positive changes will testify to “our relentless pursuit of better” as an academic institution.
THE VISION
Our Lady of the Lake College: Fall, 2018

The inviting Picardy Avenue main entrance opens to the new Library and Student Commons area, flanked by attractive Administration and Student Support Services buildings. Construction for the centrally located chapel is underway and progress on a state of the art classroom building and ongoing updating of other facilities add to anticipation for the new term.

Faculty and staff welcome an all-time high of 2,083 students with new highs in Baccalaureate Degree seekers (1443), graduate students (203), and first time freshmen (120).

The engaging learning environments offer students open, comfortable, and flexible areas designed for discussion. Each learning space is equipped with the latest access to new opportunities and worlds of knowledge. Students use interactive portable learning technologies in every course. Professors enhance learning by organizing resources and by facilitating seamless, reliable, multi-dimensional, and immediate access to them.

Most students pursue professional majors whether on campus or through distributed learning. Each program integrates knowledge from a growing array of upper division liberal arts courses as well as from other professional fields. Faculty members often team as learners and teachers. In these roles, they help students connect experiences online, on campus, and in their communities with new ways of knowing, reflecting and assessing.

New ways of learning and knowing abound, for example, in the College’s redesigned and well-equipped science labs and in its Simulated Environment Teaching Hospital (SETH). In the former, students gain sound, foundational understandings of science required for advanced studies through active learning. And in SETH, hands-on experiences increase skills and sensitivities as future health professionals prepare to work in medical homes, schools, community centers, private residences, hospitals, and other points of health care delivery. Across the College, the how of learning is conspicuous, powerful and effective.

It takes more than a unified campus with new and updated facilities to attract and retain students. Mission driven, caring, and competent faculty and staff put students first. Though many initially enrolled in or currently take on-line courses, students come to campus to directly engage with the College’s strong and well prepared scholars. And whether on-line or face to face, faculty members demonstrate respect for each student’s value and integrity.

In these ways, the College fosters its distinction as a civil, respectful, energized, and purpose driven place to learn. Therefore, students commuting to this thriving, urban and health-focused institution attest to the values added by a private education.
Our Lady of the Lake College learners and teachers are active throughout the Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady Health System. The College commitments to providing system-wide professional development throughout are pervasive and expanding along with the System’s recognition, resourcing and respect for what the College provides. The System especially, but other partners as well, have embraced the Scholar Practitioner Teacher Model which grew out of the multi-disciplinary Gerontological Research in Practice (GRIP) initiatives. Just this past summer, Our Lady of the Lake College received more recognition for its network of academic programs, research, and services focusing on healthy adult aging.

Students and faculty continue to immerse themselves in civic engagement and service learning as the College mission becomes ever more apparent and valued throughout Baton Rouge and beyond. And the College recognition as a Catholic institution increases with a creative and rapidly growing religious studies program complementing a holistic approach to health studies. Much has changed in the last five years, but the mission has not. In 2018 and into the future, Our Lady of the Lake College will live and extend that mission. The why of learning, serving, and leading at this College remains clear.