

Annual LEAP Learning Communities Plan for 2015-16

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The LEAP Program continues to be energetically engaged in promoting the three goals of Undergraduate Studies at the University of Utah.

We contribute to the first goal, enrolling every entering student in a learning community, by attracting normally a fourth to a third of every entering class in one of fifteen different LEAP “tracks,” all geared toward students’ initial success and timely graduation. That goal will be further pursued this year by the launch of three new versions of LEAP (College of Social and Behavioral Science LEAP, Humanities LEAP, and Science and Community LEAP), and at least one other new version is on the drawing board for academic year 2016-17.

The second goal, that of assuring that every student has at least one deeply engaged learning experience, is served in all LEAPs since our courses adopt and continue to embody pedagogies and practices endorsed by the AAC&U as “high impact.” These are described as:

- *First-Year Seminars* (All LEAPs are or begin with two first-year seminars, one in fall and one in spring semester.)
- *Common Intellectual Experiences* (All LEAPs are structured so that students share these.)
- *Learning Communities* (All LEAPs are by definition learning communities: academic programs keeping the same student cohort together in more than one class.)
- *Writing-Intensive Courses* (All LEAPs held this designation when it existed at the U and continue to emphasize writing.)
- *Collaborative Assignments and Projects* (All LEAPs feature collaborative group projects.)
- *Undergraduate Research* (All LEAPs partner with the Marriott library to introduce students to research techniques and require their use in class projects.)
- *Diversity/Global Learning* (All LEAP 1100 courses fulfill the Diversity requirement, and Transfer LEAP fulfills the International Requirement.)
- *Community-Based Learning* (Service LEAP, Pre-Law LEAP, and Health Sciences LEAPs all carry Community Engaged Learning credit, and Pre-Nursing LEAP soon will.)
- *Internships* (These will be a feature of the new Science and Community LEAP.)
- *Capstone Courses and Projects* (Pre-Professional LEAPs, which extend beyond the first two semesters, all have a capstone course and associated project[s].)

We will also be making increasing use of student learning portfolios documenting the deeply engaged learning in and beyond LEAP.

Goal three for Undergraduate Studies is that every student have a Plan to Finish and be supported by student success advocates, mentors, and advisors. LEAP partners with University College Advisors, College Success Advocates, and College Advisors to offer students advice and support and is in the process of expanding those connections. In addition, our Peer Advisors function as mentors for students as do our faculty, relationships fostered by the fact that in LEAP, student cohorts remain with the same faculty member and Peer Advisor for two successive semesters. In addition, our fall semester Opening Convocation features information on the Plan to Finish and its importance, information reinforced by later advisor visits to our classes.

Because LEAP is already fully engaged in pursuing and promoting these three UGS goals, I have chosen to articulate our plans for the year under other headings. Taken together, these plans should further our success in expanding our enrollment, more deeply engaging our students, and providing them with better support and direction. Our plans for the coming academic year are as follows.

Curriculum:

Position the College-specific LEAPs more fully as a conduit to a major in any undergraduate college.

Successfully launch Science and Community LEAP, Social and Behavioral Sciences LEAP, and Humanities LEAP.

Develop a more formal connection between Service LEAP and the College of Social Work.

Discuss with the College of Humanities the plan of putting their Humanities Scholars into Humanities LEAP as one of the required classes for these students, starting in the fall of 2016.

Continue to plan for the launching of Access U with a LEAP 1100 course at SLCC in the spring of 2017.

Implement the AAC&U LEAP Learning Outcomes in every LEAP class, and use the AAC&U rubrics to assess whether or not students are achieving these outcomes.

More fully adopt Pathbrite in our classes so that students can begin compiling their personal learning portfolios.

In partnership with University College and undergraduate college advisors, revise LEAP participation in the Mandatory Advising Program, such that every LEAP student gets individual advice on second semester registration and is connected to an appropriate College or UC Advisor.

Institute College advising in all appropriate LEAP sections and continue to emphasize the importance of a Plan to Finish for all students, initiating this focus at the fall LEAP convocation.

Assessment:

Formalize LEAP's program goals and decide on ways to assess whether or not we are meeting them.

In partnership with the School of Medicine, assess Health Sciences LEAP more fully so as to generate numerical data about student retention, graduation, and graduate school acceptances.

Develop a plan to assess the impact of our diversity classes on students.

Continue to track the LEAP Program's impact on retention and graduation rates of students.

Continue to administer the EBI survey and respond to its findings.

Apportioning of resources and recruitment of students:

Adjust the LEAP "menu" of offerings to reduce the number of under-enrolled sections and reassign the instructors of those sections to LEAP versions with better enrollment or to possible new LEAP "tracks" such as a "Sophomore LEAP," "Leadership LEAP," or "Lassonde LEAP."

Return Living and Learning LEAP to its former model of encouraging registration by all Residence Halls students, and eliminate the requirement that Residence Halls LEAP students share a floor in Chapel Glen. We have tried to implement this model for the past three years and it has never worked, in part because of the timing differences between deadlines for room assignment and the ability of students to register for classes.

Given its impressive success in attracting students in its first year, plan for two sections of College of Social and Behavioral Sciences LEAP to be routinely offered in the future, perhaps combining one section with Education LEAP.

Create a recruitment video as a MUSE Internship Project, in partnership with our Senior Peer Advisors and with Marriot Library, for use at events such as Connecting U Days and high school counselor conferences.

Collaborate on a Learning Communities video which will be part of the mandatory pre-orientation process for students entering in the fall of 2016, and use this instead of the expensive viewbook, which seems to be outdated the moment it's printed.

Develop a colorful and attractive trifold brochure to introduce the entire LEAP Program to prospective students and to supplement the specific and more easily updated flyers describing individual LEAP tracks.

Find ways to more regularly connect with UC and College advisors and to update them on developments in LEAP.

Investigate other ways of getting the LEAP and Learning Communities message to students before and after they come to orientation, such as "piggybacking" on Orientation efforts to contact students who came to an Orientation but have not yet registered.

Continue LEAP's current outreach and recruitment efforts, such as participation in Connecting U and Bringing the U to You days

Fundraising:

Continue to work with Development to apply to foundations and private individuals for scholarship funding and to open new opportunities for LEAP students in community engagement activities.

Continue to make LEAP students eligible for and aware of the mentoring and scholarship opportunities available to them and of the new rules governing scholarships for undocumented students.

Cooperate with the Development Office in making new mentorship connections, especially with the new School of Dentistry.

Faculty:

Make faculty development funds available for individual licenses to the Reacting to the Past website, discussion boards, and games.

Place more LEAP Career Line Faculty on University committees and task forces.

Encourage and support more presentations by LEAP faculty at regional and national conference.

Re-apply for five-year appointments as Career Line Faculty for LEAP Lecturers as these renewals come due.