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# Learner Support Program Review and Planning

Final Report



WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

LSPR&P Oversight Committee

# Learner Support Program Review and Planning

## Executive Summary

Between July 1, 2015 and August 25, 2017, a total of 193 professional staff and administrators, representing 105 identified learner support programs, participated in the Learner Support Program Review and Planning cycle serving as Beta-Group participants, self-study completers, department-level reviewers, Observation Team members, next-level reviewers, division-level reviewers, Project Management Team members, and Oversight Committee members. LSPR&P is the second of three rotating campus-wide integrated program review and planning cycles, expected to occur every six years.

LSPR&P began in July 2016 with the establishment of a Project Management Team to develop and test the process, technology, and training materials to launch the university-wide reporting cycle in July 2017. WMU chose Compliance Assist: Program Review from Campus Labs as the data collection and reporting platform for this cycle due to its reported ease of use, as well as its use by the Higher Learning Commission and other specialized program accreditors. For the most part, Compliance Assist: Program Review performed as expected with very few technical difficulties.

The LSPR&P process was divided into three phases: Self-study and Self-review (July 15 through November 30); Next- and Division-Level Review (January 1 through June 30, 2017); and, Planning (July 1 to ongoing). Due to a number of end-user delays, Phase I ended January 5, 2017, and Phase II ended August 25, 2017. Cited reasons for the delays included late start due to misunderstanding the amount of work involved; misunderstanding of directions; WMU's conversion from Webmail Plus to Microsoft Exchange causing a loss of instructions; lack of internal assistance with the project; other critical duties mitigated by presidential on-boarding; and, scheduling problems between next- and division-level reviewers.

## Findings

Completion of each self-study report took considerable time and was best accomplished using a team approach. The random assignment of self-study reports to the Observation Teams for review provided programs with objective perspectives and the shared cross campus information added value to the review process. Next- and Division-Level Reviewers, across all divisions, recommended "continuous quality improvement" for the majority of learner support programs. Specifically, 65 programs were recommended for continuous quality improvement; (62.5%). 19 programs were recommended for "growth" (18.3%), 14 programs were recommended for "remediation" (13.5%), and one program was recommended for "program restructuring." No programs were recommended for elimination.

Overall, participants considered the LSPR&P process to be a valuable experience, albeit time-consuming. They agreed that the process provided greater insight into their own programs; that

peer-review provided additional, objective perspectives; and, that program review was valuable to subsequent strategic planning. Participants also agreed that a better definition of what constitutes a “program,” as it pertains to learner support, was needed in order to avoid redundant reporting and overall delays in the process timeline.

The following recommendations for future reviews were provided:

- Develop a better definition of a learner support “program” to avoid unnecessary reporting.
- Provide better and more cohesive training for all participants between review cycles.
- Reorder reviews such that reports go from Next-Level Reviewer to Observation Team, not Observation Team first.
- Provide support in locating data that is not program- or department-specific.
- Simplify this process by offering opportunities to address questions more broadly with fewer specific questions.
- Update documentation to include the overall purpose of program review, and estimates of staff and administrator time commitment and workload.
- Prior to the self-study cycle, provide training on how to use data for assessment; focus on setting measurable goals, and on the future of the program.

## LSPR&P Process

### Programs Reviewed

A total of 141 learner support program staff began completing self-study reports for 125 identified programs on July 15, 2016. The LSPR&P process utilized a standardized template format built into Compliance Assist: Program Review, a module of the Campus Labs enterprise system platform designed to facilitate review of all learner support programs during the same cycle.

### Self-Study Template

A single self-study template was created using Campus Labs’ Compliance Assist: Program Review platform. The template includes four tabs:

- **Introduction:** an information page containing a description of the requested standards and data for review, a description of what constitutes a learner-support program, and general guidelines for completing the template.
- **LSPR&P Template:** the template interface containing all criteria and forms required for submission. Tables are prebuilt into the interface for clarity. Since all evidence is required to be sourced, each criterion provides a place to link to source material (*see “Document Directory”*). This area also contains space for the Observation Team and next- and division-level reviewers to add comments to specific criteria. The Observation Team is also provided drop-down menus for adding observation categories by criterion, and form for submitting an overall summary.

- **Next- and Division-Level Review:** provides separate access for next- and division-level reviewers to list the program’s overall strengths and weaknesses, choose planning directives, and provide recommendations for moving forward.
- **Document Directory:** a repository for uploading PDF copies of evidentiary documents. Once uploaded, documents can be organized into files for easy reference, and linked directly to the criteria they support.

#### LSPR&P Project Management Team and Oversight Committee

The LSPR&P Project Management Team was a standing committee charged by the president’s Senior Leadership Team to carry out the implementation of the LSPR&P process with the associate provost for institutional effectiveness. The committee consisted of 17 representatives from different types of learner-support units at WMU, and three members of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. This broad-based participation was essential to assuring that the process and criteria were fully vetted and applicable to all types of learner-support units, met the stated intended ends of the administration, and created a culture of transparency. The expectations of the LSPR&P Project Management Team consisted of a two-year commitment with attendance at monthly meetings. The main duties were to review materials and provide feedback for ongoing development of the process. Each team member was encouraged to think critically and ask questions, communicate with colleagues the progress being made, and collect questions for the team to address. While the significant outcomes were shared with the campus community, each member was asked to respect the confidentiality of discussions held at meetings to allow for honest and open sharing of ideas.

On July 1, 2016, the LSPR&P Project Management Team converted to the LSPR&P Oversight Committee to facilitate implementation of the 2016-17 reporting period. The committee met twice during Phase I and II to review how well the implementation followed the established guidelines, and to provide an overall evaluation of the process.

### Completion of Phase I: Self-Study and Self-Review

Large-group training sessions were held on July 15 and August 8 to prepare contributors to use *Campus Labs’ Compliance Assist: Program Review* platform. Small-group (i.e., FYE, CHHS), and one-on-one (i.e., Ombuds, OFD) trainings were held between September 4 and November 3 for those who could not attend the large-group sessions, or those who needed additional information.

Of the 125 originally identified programs, 115 went forward to the LSPR&P Observation Team for review due to the following reasons:

- During self-study completion, Intercollegiate Athletics re-identified three of its programs, and First Year Experience identified one of its programs as “administrative,” and requested they be removed from the LSPR&P cycle. The Division of Minority Affairs

re-identified one of its programs as a Registered Student Organization (RSO), and disqualified it from WMU's integrated program review and planning cycles.

- The College of Education and Human Development re-identified two programs as “activities,” as did the Office of Sustainability. Those templates were deleted from the system, and their information was integrated into the overseeing programs' templates.

The self-study completion period was scheduled to conclude on November 30, 2016. Of the 115 programs going forward, 92 (80%) were submitted by the deadline. The remaining 23 programs were granted extension of the deadline through January 3, 2017 due to the following problems:

#### *Technical Difficulties*

In four program templates (3.4%), Compliance Assist: Program Review developed an error that prevented completion of the “Departmental Verification” form. Campus Labs was able to fix the error, and programs were able to complete their self-studies by December 6, 2016.

A separate Compliance Assist: Program Review error prevented access to the “EUP – Osher Lifelong Learning Institute” template. Campus Labs was able to fix the error, but did not notify WMU. So, no self-study report was completed for the program during the self-study reporting period (*see LSPR&P Observation Team and Review for further information about this program*).

#### *Difficulties Experienced by Participants*

A total of 19 programs (16.2%) requested an extension on the deadline through December 16. Cited problems included late start due to misunderstanding the amount of work involved; misunderstanding directions; WMU's conversion from Webmail Plus to Microsoft Exchange causing a loss of instructions; lack of internal assistance with the project; etc.

On January 18, 2017, all self-study reports were downloaded to PDF, then uploaded to the WMU community SharePoint™ site (<https://wmich.sharepoint.com/sites/iprp>). This mirrored the process begun during the *Academic Program Review and Planning* cycle. Self-study completers were reminded that, although this site requires a Bronco NetID and password to access, reports are considered “public” as the potential to share them off-campus exists.

Access to Compliance Assist: Program Review, and to the electronic versions of the self-study reports, was suspended for all self-study completers and contributors to allow for confidential access by members of the LSPR&P Observation Team.

## Completion of Phase II: Observation Team, Next- and Division-Level Review

### LSPR&P Observation Team and Review

On September 30, 2016, the LSPR&P Oversight Committee released a “Call for Nominations” to the senior leaders of the five affected divisions to establish an Observation Team whose makeup was representative of the number of programs submitted from each division. A total of 25 learner support program professional staff were instead appointed by their division leaders:

- Academic Affairs: 56% (n = 14)
- Diversity and Inclusion: 16% (n = 4)
- Intercollegiate Athletics: 8% (n = 2)
- Student Affairs: 20% (n = 5)

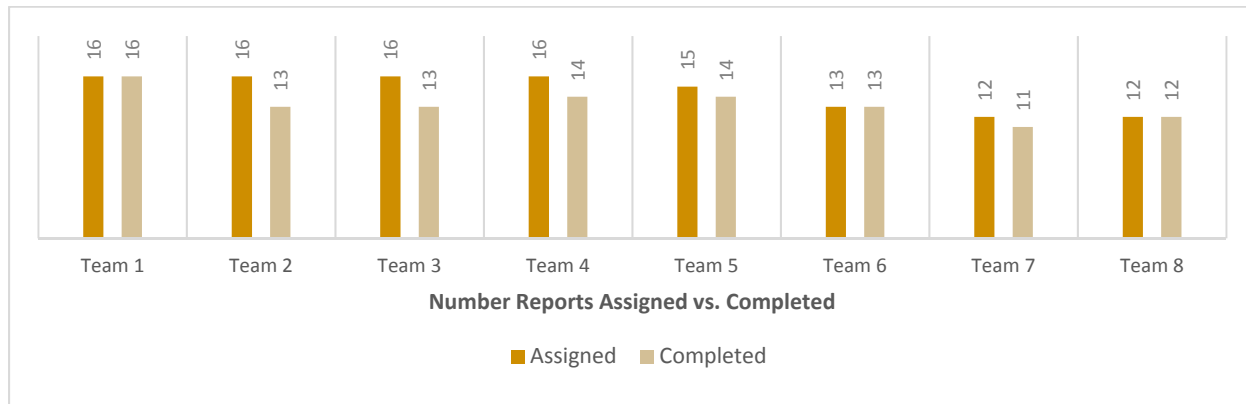
The LSPR&P Observation Team was divided into seven subgroups of three members each, and one subgroup of four members, to conduct two rounds of review on groupings of 12 to 16 self-study reports from learner-support programs outside of their affiliation (i.e., submitted programs were assigned in such a way as to ensure that no subgroup reviewed self-study reports to which they may have contributed). During Round 1, each subgroup member individually reviewed all reports within the assignment group. During Round 2, subgroups came together to discuss their individual reviews in order to come to consensus on the final review that would go forward to next-level reviewers.

Materials were developed to assist the LSPR&P Observation Team in completing their reviews. Operational definitions, observation guidelines or suggestions, and response examples were provided. The goal was to provide clarity and consistency in the interpretation of criteria for the purposes of a fair and meaningful review. It was expected that criteria and respective variables would be subject to interpretation within the context of the specific program area, and that the specific self-study and review should afford the opportunity for unique program characteristics to be considered. Observation Team training took place on December 15, 2016, with an 81 percent turnout. A small-group follow-up training was held on January 19 (to coincide with the launch), to provide another opportunity for the remaining six members to attend, and was open to all who wanted a refresher. Two members were able to attend. One-on-one trainings were held between January 20 and 24 for the remaining four members.

The LSPR&P Observation Team Review period opened on January 19, 2017. During observations, each subgroup reported that self-study reports for programs belonging to the Office of Faculty Development (OFD) were only partially complete. OFD received permission from the provost to reopen and complete the reports. To accommodate, Observation Team access was suspended, and OFD access was resumed temporarily, between January 30 and February 5. During completion, OFD re-identified eight of their 14 programs as “activities,” and those templates were removed from subgroups’ assignments.

The LSPR&P Observation Team reviewed 107 total programs. Chart 1 illustrates the difference between the number of programs initially assigned to Observation Team members, and final assignment numbers.

Chart 1. Difference between initial and final assignment numbers.



<sup>1</sup>Note: Verbatim responses from Observation Team members vary slightly from actual assignment data. See Appendix F for analysis and verbatim responses to the LSPR&P Observation Team Survey.

The observation period was scheduled to conclude on February 28, 2017. Of the eight subgroups, seven completed their assignments by the deadline. The remaining subgroup was granted an extension on the deadline through March 10, 2017 to allow two of the three members to return to the University from work-related travel. During completion of assignments, two groups identified the following technical difficulties:

*Technical Difficulties*

Compliance Assist: Program Review developed an error in one submitted program that prevented completion of the “Team Observation Summary” by redirecting to the “Departmental Verification” form. Campus Labs was able to fix the error within a matter of minutes.

Compliance Assist: Program Review developed an error in another submitted program that prevented one team member from accessing the “Team Observation Summary,” although the member had documented access. Campus Labs Support required higher-level assistance from its Tier II support team, but was able to fix the problem by March 2, 2017.

Although reviewed by the LSPR&P Observation Team, the following programs were removed from the Next-Level Review cycle prior to review:

- The Office of the President chose to review the Office of the Ombuds as a single program instead of as three
- The Office of Diversity and Inclusion reclassified *Everyone Counts Diversity Learning Communities* as an “activity”

Of the 107 programs reviewed by the LSPR&P Observation Team, 105 went forward to Next- and Division-Level Reviewers. This included the completed “EUP – Osher Lifelong Learning Institute” template that was completed after the Observation Team ended its review period.

#### Next- and Division-Level Review

A total of 18 unit-level leaders (e.g., associate provosts, deans, directors, associate vice presidents, etc.) were selected by their division-level leaders to conduct the LSPR&P Next-Level Review. One large-group training session was held on February 27 to provide updates on the process to-date, provide guides and resources, and prepare reviewers to use Campus Labs’ Compliance Assist: Program Review platform. Reviewers were also provided one-on-one access to assistance throughout the review cycle.

Although the Next-Level Review period was scheduled to conclude on April 30, 2017, some division-level reviewers chose to work directly with their next-level reviewers on each program in a “hand-off” completion style. Division-Level Review was scheduled to conclude on June 30, 2017, with final reporting and release of documentation to the Integrated Program Review and Planning SharePoint™ site scheduled for July 31, 2017. Of the 105 programs reviewed, 47 (44.8%) were submitted by the deadline. The remaining 58 programs were granted extension on the deadline through August 25, 2017 due to the following difficulties:

#### *Difficulties Experienced by Participants*

Cited difficulties included late start and delayed completion due to other critical duties mitigated by presidential on-boarding; misunderstanding directions; and, scheduling problems between Next- and Division-Level Reviewers. Also, due to a change in reporting structure, three programs were not reviewed by either Next- or Division-Level Reviewers. Two other programs were not reviewed at either the next- or division-level for unreported reasons.

The final count of learner-support programs reviewed at all levels during the LSPR&P cycle was 100. Tables 1 through 3 provide an account of the number of programs under each of the aforementioned recommendation by “unit” within each participating senior-leader supervised division.

Note: The Office of the President recommended “Continuous Quality Improvement” for the Office of the Ombuds. Intercollegiate Athletics did not review their Academic Services or Varsity Sports programs at the next or division levels.



Table 1. Comparison of next- and division-level recommendations by “unit” within Academic Affairs.

Unit	CQI		REM		GRW		PR		ELIM		TOTAL	
	Next	Division	Next	Division	Next	Division	Next	Division	Next	Division	Next	Division
ASUGS <sup>1</sup>	8	8	6	3	-	3	-	-	-	-	14	14
CFS	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
COLLEGES	25	24	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	26	26
ENR MGMT	3	3	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	4	5
EUP <sup>2</sup>	6	3	-	-	-	7	4	1	-	-	10	11
HIGE <sup>3</sup>	3	3	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	4
LIBRARIES	2	2	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	3	3
SUSTAIN	-	1	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	2	2
TGC	3	1	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	3
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>69</b>

Although part of the Centers and Institutes Review and Planning cycle:

<sup>1</sup> ASUGS' CASP programs participated in LSPR&P.

<sup>2</sup> EUP's "Osher Lifelong Learning Institute" participated in LSPR&P.

<sup>3</sup> HIGE's CELCIS program participated in LSPR&P.

Table 2. Comparison of next- and division-level recommendations by “unit” within Diversity and Inclusion.

Unit	CQI		REM		GRW		PR		ELIM		TOTAL	
	Next	Division	Next	Division	Next	Division	Next	Division	Next	Division	Next	Division
ODI	1	3	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	3	3
DMA	2	3	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	3	3
DSS	1	3	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	3	3
Pre-College	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>

Table 3. Comparison of next- and division-level recommendations by “unit” within Student Affairs.

Unit	CQI		REM		GRW		PR		ELIM		TOTAL	
	Next	Division	Next	Division	Next	Division	Next	Division	Next	Division	Next	Division
BSC	1	-	-	-	1	3	-	-	-	-	2	3
CSES	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
CPLC	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
PFP	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Res Life	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
SHC	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
SALP	1	1	-	-	2	2	-	-	-	-	3	3
Std Conduct	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Univ Rec	1	-	-	3	-	2	-	-	-	-	1	5
WMU Dining	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>20</b>

## Division Level VP Summaries

### Student Affairs

The 30 student support programs reviewed in the Division of Student Affairs, reflected a wide degree of variability in program size, complexity, and student impact. The following issues were found in a preponderance of the programs.

- Figure out a way to incorporate information learned from comprehensive departmental program reviews into this process.
- Add a quality control step within each division. For Student Affairs, I (Vice President for Student Affairs) would require every department to submit their report to Ciji (Assessment Coordinator in Student Affairs) prior to submitting to the University. Once Ciji has had the chance to review and recommend changes and the changes completed, then it could be submitted to the University.
- More work needs to be done to ensure departments are incorporating division-wide learning and operational outcomes into their departmental strategic plans.
- It was clear that some departments put a lot of time and effort into this process; others did their departments a real disservice by providing incomplete responses and/or simply cutting and pasting from other documents without answering the questions asked.
- Overall Student Affairs has work do to in the following areas: departmental strategic planning, incorporating division-wide priorities (learning and operational outcomes) into departmental strategic plans, telling our story with the data we have.

### Academic Affairs

After reviewing over 200 Academic Affairs Support Programs, the following issues were found in a preponderance of the programs. There needs to be an Academic Affairs-wide discussion how to address these issues and assist all the academic student support units to become better.

**Alignment of Student Services to University and Academic Affairs Strategic Plans** - There needs to be a better, more formal alignment of Academic Affairs student services delivery with the University Strategic Plan and the Academic Affairs Strategic Plan. What is the coordinated big picture that outlines scope, depth, specificity of services rather than redundancies?

**Integration of Student Success Services Across Campus** - There appears to be a great deal of redundancy in student success programs across campus. In the last eight years many colleges have created such programs. There needs to be a clear identify of what each program's specific contribution is to the bigger student success picture. There is a need to integrate and coordinate these programs.

**Assessment** - There is a significant lack of assessment in support services for students. Although many units firmly believe that they know the services they should provide and how to provide them, they have no specific, quantifiable basis for determining individual service value and impact. As a result, we have a tendency to simply add additional services without knowing which services have the largest impact and the greatest return on investment. It is imperative

that there be an Academic Affairs wide discussion as how to assess programs and specific activities and an understanding that we will have common assessment means. Then we must allocate resources based on assessed value.

**Understanding Assessment** - More education needs to occur on the management of program review and assessment. Program goals, process outcomes, and student outcomes are very different things, yet many program self-studies treated them as the same issue. Also, the need for documentation and supporting evidence was not understood or provided by many units. Hence, there is a need to provide campus wide training on assessment.

**Communication** - Most if not all programs lack any formal communication plan or assess if their current communication practices are effective.

**Integration between Advising and Career Counseling** - The relationship between career counseling programs and advising units needs greater oversight and in-depth planning for maximum benefit. While some units offer career services as part of advising, many wait for seniors to find the services at the end of their academic program. Again, duplication of services and lack of connection across units seems to be limiting impact. HCOB seems to have a model that could either be replicated or modified across other colleges.

**Better Integration of CASP and EUP with College Programs** - Exploratory advising as well as other services within CASP and University Studies advising within EUP seem to need greater alignment with academic units. Again, there is a great deal of redundancy that may or may not be intentional to specific populations of learners.

**A Focus on Undergraduate Solely Versus Also Serving Graduate Students** - Many student services within the colleges could provide greater service to graduate students without much additional resources. Suggesting that most of the student support should come from the centralized graduate college runs counter to the current undergraduate program rationale or need for separate unit level programs.

**Resource Utilization** - Discussion and consideration of resource utilization for all units reporting was woefully weak. We need to be able to cost services and seek understanding of return on investment. That also means we need to step up our assessment of program, process and student outcomes.

**Compliance** - The section on compliances with laws, regulations, and university or program policies was new and indicated that most units are not addressing these issues. It is necessary that all units be aware of, understand, and comply with all policies, laws, and regulations. Units need to make sure they are in compliance as it is their responsibility to be in compliance.

### *Office of Diversity and Inclusion*

The Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) review process includes five distinct program areas: Division of Multicultural Affairs, Disability Services for Students, LBGT Student Services, Kalamazoo Promise Scholars program and the ODI central office that includes diversity related

university-wide and community outreach programs. This report focuses on diversity goals that are consistent with the University Strategic Plan, the DMAP, and the ODI Strategic Plan, 2016-17.

- All ODI units plan to partner more closely to build community around the peer mentor programs and amongst their participants. Equally important, ODI offices are focused on centralizing programming activities as we respond to the increasing student population that we serve.
- A McNair proposal has been submitted by **DMA** for potential funding.
- To keep costs to students low DMA is limited in its ability to employ third party study abroad organizations in-country; must select locations that are close to the U.S. or have low air fare, only provide short-term study abroad opportunities. Instructors must be sought outside the program and curriculum developed in that particular instructor's discipline. ODI will continue to seek external funding for study abroad opportunities for historically underrepresented students and plans to increase staff time dedicated to this endeavor.

The Office of Diversity and Inclusion has accomplished goals that are set forth in the university strategic plan. However, recognizing the increasing number of students served in all areas and the need to redefine our services to meet the increasing growth of a diverse population at WMU, the entire staff is conducting a series of retreats to identify our priorities by asking the question “Why” diversity and inclusion exists, and then, how and what that will be at WMU. At the conclusion of the redefining exercise, ODI proposes to share our vision with the university leadership. A glimpse into the future of the higher education student demographic provides a clear picture:

*“Students of color and students from low-income families will soon form the majority of the nation’s college-eligible learners. Their fortunes will shape—for better or worse—America’s economic and global future. These students are democracy’s hope and America’s future. They need and deserve the advantages of a horizon-expanding higher education. They need and deserve a twenty-first-century liberal education.”*

Carol Geary Schneider, President of AAC&U (May 29, 2015)