

## ADVANCING THE VISION

During last fall's Convocation I noted that the challenges to US higher education have never been greater than they are now. Some of these challenges include:

- decreasing or stagnant financial (local, state and federal) support and unsustainable fiscal models,
- changing student demographics, including declines in high school graduation numbers that will impact current and future freshman and transfer enrollments,
- educational attainment gaps for previously underserved populations,
- learning-focused outcomes (with increasing expectations for proficiency, competency-based learning and prior-learning assessment and credentialing),
- technological changes in learning modalities, including MOOCs, online and distance education,
- increased accountability requirements and expectations from accrediting agencies, policy makers, and the public, and
- intense competition for students among public, private and for-profit institutions (local and global).

Lehman College and CUNY are not exempt from these challenges—we must prepare for the changes to come and it is critical that we use this time to redefine what a Lehman College education means for the students we serve and for the evolution of our institution.

This challenge is not new to us. As a matter of fact, this is the continuing implementation of our Strategic Plan: *Achieving the Vision*. The third stated goal of this plan affirms the intent to achieve Greater Institutional and Financial Effectiveness. In particular, Objective 3.1 underscores the need to “integrate institutional planning and assessment to improve effectiveness through modification of the budget planning and resource allocation process.” Doing so will help us advance all of the other goals of the strategic plan: excellence in teaching, research, and learning; as well as enhanced student success and commitment to engagement and community service.

In October 2013, reflecting on our mission, vision and strategic plan, and the need to think creatively about our common future, I solicited nominations from the Deans and the Provost to identify a team of Lehman faculty and staff who would attend a two-day workshop on prioritizing academic and administrative programs. The workshop was offered by *Academic Impressions* and led by Robert C. Dickeson, President Emeritus of University of Northern Colorado, and Larry Goldstein, President of Campus Strategies. (Dr. Dickeson's book *Prioritizing Academic Programs and Services*, published by Jossey-Bass, has been used by over three hundred institutions as the basis for conducting this type of institutional assessment and planning exercise.) The team was comprised of:

Liesl Jones, Professor and Chair of Biological Sciences  
Dene Hurley, Associate Professor and Chair of Economics and Business  
Patricio Lertzundi, Professor and Chair of Journalism, Communication and Theater  
Daniel Stuckart, Assistant Professor, Department of Middle and High School Education  
Raymond Galinski, Coordinator, Office of Assessment and Planning  
Vincent Clark, VP of Administration and Finance  
Anny Morrobel-Sosa, Provost and Sr. VP of Academic Affairs

After their return to campus I met with the group to learn about their experience as well as their assessment of Lehman College's readiness to undertake this process. They unanimously agreed there is

now a compelling need for Lehman to engage in this type of review to emerge as a stronger, more innovative, and more competitive institution while also affirming our core mission and values.

Through a transparent and inclusive evaluation process we will examine all academic and administrative programs and services, focusing on their efficiency, effectiveness, and centrality to the College's mission, all within the framework of shared governance. How our programs and services contribute to student success and to Lehman's identity will be used to determine the strategic allocation of existing resources and to identify opportunities for generating new resources. Within this framework, a program is defined as any activity or collection of activities that require or consume resources (dollars, people, facilities/space, research/scholarship, performances, equipment/instrumentation, and time). In addition to transparency, inclusivity and confidentiality, other guiding principles for our work will require that the process be comprehensive, data-based, driven by internal and external demand, consistent, and fair.

Following Dickeson's validated framework, I will appoint a steering committee to be co-chaired by Provost Morrobel-Sosa and Vice President Clark. I will also seek nominations for faculty and staff participation in two task forces. The first will focus on the assessment of academic programs; the second will focus on assessing administrative programs and services. A Data Support Group will support these efforts with data acquisition and analysis from internal and external sources. A communications team will provide the campus community with regular updates through every step of the process. The product of this prioritization process should reflect both the quality and resource impact associated with each program's contribution to the success of our students and to the centrality of our mission. All decisions on final recommendations will be phased-in after thorough planning and careful consideration of the impact on our mission, students, faculty, staff, and financial and organizational infrastructure. A tentative timeline for the entire process is attached.

Economic projections suggest that state government support for higher education is not likely to increase significantly in the foreseeable future. Consequently, a significant portion of the resources needed for new programs and to strengthen and/or expand existing programs will have to come from a reallocation of existing resources. Thus, we must prioritize what needs to be done as we explore new strategies to move Lehman College beyond a sustainable academic and financial model into one that is stronger and innovative. An essential element in Lehman's future development must be a dramatic increase in the resources coming to the College from the private sector, especially from our more than 65,000 alumni.

In addition to helping us establish priorities for planning and decision-making, this effort will have a synergistic relationship with the preparation of both our Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) progress report and upcoming self-study, and with the annual CUNY Performance Management Plan (PMP). It will also be used to inform individual academic program accreditation reports and regular institutional academic program reviews.

None of this will be easy, but it is absolutely necessary. The challenges we face are complex. While the initial review and recommendations may come from these task forces and the steering committee, all of us need to be engaged in this work in order to better respond to the changing needs of those we serve. Lehman College's future as an institution that thrives in the 21<sup>st</sup> century depends on our collective contributions as we strive to bring our vision to fruition. I look forward to your participation in this important process.

Prioritization Process: Tentative Timeline

<b>DATE</b>	<b>ACTION</b>
21-Feb-14	Due Date for Nominations to Steering Committee: Task Forces (Academic, Administrative), Data Group, and Communications Group
24-28 Feb-14	Steering Committee to announce members of each of the Task Forces, Data Group and Communications Group
12-Mar-14	Prioritization Kick-Off Meeting and Open Forum; 3:30pm-5:00pm, location TBD; Open to all faculty and staff
March-June 2014	Bi-weekly meetings for each of the Task Forces, Data Support Group and Communications Group; locations TBD; Possible dates/times: Wednesdays 3:30pm-5:00pm or Fridays 10am-noon
04-Apr-14	Task Forces submit recommendations regarding process and criteria to Steering Committee
07-May-14	Steering Committee to host Open Forum and announce final criteria and process to campus; location and time TBD; Open to all faculty and staff
August-December 2014	Bi-weekly meetings continue for each of the Task Forces, Data Support Group and Communications Group; locations TBD; Possible dates/times: Wednesdays 3:30pm-5:00pm or Fridays 10am-noon
01-Nov-14	Deadline for all programs to submit reviews/responses program criteria, data and supporting documentation to Task Forces
01-Dec-14	Task Forces to submit preliminary Prioritization recommendations to Steering Committee
December 2014 – January 2015	Steering Committee to review preliminary Prioritization recommendations
February, March 2015	Steering Committee to host Open Forum on preliminary recommendations to campus; location and time TBD; Open to all faculty and staff
01-Apr-15	Steering Committee to submit Prioritization recommendations to President
May 2015	President to announce final recommendations