Academic Planning Committee
Final Report
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Structure of the Report:

- The report begins with key recommendations, described in more detail in the document, but highlighted in this first section.

- The report continues with the key academic challenges, which were identified in the interim academic planning report

II. Priority Recommendations

1. Create a temporary **Curricular Working Group (CWG)**, jointly reporting to CPC and ARRC**,** to explore several of the questions identified in this report. While we must look to existing structures whenever possible for this work, a series of issues that exceed existing capacity calls for the creation of new advisory group. The CWG would particularly address the questions outlined in the Academic Program Portfolio section below, although their purview might also extend to other areas. This group should directly engage the full faculty as it conducts its work.

2. Create a temporary **Faculty Experience Working Group (FEWG),** reporting to FPPC, to address faculty work in terms of and in addition to specific policy questions. The policy questions relate to issues of real importance, including, for example, the use of student evaluations of teaching and advising and the counting and equitable distribution of faculty service. In addition, the FEWG would make sure that expectations on faculty are reasonable, that the College is fostering a healthy work-life balance, and that our faculty policies respond to the demographic diversity of the institution. This group should

III. Key Academic Challenges

The Academic Planning Group recognizes a set of intersecting near- and medium-term challenges that our academic program (alongside other parts of the College) must address in the coming years.

1. **Demographic trends are not favorable for future enrollment at colleges and universities, and the budget of the College is highly dependent on enrollment.**

Lake Forest College has a strategic advantage in this regard: we have consistently recruited a socioeconomically and demographically diverse student body, which aligns directly with our mission and values. Nonetheless, the coming demographic cliff will make recruitment and retention even more challenging, and the competition for fewer available students will challenge many aspects of higher education.

We cannot take our appeal to students for granted. Accordingly, we must ask which programs will attract more students, and whether students will be willing and able to pay a higher proportion of our tuition. How do we continue to provide our high-quality education and hew to our mission and values, in the most cost-effective way? What areas of the College should we strengthen to increase our attractiveness? How can we further improve our retention and graduation rate, while also maintaining our commitment to enrolling a diverse group of students? We remain a tuition-dependent institution. How can we strive to provide additional financial support for students in need?

2. **The student body is changing.**

Students are coming to the College with more varied challenges and needs, including disability accommodations, mental health challenges, differential academic preparation, and the need to work off campus to finance their degree. These challenges impact faculty, staff, and students, in the form of increased workload (for faculty and staff) and impediments to the traditional eight-semester plan for graduation (for students).

This changing student body also provides abundant opportunities for the College to reconsider how we teach and how we structure our curriculum for this new generation of students. How can we provide for thoughtful curricular innovation in line with our values? How can we continue to provide our students with an outstanding education that prepares them for the challenges they will face post-graduation? How can we ensure we have the proper support for these efforts?

College: the breadth of education, as expressed in the Forester Fundamental Curriculum. Many students may not fully understand the value of that breadth, nor do they fully explore the range of academic programs we offer due to their predisposition to certain careers that they may believe require a narrower path and an earlier focus.

Accordingly, how do we adapt to incoming student interest in particular majors, while broadening and deepening their understanding of what we find most important in a liberal arts education? For students who arrive wanting to specialize, how can we ensure they experience both multifaceted approaches to their field and different methods of inquiry entirely—thus making them even more in-demand on the job market?

4. **Students expect their areas of academic study to reflect the present realities of the job market.**

We should continue to support innovation and change in our curriculum (including both our current and new programs) to ensure we have the right portfolio to provide vital, responsive, and forward-looking offerings. Such innovation, aside from evolving student interest, is essential to the strength and integrity of our academic program.

We recognize that, just as our students are changing, all academic fields evolve and change over time. This presents a challenge at both the course and the department/program level. How can we ensure that we are continuously improving and innovating—not only in what we teach but how we teach—in a manner that responds proactively rather than reacts defensively?

Questions for Discussion and Action
1. The Academic Program Portfolio: What We Teach

How do we develop and maintain academic programs that will attract students and be economically sustainable?

and not solely as a metric of cost efficiency. The CWG should be provided with any

How do we provide students with the flexibility they (increasingly) desire while also being mindful of concomitant increases in faculty and staff workload?

Tier 1 Concerns:

- Explore changing pricing to move toward "inclusive tuition" options (e.g., summer course/s are part of the tuition price; this could also lead to an adjustment of faculty teaching load [3/2/1, etc.]) (93%)

- Create more flexible schedules (e.g., more evening/weekend courses, use of summer term) (80%)

- Create more opportunities to teach students outside the traditional classroom (research experiences, career preparation, etc.) (73%)

- Explore changing pricing to make part-time study more feasible for interested students (73%)

For the two items that concern pricing, the Student Success Committee—working with various administrative offices and in consultation with all governance bodies and other campus stakeholders—should draft an inclusive tuition proposal that would account for financial aid, the potential distribution of teaching load, the potential positive financial impact on the College, and the implications for staff time to support an enlarged summer enterprise and a potentially adjusted academic year model. With particular attention to retention and graduation, the College should determine whether further "leaning in" to a year-round academic operation is desirable and feasible. The Academic Planning Group would not want any current faculty to feel pressed into summer service, and the option must work with existing interest and capacity.

With regard to flexible schedules, the Office of the Registrar and the Office of the Dean of Faculty should analyze current usage of course slots and identify areas of low slot coverage but high desirability. This analysis should then become comparative—when do peer competitors offer courses, and in what numbers? —to determine existing strengths and vulnerabilities. From there, current student levels of satisfaction should be assessed, and a plan to improve the schedule-building process to engage more predictive analytics should be undertaken. For instance, can schedule-building software identify optimal times based upon known students? This process must then lead to an assessment of whether expanded course slot offerings are possible or desirable given current staffing capacity and interest, and, only then, to plan for how to expand offerings to provide additional flexibility. Any changes of this kind would need to meet the capacity and interest of faculty and support staff, and to be assessed through the governance system.

Finally, the College should audit **current ways of teaching outside the traditional classroom structure**, identifying the scale of student usage of non-traditional credits (the recent passage by the faculty of practicum experiences is an example of a potential type of change). From there, departments interested in expanding research-based experiences for credit should be encouraged to generate proposals. Expanding the amount of teaching done outside of the traditional classroom structure has implications for faculty workload, the criteria for evaluating faculty, and the need for further faculty positions (perhaps continuing, non-tenure-track faculty). As such, it would need careful consideration from a workload lens.

Tier 2 Concerns:

- Offer an increased range of remote courses, alongside in-person courses (53%)

- Create more flexible programs of study (e.g., expand College Studies and the Self-Designed major; develop more tracks/concentrations within existing departments/programs; create focus areas not tied to existing departments) (46%)

The issue of remote courses was settled for the near term by the College's recently approved policy for non-COVID emergency remote teaching. Importantly, that policy must be reviewed every two years to account for the rapidly changing environment. In addition, and because the College endorses summer remote courses and accepts student transfer credits of remote courses from other institutions, we should explore the ACM's developing interest in this topic, which could take the form of remote course sharing and seamless transfer of peer offerings for our students who will transfer in remote credits.

Regarding flexible programs of study: This is an area that connects to many aspects of the College, and many stakeholders may have different definitions of appropriate flexibility. We seek here to address several interrelated issues. First, the current ARRC review of the Self-Designed major will explore this question for students who wish to pursue an area of academic focus outside an existing program; further, the Student Success Committee should weigh in on the feasibility of any potential expansion of the Self-Designed major. Second, the College should stabilize the resources for student development courses offered by College Studies, which are currently determined on an *ad hoc* basis; affirm the Associate Dean for Student Success as chair of the program; appoint the Student Success Committee as the program committee for College Studies; and ensure that College Studies enters the ARRC program review process. The program should have its initial review within three years, as a mechanism to assess current practice and to propose new developments.

In addition, CPC should bring a definition of concentrations or tracks to the faculty, and, if passed, departments and programs may make use of these structures for their own curricular development. In the case of focus areas not tied to existing departments, CPC should discuss the possibility of implementing programs in areas such as media production work, finance-related professional certifications, or non-profit humanities/arts professions, as examples.

How will we support the needs of an increasingly diverse student body? These items reference specific offices or potential areas of adjustment.

Tier 1 Concerns: Offices and Staffing

- Disability Services (100%)
- Center for Academic Success (93%)

Tier 1 Concerns: Initiatives (separate from Offices and Staffing, but also Tier I)

- More financial advising resources (94%)
- More flexible financial aid packages (93%)
- Course material costs (textbooks and software) (87%)

The first two items are addressed elsewhere in this report, while the question of

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3. The Faculty Experience: How We Teach

How do we equitably evaluate faculty and ensure that labor is recognized?

Tier 1 Concerns:

- Determine whether class-size guidelines should be revised (rewards for teaching more students, or some weighting mechanism, between, for instance, lecture vs. lab) (87%)

- Further clarify expectations for faculty work and to equalize faculty workload as much as possible (66%)

- Revisit assessment of tenure

SOAN, Math, MLL, Econ) do not receive additional teaching credits for their efforts, and there

What lessons have we learned from the pandemic about teaching modalities and the need for flexibility/accessibility of learning?

Tier 1 Concern:

Expanded role of remote learning and/or flexible modality (73%)

This is the only item that accrued more than 50% support, and it relates to questions above regarding flexibility for students. It requires regular and further consideration through the governance system.

Tier 2 Concerns:

- Expanded availability of instructional design resources and academic technology resources (47%)

- Further development of "flipped classrooms" (e.g., multi-section introductory courses as flipped classrooms, with standard videos for all students, and hands-on work in class) (40%)

- Expanded resources for the Office of Faculty Development (OFD) (40%)

The first two items relate in separate ways to classroom instruction, and the Academic Planning Group suggests that the Director of Academic Technology and ITS work to survey faculty on areas of potential development. The College can then assess what resources would prove helpful, although we recognize that some of this is idiosyncratic to individual faculty needs.

The third item recognizes the current strength of the **OFD**; there is agreement that its current level of programming should continue.

What facilities development should be prioritized to allow faculty to do their best teaching?

Tier 1 Concerns:

- Identify new buildings that could aid student recruitment (e.g., a fine and performing arts center?) (87%)

- Identify needed improvements in existing buildings (86%)

- Identify classroom technology improvements (73%)

There are many campus constituents who value the concept of a **new facility for the fine and performing arts.** Because facilities of this kind could potentially allow the College to attract students to these areas (in the way Lillard and Brown have done, respectively), and because our proximity to Chicago continues to provide opportunity for students interested in the fine and performing arts, the Academic Planning Group strongly endorses continued attempts to identify donor interest in this direction. However, because the College has identified endowment development as a more pressing concern than capital projects, this group endorses two separate near-term measures:

First, we encourage the continued development of the new Krebs Center for the Humanities as support center for fine and performing arts activities, along with the 6x%hen0.87 g0 Tc 0 Tw 6s std12 (r)3 (ong)

4. Governance

Should we conduct a comprehensive review of the governance system and procedures? It was last reformed in the 1990s—does it need a comprehensive review, given concerns about the distribution of faculty workload as well as other important issues? Further, how can the growing diversity of our faculty be effectively supported by the governance process?

Tier 1 Concerns:

- Discussion of the future role of part-time faculty; full-time non-tenure-track faculty; review and promotion opportunities for NTT faculty (100%)
- Empower ARRC to shift permanent allocation as needed (87%)
- Review of the governance system and procedures (80%)
- Address sabbatical challenges for small departments (80%)
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the scope of potential change, FPPC may advise the creation of a new temporary group or may remand various identified issues to existing committees.

Sabbaticals are, again, part of FPPCs purview, and the committee has in recent years started discussion of this issue. FPPC should survey faculty on the efficacy of the current sabbatical policy, examine those of other institutions, ask ARRC to further consider the implications of not replacing faculty on sabbatical, and propose, if warranted, a revision to the existing policy.

Regarding **tenure criteria at the department level**, FPPC should ask departments to develop tenure criteria for research to create consistent expectations for junior faculty. These criteria can be revised and updated but should not be "implied." Departmental-level discussions should take place in the context of College-level conversations about equitable faculty evaluation.

The Student Success Committee has taken up a number of **revisions to academic policies**, making recommendations to CPC, and this group should continue this important work. This is part of the multi-faceted work for the Student Success Committee that is envisioned for the years to come in the Priority Recommendations.

FPPC should assess progress in these area in the next 2-3 years, and, after consulting faculty, determine if a larger governance revision may be warranted.

Finally, the College should regularly review the progress of academic planning and ensure that its direction provides support for our faculty (see key challenge #5). We must ensure that as we grow, plan, and amend our procedures in times ahead that we always do so with an effort to improve the work-life balance of faculty, ensure that faculty are given the time to pursue their work as free from unnecessary tasks as possible, and with institutional recognition of their continuing accomplishments.